Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 31 · Number 3 · July 2007

Articles and book reviews reflecting global evangelical theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith

Published by

Paternoster:
thinking faith

WEA
World Evangelical Alliance
Theological Commission

for
WORLD EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

ERT (2007) 31:3, 239-255

A Brief History of the Blood: The Story of the Blood of Christ in Transatlantic Evangelical Devotion

Benjamin A. Pugh

KEYWORDS: *Spirituality, devotion, hymns, preaching, cleansing, redemption, mysticism, merit, perfectionism, Pietism*

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath its flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

HYMNS SUCH AS THESE can fill Evangelical hearts either with nostalgic affection or plain revulsion. Either way, such hyperbolic language about the blood of Christ is largely a thing of the past. Hymns, testimonies and sermons about 'the Blood' are the legacy of some remarkable movements such as the Salvation Army and some equally remarkable individuals such as Andrew Murray. The devotional outpourings bequeathed to us on this important theme I have termed 'Blood Mysticism'.

Blood mysticism, the veneration of the visualised and verbalised 'Blood' of Christ with a view to achieving a richer and fuller relationship with God, is a tradition that, in many ways, is traceable to the New Testament itself. The New Testament writers commonly use 'the blood of Jesus' and similar phrases as shorthand for the treasured truths connected with the death of Christ in its atoning and saving significance. That death is gloried in and boasted of and made the hub of apostolic preaching. Yet the facts of history are such that Christian devotion to this theme has fluctuated wildly under the influence of factors that often lie outside the two covers of people's Bibles. And it is within Evangelicalism in its many forms that this particular New Testament theme seems to soar to its greatest heights.

1. Medieval Passions

The idea of the Eucharist as a sacrifice

Benjamin Pugh *is lecturer in theology and church history at Birmingham Cosmopolitan College, UK., which specialises in training the African migrant church for ministry within the UK. He obtained an MA with distinction in the study of Pentecostal and Charismatic theology (Manchester), and is currently completing his doctoral research on the role of the blood of Jesus in early British Pentecostalism. Some parts of this article have been adapted from '"There is Power in the Blood"—The Role of the Blood of Jesus in the Spirituality of Early British Pentecostalism',* Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association *Vol.XXV (2006), pp. 54-66, published by Paternoster Periodicals.*

presented to God by the worshipping church goes back at least as far as Irenaeus of the second century AD.[1] By AD1000 belief in transubstantiation was widespread, being officially recognized at the 4th Lateran Council of 1215 and then reaffirmed at the Council of Trent.[2] This belief, entailing as it did the repeated offering of the Lord's body and blood, led to the multiplication of masses, as well as to the creation of a number of new devotional practices, including the annual summer feast of Corpus Christi. Besides these developments, the medieval period also witnessed growing devotion to the Sacred Heart in France as well as to the Five Sacred Wounds in Portugal, the creation of 'Calvaries'—life-size sculptures of scenes depicting the final hours of Jesus' life on earth, not to mention the appearance of countless splinters of the cross and the dissemination of various Holy Grail myths.

The background to this would appear to be a shift of emphasis taking place throughout the medieval and renaissance periods. This was a shift in popular devotion from a kingly exalted Christ in heaven to a very human Jesus, suffering and dying on a cross. After such emphasis on the divinity of Christ as had been seen in late antiquity, perhaps it was inevitable that the pendulum would eventually swing the other way. The trigger for this swing of the pendulum seems to have been the growing misery of ordinary people as the Middle Ages reached their height. Until the first bubonic plague of 1349-51, population growth meant that people began to outstrip the natural resources available to sustain them. There was widespread rural poverty and a massive immigration to the cities where sanitation was poor and life expectancies short. A suffering human Christ could transfigure the deprivations of churchgoers as they beheld the various pictorial sermons of a Christ who suffered yet overcame death.

Of the many contributors to the passion mysticism of the time, Bernard of Clairveaux (1090-1153), the highly influential Cistercian monk, was by far the most significant. Of particular significance to this study is his influence upon the young Luther. Bernard's works were routinely read aloud at meal times at the Erfurt friary.[3] His most prized devotional classic, from which Luther quoted frequently, was his *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, his sermons on the Song of Songs. Mostly Sermons 61-62 of Bernard's *Cantica* are a meditation around the theme of the beloved in the cleft of the rock.

The Rock is pictured as Christ, and the cleft, his 'Side Wound'. The Bride, usually representing the church, but sometimes the individual, is exhorted to dwell in child-like abdication in this and other wounds of Christ by continually mediating upon them: 'It is because the Bride is thus devoted to the Wounds of Christ and meditates on them continually, that the Bridegroom

1 Irenaeus *Against Heresies* IV:18, 4-6.

2 R. McBrien, (ed), *The Harper Collins Encyclopaedia of Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 1264.

3 G. Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross: Theology of the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), p. 131.

calls her "My dove in the clefts of the rock".'[4]

2. The Merit of Martin Luther

By the time of Martin Luther (1483-1546), passion meditation was widespread, being espoused, for instance, by Thomas à Kempis, the most widely read of the late medieval mystics: '…take refuge in the Passion of Christ and love to dwell within his sacred wounds. For if you devoutly seek the wounds of Jesus and the precious marks of his passion you will find great strength in all troubles.'[5]

The early Luther was steeped in late medieval passion mysticism, out of which would emerge his distinctive *theologia crucis*. The passion mysticism with which Luther was acquainted included meditating in detail on each of the wounds of Jesus. This was designed to reveal to oneself the true awfulness of one's sin, inspiring true penitence.[6] Later in life, following his famous 'discovery' of the true meaning of the righteousness of God in Romans, Luther, without leaving behind his earlier mysticism, became much more assured of the absolute merit of Christ's blood:

> …and our sins have been forgiven, *by His blood*, that is, by the merit of His blood…[7]
>
> …our place of propitiation is not won by our merits, but *in His*, Christ's, *blood*, that is, in His suffering, whereby He made satisfaction and merited propitiation for those who believe in Him.[8]

A basically Anselmian view of Christ's death as achieving a certain surplus of merit with God had remained unchanged with the transition to Protestantism; it was merely the way this merit could be appropriated that had changed: from the sacrament of the mass to the sacrament of preaching.

3. Zinzendorf: The Religion of the Heart

The Pietism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries exhibited a strong desire to move away from what had by now, long after Luther's death, become lifeless Lutheran orthodoxy. The Pietists underlined the doctrine of regeneration as uppermost in their soteriology. This brought about the desired focus upon the subjective state of the believer as opposed to his or her objectively justified status. It also brought about a sharp division between 'head' and 'heart', a statement of Philip Spener's being typical of this: 'Let us remember that in the last judgment we shall not be asked how learned we were…'[9] The kinds of

4 H. Blackhouse, (ed), *The Song of Songs: Selections from the Sermons of St Bernard of Clairvaux* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 196.

5 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 68.

6 Tomlin, *The Power*, p. 140.

7 Romans 5:8 in H. Oswald, (ed), *Luther's Works* (St Louis: Concordia, 1972), p. 45 (italics original).

8 Romans 3:25, *Luther's Works*, p. 32.

9 T. Tappert, (Tr. & Ed.), *Pia Desideria by Philip Jacob Spener* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), p. 36.

dichotomies opened up by Pietism further deepened the fissure already opened up by Luther between an entirely extrinsic justification and a totally inward sanctification.

From 1727 a recognisably new form of Pietism began to emerge, whose leader, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60), actually came to reject the increasingly legalistic Halle Pietism that he had been brought up with. The group that gathered around the German Count became known as the Moravians, simply because most of their members had originally been part of the 'Hidden Seed' of Hussite Protestantism, which, before the outbreak of persecution, had dwelt mostly in Moravia in the present-day Czech Republic. Now, they were safe to practise their religion on Zinzendorf's estate in Saxony.

With the Moravians, the subjective dimension in the Christian life, already recovered by Halle Pietism, was no longer centred upon the new birth; now it was centred around the personal appropriation of the merits of Christ's death, an apparent *novum* introduced by Zinzendorf, utterly steeped as he was in Luther's theology of the cross. Because of the essentially subjective nature of Moravian spirituality, the use of the word 'blood' became more appropriate than 'cross', since 'blood', both symbolically speaking and biblically speaking, is the aspect of a sacrifice that can be most readily manipulated and applied personally to the worshipper. It is fluid and distributable.

The Moravian Brethren were thus encouraged to make the atoning work of Christ something morally and emotionally transformative. To appropriate this transformative power Zinzendorf's followers were encouraged to visualise the wounds of Jesus:

> Thus if you have serious thoughts about the Savior, conclude that the bleeding Savior stands before your hearts, that he is there in person, He longs to have you glance at His wounds.[10]

Yet this moral influence factor is also balanced by the Lutheran note of Christ's merit:

> …the bleeding Husband forms Himself in the innermost part of the soul. Then the heart stands full of Jesus, full of His wounds and His sores, full of the Merits of the Lamb.[11]

Related to this there emerges the idea of 'pleading the blood'. Here is a remarkably full exposition of the concept from Zinzendorf:

> …we must come to Him entirely natural, in the most wretched form in which we happen to find ourselves, pleading His blood, His faithfulness, and His merits, and reminding Him that we men are the reward of His suffering….[12]

To plead the blood, for Zinzendorf, was to surrender all attempts at the acquisition of merit before God on one's own account, to boldly approach God on the basis of Christ's merit and to remind God of one's status as blood-bought.

---

10 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures in Important Subjects in Religion Preached in Fetter Lane Chapel in London in the Year 1746*, Tr. & ed. Farell, G.W., (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1973), p. 67. (18 Sept 1746).

11 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures*, p. 94.

12 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures*, p. 101.

The wholesale use of references to the blood and wounds of Jesus soon became excessive, a trend which reached its peak during what became known as the 'Sifting Period', dating from 1743 to 1750. At this time, Zinzendorf had been absent for some time and the Herrnhaag community, a plant of the original Herrnhut, had become dominated by the vibrant spirituality of some of its younger members. These young people, striving for true intimacy with Jesus, took some of Zinzendorf's teachings to extremes. As a result, their terminology can seem to an outsider rather strange and perverse:

> Now rests my whole mind on
> In one nook of the Side-hole,
> And dreams of Blood alone:
> Sometimes it is as a wide Hall,
> Sometimes so close and Deep
> As if each Heart in it
> Alone did lie and sleep.[13]
>
> Lovely Side-hole, take in me:
> Let me ever be in Thee
> O Side-hole's Wound, My Heart and Soul,
> Does pant for thy so lovely Hole.[14]

4. The Wesleyan Way

John and Charles Wesley's first contact with the Moravians had been in 1737 on a voyage across the Atlantic. This encounter resulted in John Wesley becoming aware of his own lack of faith. Wesley soon became a close companion of Zinzendorf himself. The split between the two leaders came in 1741 when Wesley and Zinzendorf could not agree on the issue of sanctification. When pressed on the matter, it seems that Zinzendorf's view of the blood was, in spite of his devotional enthusiasm, strictly forensic and firmly Lutheran: 'All Christian Perfection is, Faith in the blood of Christ. Our whole Christian Perfection is imputed, not inherent.'[15]

It was, seemingly, only the emotional impact of the wounded Saviour revealed to faith that was morally transformative, not the Blood itself. Wesley saw the cleansing of the blood as an inward crisis event leading to a 'Clean Heart'.[16] Scripturally, Zinzendorf was thinking along the lines of Romans 3-5 and spoke the language of imputation, while Wesley was thinking along the lines of 1John 1:7 and spoke the language of cleansing. Both men appear to have been confuting current concepts of sanctification and justification. For Zinzendorf sanctification was an outward, imputed holiness, while Wesley's thinking on sanctification produced the opposite kind of hybrid: an instantaneous inward perfection. From here on in Evangelical devotion to the Blood, the two worlds of justification and sanctification remain apart. Few further attempts are made at bringing the two together.

The most notable feature of John Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* is, unsurprisingly, the total dominance of the cleansing motif. This is in large measure due to the fact that

13 *Moravian Hymnal* 1748 Part III, No.67.

14 *Hymnal* 1748, Part III, No.59.

15 The full conversation is available in English and Latin in J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* (London: SCM, 1992).

16 J. Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book Room, nd), pp. 23-27.

he takes 1John 1:7 as one of a number of proof texts for his doctrine of Christian perfection, claiming that the cleansing described is complete and final in this life:

> A Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin…For he sayeth not, The blood of Christ *will* cleanse (at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment), but it 'cleanseth,' at the present time, us living Christians "from all sin." And it is equally evident, that if any sin remain, we are not cleansed from all sin.[17]

Wesley held that a process of sanctification was begun in the heart at regeneration but that a second experience was needed to bring 'full salvation', or, 'entire sanctification'. This second blessing involved the cleansing away of all sin, followed by an influx of love towards God and man taking its place in the believing heart; hence, the frequent use of the epithet, 'perfect love', as a way of describing the experience. All failings from this point onwards were considered by Wesley to be unintentional. He preferred to call all subsequent sins, 'infirmities', which the atoning blood continually covered.

From the early 1740s onwards, John Wesley's attitude to the Moravians displayed much bitterness over the beliefs they held, such as their quietism, aspects of their blood and wounds theology, and their Luther-inspired antinomianism. Yet his attitude could also oscillate in the direction of an irresistible admiration for their spirituality. Charles Wesley, however, maintained a consistently charitable spirit towards them, even momentarily falling under the spell of their 'stillness' fad. His hymns also contain some overtly Moravian phraseology:

> Thy Offering still continues new,
> The vesture keeps its bloody hue,
> Thou stand'st the ever-Slaughtered Lamb
> Thy Priesthood still remains the same…[18]

Charles Wesley, like his brother, was especially interested in the theme of cleansing:

> Come, thou dear Lamb, for sinners slain,
> Bring in the cleansing flood:
> Apply, to wash out every stain,
> Thine efficacious blood.
> O let it sink into our soul
> Deep as the inbred sin;
> Make every wounded spirit whole,
> And every leper clean![19]

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, both Moravian and Wesleyan terminology seems to surface from time to time in hymnody outside of Wesleyanism. The tormented soul of William Cowper, for instance, clearly found great comfort in the idea of the cleansing power of the blood, using the language of superabundance to underline its supererogative power to deal with guilt in his *There is a Fountain*, quoted at the start of this paper.

So, the Wesleyan dimension brought something new to blood mysticism. Moravian blood mysticism was, in many ways, only a small advance on medieval passion mysticism. It simply added Luther's emphasis on the absolute merit of Christ's death. With

17 Wesley, *Plain Account*, pp.19-20.

18 C. Wesley cited in Davie, D., *Christian Verse* (Oxford: University Press, 1981), p. 159.

19 Quoted in Wesley, *Plain Account*, p. 114.

the Wesleys a new dimension is introduced that takes the believer beyond the realms of emotional response. Now, something actually happens somewhere within the psyche, a datable, crisis event called 'cleansing'.

5. The Highway of Holiness

The Holiness movement of the nineteenth century originated with American Methodism. During the years 1773-76, Wesleyan Methodism took firm hold for the first time in America in the state of Virginia by means of a significant revival.[20] By 1800, Methodism was a major denominational block and began tipping the theological scales of popular religion away from the Calvinism of the puritan settlers. By 1812, the Methodists were holding at least 400 camp meetings annually throughout the United States.[21] By mid-century, Methodism was the dominant religion of North America.

Dayton[22] has observed that the early preaching of the Methodists in America was inevitably 'salvation' orientated, the vast majority of people attending the camp meetings being unchurched. The new emphasis on Christian Perfection that took hold during the 1830s coincided with a change in the make up of Methodist churches from first generation to second generation Christians. People no longer needed to know how to be saved but how to become better Christians, a challenge made the more urgent by the advances of German liberalism, Deism, Unitarianism and material prosperity.

There was also a change in the style of spirituality, from a Calvinist style to an Arminian one. The Calvinist mindset of throwing oneself utterly upon the mercy of a sovereign and holy God was set to change dramatically as the century unfolded. This change involved the democratisation of Christianity—its reduction to the individual's response to the call of the gospel. In Calvinist Christianity, the blood was of great value in easing the sting of a stricken conscience before an Almighty God who, in the manner of Jonathan Edwards, holds sinners by a mere thread over the flames of Hell.[23] To the Calvinists, the blood thus propitiated an angry God. To the Arminians of the generation following, the blood cleansed the responsive and consecrated heart.

Phoebe Palmer, and her sister, Sarah Lankford, represented the first major thrust in the advance of Perfectionism within American Methodism. The 1830s saw the beginning of the 'Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness' held at the Palmers' home, soon to be augmented by the magazine, *Guide to Holiness*. Among the Presbyterians and Congregationalists an interest in Christian Perfection was being promoted by Charles Finney and Asa

20 V. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971, 1997), p. 9.

21 I. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), p. 183.

22 D. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1987), p. 65.

23 J. Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1992), p. 19.

Mahan at Oberlin. By the 1840s there was a flood of Perfectionist teaching throughout the Evangelical churches of North America which was of a piece with the aspirational, expansionist spirit of the young nation.

Palmer's experience of sanctification began with 'an enlarged appreciation of the Atonement'[24] in the light of her own inability to be holy. From this experience, as well as from the theology of a certain Adam Clarke, came her 'altar theology'. The essence of this theology was an adaptation of Wesley's system that made the experience of the second blessing more readily accessible via a threefold process of consecration, faith and testimony.[25] If people followed these steps, they could assure themselves that they possessed this blessing, regardless of any evidence to the contrary. The agony and soul-searching was thus removed from the process and holiness was now a blessing that was simply there for the taking. The immediacy of the experience is celebrated in her hymn, *The Cleansing Wave*:

Oh, now I see the cleansing wave,
The fountain deep and wide!
Jesus, my Lord, mighty to save,
Points to His wounded side.

The cleansing stream I see, I see!
I plunge, and oh, it cleanseth me!
Oh, praise the Lord: it cleanseth me;
It cleanseth me, yes, it cleanseth me.

I see the new creation rise;
I hear the speaking blood!
It speaks polluted nature dies!
Sinks 'neath the cleansing flood.

Meanwhile, in Britain the shocking truth was revealed in the 1851 census that no more than half of the population went to church on a Sunday. More recent scholarship has surmised that 1851 in fact represented the most significant peak in church attendance in Britain since Norman times and was never to be repeated.[26] Later, a variety of factors contributed to the widely recognized Victorian crisis of faith so that as early as 1864, Lord Shaftsbury was lamenting that the 'Protestant feeling' of the nation was not what it was.[27] The evidence suggests that overall church attendance was in more or less continuous decline from 1851 onwards. For reasons that are still far from certain, America would weather the secularising storm that gathered with the turn of the century, while Britain would never recover from the steady decline in church attendance that went on to empty its churches and chapels in the twentieth century.

Faced with widespread questioning of Christian explanations for the universe, all Christians faced a choice. Either they could accommodate themselves to the prevailing cultural and intellectual mood, which rejected the perceived barbarism of traditional ideas of the atonement, or they could radicalise their Christianity. This radicalisation process, well documented as a reaction to secularisation, spawned a

24 Phoebe Palmer's diary of July 27, 1837.

25 C. White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), p. 136.

26 R. Gill, *The 'Empty' Church Revisited* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 212.

27 D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), p. 141.

number of new dimensions to the holiness movement, some more sectarian than others. Two of them are noteworthy: the Salvation Army and the Keswick Conventions. To these we now turn.

The theology of William and Catherine Booth was profoundly influenced by Phoebe Palmer's altar theology. Besides her, the preaching of James Caughey, another American holiness speaker, had a powerful impact on William during his youth. The Booths went on to extend their irradicationist theology of Christian Perfection into the social sphere, engaging in a widening campaign against all the social evils of working class Britain. As opposition mounted against the Booths and their followers, this holiness crusade was seen increasingly as a spiritual warfare. A newspaper cutting written for the Salvation Army's centenary in 1965 puts it aptly: 'To the Booths, and especially to Catherine Booth, the Devil was a personal opponent and as real as one's next door neighbour.'[28]

In the face of this enemy, the Booths were utterly defiant and completely confident of the power of Christ to defeat sin and Satan. And, more particularly, this strong faith was faith in the power of Christ's blood. As the Christian Mission took on the name of the Salvation Army, and William Booth took the title of general, the cleansing of the blood would be coupled with his belief in baptism in the Spirit to produce the now famous piece of branding: Blood and Fire. Through Blood and Fire all the forces of 'Darkest England' would be overcome.

The *Salvation Army Song Book*[29] is the most blood mystical of all the holiness hymnals. The 1930 edition contains 1,733 songs. In all, there are a total of 454 references to the blood of Christ, which means that almost half of all the songs containing at least one reference to the blood. Not only does the word Blood always receive capitalisation, but all adjectives associated with it do too: Precious, Flood, Fountain and so on. Of the total references to Christ's Blood, 42 per cent (191) express the idea of cleansing and washing.

In order to aid the worshippers as they appropriate this cleansing, every imaginable liquid image is employed. The worshipper comes to the Fountain where he or she plunges beneath the Precious Blood, beneath that 'cleansing Flood', while the hand 'takes hold of Jesus'. Alternatively, they may prefer to 'dip' or to fling themselves at the cross '…for the Blood is flowing there'. All sorrows and doubts are swept away in the River that is 'streaming' and 'flowing'. It is a 'crimson tide', a 'Blood-current'. It is construed either as flowing from the cross, flowing or gushing from the riven side of Jesus, or flowing from the throne of God. Either way, it is a 'Purple Flood', a 'sin-cleansing wave', a 'cleansing Fountain' in which garments may be washed, sin destroyed, guilt removed and souls healed as the Precious Blood is applied. That blood may now 'Flood and cleanse' the heart itself. In spite of

28 'History of the Salvation Army', *Sunday Telegraph* (30 May 1965), cutting, Nottingham City Archives.

29 *Salvation Army Song Book*, (London: Salvatinist Publishing and Supplies, 1930).

their militarism, the Salvationists seldom referred to the blood as bringing victory or protection. Rather, they saw its power to cleanse or destroy sin as being, in itself, the victory they sought.

The second most common theme is way down the league. It is redemption. Under this heading I include all references to being redeemed, bought, purchased, set free and rescued. These make up a mere 7.2 per cent of the total (33 occurrences). The fact of the Master's ownership rights as purchaser of the redeemed is given a dual function. Firstly, believers owe it to Jesus to live their whole lives in consecrated service to him. The singer has been claimed by 'His life's Blood' to be 'a jewel in His sight'. Secondly, the lost are already purchased by Jesus' blood and must be claimed for him. These 'brands' plucked from the fire must be 'quenched in Jesus' Blood'.

Next in line, and perhaps unsurprisingly for Salvationists, is the theme of being 'saved', or receiving 'Full Salvation' through the Blood. Of the total, these make up seven per cent (32 occurrences). Of note is the appeal to drunkards and other dedicated sinners in many of these hymns. When addressing them, much is made of the theme of guilt, a word that is otherwise quite rare in hymnbooks of the period. The blood is 'spilt' for 'guilt'. Seemingly no effort is made to tone down the blood language when singing to sinners. Only when it comes to the hymns for young people is the word 'blood' edited out.

In contrast to the Salvationists, the middle classes who attended the Keswick Conventions were particularly keen to distance themselves from fanatical Perfectionist teaching. Yet in practice, there was little difference between their view of holiness and that of the Wesleyans. They certainly shared with the Wesleyans a belief in sanctification as a sudden, crisis experience.

In Keswick's *Hymns of Consecration and Faith*[30] an average of one in every three hymns refers to the noun 'blood' in connection with the death of Christ. 51 per cent of these references refer directly to the 'cleansing' and 'washing' efficacy of the blood:

> Trusting, trusting every moment;
> Feeling now the blood applied;
> Lying in the cleansing fountain,
> Dwelling in my Saviour's side.

Despite the allegedly non-Wesleyan nature of the Keswick view of holiness, the uses to which the blood is put are similar to Wesley's *Plain Account*. 54 per cent of Wesley's references to the blood in the *Plain Account* are about cleansing. Second to this, 27 per cent are about redemption. The *Hymns* shares these two priorities, with cleansing at 51 per cent and redemption at 13 per cent.

Perhaps most notable of all the Keswick speakers for his delight in the blood of Jesus is Andrew Murray (1828-1917). Being a Dutch Reformed minister from South African, he was Calvinist in his theology but appears to have reached similar conclusions to Keswick about cleansing, faith and holiness. He insisted that before opening oneself to the Spirit in order to acquire holiness by faith, the blood

30 Mrs Evan Hopkins, (ed) *Hymns of Consecration and Faith* 2nd Ed. (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, nd).

must be applied to cleanse the heart.[31] Likewise, when the Spirit comes, he points back to the blood and further applies its benefits to the heart,[32] so that the blood brings the Spirit, and the Spirit brings the blood: 'We must once again notice the two sides of this truth: the blood exercises its full power through the Spirit, and the Spirit manifests His full power through the blood.'[33]

Partly because of this union of Blood and Spirit, both susceptible of the 'liquid' terminology of washing, flowing and flooding, the blood was understood by Murray to be alive, fresh and flowing. Primarily, however, the power of the blood as a living entity lay in the fact that it was shed by a High Priest who now lives by the power of an endless life. His blood, now offered in heaven, is still fresh and has eternal efficacy: 'Our Lord is a High Priest "in the power of an endless life," and thus the cleansing power of the blood of the Son of God is unceasingly conveyed to us.'[34]

Many other preachers, on both sides of the Atlantic, some within and some outside the holiness tradition, explored these themes with great thoroughness. An intriguing variety of metaphors are used. F.B.Meyer speaks of Christ's disc-like red blood corpuscles as the coinage by which he purchased the redeemed.[35] D.L.Moody delighted to 'honour' the blood. When preaching about the Passover night, the reason he gave for the Israelites being commanded to daub blood only on the lintel and doorposts and not on the threshold is that God 'would not have them trample on the blood'.[36]

Outside of the holiness movement, the blood was highly valued among all Evangelicals, non-holiness groups tending towards a somewhat polemical usage of it. Against the tide of liberal scholarship, Charles Spurgeon declared that he would rather have his tongue cut out than ever agree to stop preaching about the blood.[37] Preaching the once-for-all atoning blood was a way of opposing the perceived watering-down of the gospel that the liberals had brought with their penchant for the life and teachings of Jesus; it was also a way of countering the perceived replacement of the gospel that the revival in Catholic sacramentalism had brought in the wake of the Oxford movement. In the non-holiness context, therefore, the blood often served as an identity marker, identifying Evangelicals as anti-liberal and anti-ritualist.

6. Revival Through the Blood

Turning now to the Welsh Revival, numerous examples of blood mysticism in Evan Roberts survive from his letters and diaries. Ideas of power, of victory and of protection begin to take

31 A. Murray, *The Power of the Blood of Jesus* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1993), p. 93.

32 A. Murray, *The Blood of the Cross* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1981), p. 16.

33 Murray, *The Blood*, p. 16.

34 Murray, *The Blood*, p. 131.

35 F.B. Meyer, *From Calvary to Pentecost* (London: Marshall Brothers, nd), p. 13.

36 D.L. Moody, *Where Art Thou? And Other Addresses* (London: Morgan & Scott, nd), p. 103.

37 C.H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle* Vol.32, 1886, 129.

a central position: 'When I heard that the devil or the evil spirit attacked him…I could not but exclaim "O Lord, put him under the sign of the blood".'[38]

The blood is no longer a source of cleansing so much as a source of confidence. Elsewhere in his diary he records:

> Jesus' blood exalts the feeble,
> Makes their victory complete;
> Jesus' blood brings down the mighty,
> Lays them humble at His feet.
> Heavenly breezes!
> Breathe on me from Calvary.[39]

There was another, much more emotive dimension to Welsh Revival blood mysticism, however. The favourite hymn of the Welsh Revival, known as the love song of the Revival, was *Here is Love*. This was often sung solo by Anne Davies who accompanied Roberts on his missions.[40]

> Here is love, vast as the ocean,
> Loving-kindness as the flood,
> When the Prince of Life, our ransom,
> Shed for us His precious blood…

The effectiveness of these hymns was well known: 'The most effective hymns of the present Revival are in the key either of the sufferings of Jesus in the Garden or on Calvary, or of the gracious wonder of His atoning love…'[41]

Eifion Evans draws attention to the type of hymns that were sung as evidence that the Welsh Revival was not as influenced by Keswick as has often been claimed.[42] Those affected sang songs about 'redemption and assurance', drawing from the eighteenth century Calvinistic Methodism of Daniel Rowland and William Williams, not the hymns of 'holiness and consecration' that were sung at Keswick.[43] Those impacted saw themselves as being in a direct lineage with previous Welsh revivals, not 'a novel English holiness movement'.[44] Even those who attended the Welsh Keswick at Llandrindodd Wells did not swallow Keswick teaching without adding the Welsh emphasis: 'Now at Llandrindod Wells the doctrines of Rowland and Keswick have come together. The Cross and the Holy Spirit; Calvary and Pentecost…'[45]

Clearly Keswick's crucicentrism was not quite cross-centred enough for the Welsh. It could be the strong note of assurance with which the Welsh sung and preached the cross that allowed a *Christus Victor* theme to emerge to the extent that it did. In the revival, not only were worshippers being moved to tears by the thought of Christ sweating blood at Gethsemane, a time-honoured theme from previous Welsh revivals, they were also standing up and claiming to have partaken of

38 Letter to David Lloyd, 12 March 1906.

39 Hymn by William Williams (1717-91) in B. Jones, *Voices from the Welsh Revival 1904-1905* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1995), pp. 117-8.

40 K. Adams & E. Jones, *A Pictorial History of Revival: the Outbreak of the 1904 Welsh Awakening* (Farnham: CWR, 2004), p. 96.

41 Article entitled 'The Heart of the Revival' in The British Weekly (2 Feb 1905) in E. Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1969), p. 167.

42 Evans, *1904*, p. 168.

43 Evans, *1904*, p. 170.

44 Evans, *1904*, p. 170.

45 Sermon by Rev Thomas Phillips at the Welsh Keswick of 1912: B. Jones, *The Spiritual History of Keswick in Wales 1903-1983* (Cwmbran: Christian Literature Press, 1989), p. 23.

a 'victory' through the blood, a theme until now only implicit within the Welsh tradition, (and surprisingly absent from the Salvation Army tradition). Yet it is this theme of victory that soon becomes dominant in twentieth century blood mysticism.

7. 'There's Power in the Blood.'

The events of April 1906 in Los Angeles under the leadership of the one-eyed Afro-American, William J. Seymour, are still considered by most to be the beginnings of worldwide Pentecostalism. An emphasis on the blood at his Azusa Street mission is indicated in what has now become the most famous quotation from the ministry of that church: 'The color line has been washed away in the blood.'[46] Frank Bartleman related how '…the "blood songs" were very popular' in the meetings[47] and reflected that 'The Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus, and His precious blood. As He is exalted and faithfully preached, God is restoring the old time power.'[48] A.S. Worrell could write, 'The blood of Jesus is exalted in these meetings as I have rarely known elsewhere.'[49]

This impression is supported by even a cursory reading of the earliest issues of *The Apostolic Faith*, a magazine that, having begun in September 1906, acquired a worldwide readership of over 50,000 by 1909. During the first year there are an average of 25 references to the blood of Jesus per issue, with many articles devoted entirely to the subject of the atonement. A similar picture emerges two years later from the other side of the Atlantic with the first issues of Alexander Boddy's *Confidence* Magazine, which, together with his annual Whitsuntide Conference, became the shop window for the early Pentecostal movement in Britain. From the first issue in April 1908 until the March of the following year, *Confidence* magazine, a monthly of similar length to the *Apostolic Faith*, can boast an average of 26.5 references to the blood of Jesus per issue.

The distinguishing mark of Azusa Street blood mysticism is the recurring imperative to stay 'under', or 'covered by' the blood. This terminology may have been borrowed from the Welsh Revival; Frank Bartleman having himself had close contact with it. References to being covered by or being under the blood comprise 14 per cent of the total in *The Apostolic Faith*, second only to the cleansing theme, which stands at 21 per cent: 'As long as we live under the Blood we will have life and be preserved…'[50]

Another distinguishing mark, besides the 'covering' theme, and one that would come to dominate Pentecostal blood mysticism, is the victory theme: 'The blood of Jesus prevails against every force and power of the enemy. Glory to God.'[51] The number of times the blood is described as the means of victory over Satan and his

46 F. Bartleman, *Azusa Street: the Roots of Modern-day Pentecost* (Plainfield: Bridge Publishing, 1980), p. xviii.

47 Bartleman, *Azusa*, p. 57.

48 Bartleman, *Azusa*, p. 156.

49 Bartleman, *Azusa*, p. 86.

50 *Apostolic Faith* 1:6 (Feb-Mar 1907), p. 47.

51 *Apostolic Faith* 1:4 (Dec 1906), p. 3.

works is considerable, amounting to 11 per cent of the total in the *Apostolic Faith* and is greater still in Confidence Magazine, amounting to some 38 per cent.

There seems to have been a real fear amongst many that a counterfeit miracle might take place when they were seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the sign of tongues. Seymour is more straight-talking than the English and, inspired by Luke 11:9-13, expresses clearly and bluntly the fear that many felt, offering the reassurance that the Devil cannot get past the blood: 'Never let the hosts of hell make you believe that while you live under the blood, honouring the blood, and pleading through the blood for blessings from the throne, that God will let Satan get through the blood, and put a serpent into you.'[52]

There was a fear among the Sunderland Pentecostals that was even greater than that seen at Azusa Street that they would be overtaken by a deceptive demonic power while seeking the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the gift of tongues. Failing that, the Devil might do all he can to obstruct the seeker from receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit by means of accusations launched at the conscience. Alexander Boddy offers his advice: 'Satan will come to accuse, but steadfastly point him to the blood of that victorious life on high.'[53]

In the many testimonies published in *Confidence*, the breakthrough comes as a result of the seeker saying out loud such phrases as 'The precious Blood of Jesus', or simply, 'Blood! Blood! Blood!' It is seldom clear exactly what the seekers are experiencing that they are looking to the blood to overcome. The testimony of a certain John Martin of Kilsyth, Scotland, gives more detail than most: 'I found I had spiritual enemies hindering my getting through. I felt them. They were like an atmosphere in front of me. I BEGAN TO PLEAD THE BLOOD. I assured myself and Satan that it was the all-atoning Blood, and that Jesus was both Lord and Christ.'[54]

Mr Martin reports that, within a few moments of this encounter, which all took place while lying flat on his back in his pastor's kitchen, he was swept '…in to the sea of Pentecostal Fulness with its unmistakable seal'. The 'unmistakable seal' was, of course, the gift of tongues.

This type of pleading the blood is markedly different from that which Zinzendorf would have commended or which Charles Wesley might have invoked in his hymns. For them, pleading the blood was theocentric. You appeal to the merits of the sacrifice of Christ as you approach God in his holiness. For the Pentecostals, pleading the blood was intended for Satan's ears rather than God's.

Pleading the blood in this latter form has, of course, survived right up to the present day. My African students say that their preachers will routinely plead the protection of the blood of Jesus over a meeting before they begin. Benny Hinn recommends simi-

52 *Apostolic Faith* 1:4 (Dec 1906), p. 37.

53 A. Boddy, 'The Way to Your "Pentecost"', *Confidence* 1:5 (Aug 1908), p. 24.

54 Testimony from John Martin: *Confidence* 1:1 (Apr 1908), pp. 12-13.

lar practices. For him, this takes the form of a simple daily prayer for his family: 'Lord, cover Suzanne, Jessica, Natasha, Joshua and Eleasha with Your blood.'[55] He has written in detail about the subject, offering the story of the Passover as his chief biblical precedent.[56] Joyce Meyer has also taught extensively on this subject.[57]

As for the other dimensions to blood mysticism, it appears that with the rapid waning of emphasis on sanctification as a distinct crisis experience within most holiness groups, the blood became somewhat obsolete. Sanctity no longer holds the attraction it once did and the obsession with crimson tides and cleansing floods has disappeared with it. Instead, with the advent of the post World War II healing evangelists, the promise of power, of new anointings, and of miracles proved to be the attraction that filled the stadiums. Only in so far as the blood could serve the interests of this power hunger did it retain a function in popular spirituality. Yet the underlying dynamic was unchanged: the need to legitimate one's faith, the need to prove its reality in a hostile world. For nineteenth century holiness adherents, mastering sin proved the authenticity of the Christian message. For twentieth century Pentecostals and charismatics, it was mastering the forces of nature or the powers of darkness that vindicated their beliefs. In this way, the blood has become part of the empowerment package that is perhaps the main attraction of Pentecostalism today.

Conclusion

I have here attempted to trace a scarlet thread of blood mysticism that originated in the medieval mystics that were Luther's spiritual mentors. Through Lutheran Pietism the line is traceable to Zinzendorf and his followers and then on to the Wesleys, the holiness movement and the Pentecostals. In broad terms, there are three distinct phases of development.

The first phase is that embodied by the Moravians. It is the devotional phase, and its dominating note is that of personal, heartfelt response to the sufferings and death of Christ. At the dawn of the Enlightenment, at the start of the modern era, the Moravians drank deeply from a pre-modern well. In an age of growing infidelity towards religion, the blood of Christ was calling the Moravians to give themselves utterly to him who gave his life for them. The spirituality of the medieval mystics was now transfigured within a profoundly Lutheran and non-sacerdotal community. God now infused the mental image of the crucified Christ with his Real Presence rather than the physical elements of the Eucharist. Faith in a visualised blood and wounds would melt the heart and inspire repentance. The desired attitude of childlike surrender and abdication to all that the blood had achieved would run deep into the religious psychology of the holiness and Pentecostal movements of

55 B. Hinn, *Power in the Blood: the Biblical Significance of the Blood from Genesis to Jesus to the Modern Believer* (Lake Mary: Creation House, 1993), p. 75.

56 Hinn, *Power in the Blood*, passim.

57 E.g. J. Meyer, *The Word, The Name, The Blood* (Lebanon: Time Warner, 2003), pp. 115-138.

the following two centuries.

The second phase begins with the Wesleys. Charles provides the devotional language while John supplies the theological framework. Thanks to them, the great blood mystical theme bequeathed to a huge body of nineteenth century devotion is that of holiness through the blood. The role of the blood in personal holiness is twofold. First and foremost, it cleanses the heart, Wesleyans would say permanently, from 'inbred' sin. Non-Wesleyans held to a fairly similar initial crisis experience but placed more emphasis on the blood's effectiveness at removing the guiltiness of ongoing sins before God once these were acknowledged. Secondly, it purchases men for God. To be bought at such a price is, as for the Moravians, a devotional summons to a higher Christian life. All of this thrived in the context of a wider church that was becoming 'worldly' and a society at large that was beginning to reject the very idea of religious belief.

The third phase begins insipiently during the Welsh Revival, but is more clearly seen at Azusa Street, and finally reaches almost psychotic levels in early English Pentecostalism. It is the demonological phase. At its worst, it is the blood mysticism of spiritual paranoia; it is the kind of belief that develops in the breasts of those who feel themselves to be inhabiting a world torn between God and Satan, and praying through a heaven clouded with demons. At its best it arms the believer with the confidence to repel the accuser as he or she seeks earnestly after God. This demonological element appears to have survived while the other chapters in our story have receded somewhat into the background.

Alan Stibbs, in his masterful study of the word 'blood' in Scripture, concluded his monograph with the insight that blood is: '…a sign of life either given or taken in death. Such giving or taking of life is in this world the extreme, both of gift or price and of crime or penalty. Man knows no greater.'[58]

So the phrase, 'the blood of Christ' is by nature susceptible of hyperbolic usage. It is by nature extreme language. No greater gift and no higher price is possible; and no worse a crime or exacting a penalty is conceivable than all that is involved in the death of the Son of God at the hands of sinners on behalf of sinners. Desperate times call for desperate measures and it is in precisely those times when sincere believers feel desperate that their routine cross-centredness erupts into a fountain of blood mysticism. These peaks of blood mysticism are thus an extension of Evangelicalism's routine crucicentrism recruited in the cause of some specific fight: the fight against apostasy or against inbred sin or against demons. In a world increasingly seething with satanic anti-Christian beliefs, nothing, it was hoped, could stand against the all-cleansing, all-conquering Blood, the very heart of Evangelical faith.

The blood mysticism of Evangelicalism's past has much to offer. There is truth in the fact that the blood of Christ is a stimulus for us to give ourselves to him who gave himself for us. There is

58 A. Stibbs, *The Meaning of the Word 'Blood' in Scripture* (Tyndale Press, 1948), p. 33.

truth in making the merits of Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice our final appeal as we come before a holy and awesome God. There is truth in the idea of the power of that sacrifice to fully cleanse and profoundly relieve the stricken conscience, preventing us from seeking harmful alternative ways to medicate the pain of guilt.

There is truth in the notion that we are bought at the price of Christ's blood and we are not our own; truth alike in the thought that the masses of the as yet unreconciled to God are already bought and paid for by him. Truth there is in the appeal to the justifying blood as our mightiest weapon against the accusations of Satan.

The error lies only in taking just one of these concepts and peddling it to the exclusion of all the others. For here there are vast spiritual riches from the full length and breadth of our Evangelical heritage that any Christian may utilise and enjoy in the pursuit of a 'closer walk' with God.