

Fundamentalists and the “Incorruptible” Blood of Christ (2)

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Its Historical Lineage

Those who deny the novel blood dogma of Fundamentalism are accused of heresy. But can such a serious charge be substantiated? Heresy is, by definition, an aberration in doctrine from the historic creeds of the church. However, the creeds breathe not one word in favour of this new dogma. Indeed, it is ironic that many heretical groups past and present hold views related to the Fundamentalist blood doctrine. We shall consider eight such movements in historical order.

Orthodox Christianity has always taught that Jesus Christ is fully and eternally God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and that in the incarnation the eternal Word “was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). “Made flesh” means that the Lord Jesus assumed to Himself a real human nature “with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof” (*Westminster Confession* 8:2). The early church was plagued by various heretical groups, who denied either Christ’s divinity or His humanity or the right relationship between the two natures. The Fundamentalists’ dogma of the blood of Christ is a form of these heresies.

1. Gnosticism

The Gnostics were a mystical group who claimed salvation by a special knowledge (Greek: *gnosis*). Among their many heresies, they taught that matter was sinful and that therefore Christ could not have assumed a material body. It is surely a form of Gnosticism to teach that physical blood is sinful and therefore Christ did not have real, human blood. The Apostle John warns against Gnosticism in his epistles,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know we the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is

come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (I John 4:1-3).

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (II John 7).

Thus, any doctrine which denies Christ’s *complete* human nature (because His blood is divine or divine and human) is of antichrist and his spirit.

2. Docetism

The Docetists taught that the human nature of Christ was an illusion, that Christ only *seemed* to be human. Modern Fundamentalists teach a form of Docetism because Christ only seemed to have human blood, for they claim that it was divine blood or divine and human blood or incorruptible and indestructible blood.

3. Apollinarianism

Apollinarianism denies the completeness of Christ’s humanity. Apollinarius (c.310-c.390) maintained that Christ had a human body and a human soul but not a human spirit or rational mind (Greek: *nous*). He taught that Christ’s divine nature (the divine Logos) took the place of His rational human spirit (*nous*). The blood theorists (like the Apollinarians) deny part of the human nature of Christ: the former deny that His blood is truly human; the latter denied that His spirit or mind was human.

4. Eutychianism

Eutychianism is the view that Christ’s two natures were *mixed* together to form one nature (Monophysitism). The Fundamentalists teach a form of Eutychianism, because they attribute divine characteristics to the human blood of Christ, so that His blood is neither truly human nor divine but both. Hence Hymers’ outrageous statement that the blood of Christ is “both human and divine.”

That great church father, Athanasius, rightly expressed the importance of a true Christology: “What He did not assume, He could not redeem.” If Christ did not have fully human blood, He could not redeem every part of us, and if He did not redeem every part of us, then He redeemed no part of

us. Therefore, we are not redeemed at all! Such is the logical outworking of the Fundamentalist blood doctrine.

The orthodox view of the true humanity of Christ is that He assumed to Himself at the incarnation a real, complete, sinless and weakened human nature. Herman Hoeksema presents the biblical doctrine:

A real man is one who partakes of our human nature, soul and body. Christ must be real man, that is, he must not assume a temporary appearance of a human being, for then he is not related to us. He must not come in a specially created human nature, for then he stands outside the scope of our race. He must be of us. He must subsist in the very human nature that was created in the beginning ... Even though he was conceived without the will of man and born of a virgin, his was not a strange or specially created human nature: but he took upon him our flesh and blood. He was organically connected with us. As to this human nature, he did not come from without, but was brought forth by us. He did not stand next to men, but among them, and was of them. He partook of the flesh and blood of the children. He was flesh or our flesh, blood of our blood, bone of our bone.¹

To ascribe divinity to the blood of the Lord Jesus is a mixing of the two natures of Christ, something condemned in the early councils of the church. The *Chalcedonian Creed* (451) affirms that Christ is

to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one subsistence.

To state, as Hymers, supposedly representing all “credible Fundamentalists,” that the blood of Christ is both human and divine or to claim, as Paisley, that Christ’s blood is divine and not human, is to confuse the two natures of the Lord Jesus Christ and to fail to preserve the property of each nature. This is Christological heresy contrary to the early creeds.

¹*Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: RFP, 2005), vol. 1, pp. 499, 505.

5. Romanism

The subject of the blood of Christ was hotly debated in the fifteenth century. The question was asked, “Did the blood shed by the Saviour during His passion remain united to the eternal Word?” This led to a debate between the Dominicans and the Franciscans in the presence of Pope Pius II (1458-1464). The Dominicans held that the blood of Christ was an essential part of His sacred humanity and as such could never be detached from the divine Logos. The Franciscans argued that Christ’s blood was only concomitant with His sacred humanity, that is, it existed with it but was not an essential part. Although Pope Pius II did not decide one way or the other, the trend of Roman Catholic theological thought, according to the on-line Catholic Encyclopedia, is in favour of the Dominican teaching. Accordingly, Rome teaches that the blood shed by Christ during His passion was “reunited to the body of Christ at the Resurrection, with the possible exception of a few particles which instantly lost their union to the Word and became holy relics to be venerated but not adored.”² Apart from “the possible exception of a few particles” of Christ’s blood in relics, this is almost identical to what many Free Presbyterian ministers, such as Revs. Greer, Cairns and Martin teach.

Rome teaches that “viewed as a part of the Sacred Humanity hypostatically united to the Word, the Precious Blood deserves latreutical worship or adoration.”³ This is an integral part of Rome’s idolatry, where she allocates different levels of adoration to various persons and objects. According to the above classification, the blood of Christ is to be adored with *latria*, which is why Romanists worship the bread and wine (which they believe are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ) in the Mass. Other objects of devotion, such as relics, receive *dulia* (supposedly a lower level of worship) not *latria*.

The Reformed faith condemns such idolatry. Thus Calvin dismisses such distinctions as an “inept” and “entirely worthless.”⁴ There really is no difference between religious adoration, veneration or worship. They all amount to the same thing.⁵

²<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12372c.htm>

³<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12372c.htm>

⁴John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (USA & GB: The Westminster Press and S. C. M. Press, 1960), vol. 1, p. 118 (1.12.2).

⁵Cf. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 3:8).

Furthermore, Rome has among her many idolatries a special devotion to the blood of Christ. “Confraternities which made it their special object to venerate the Blood of Christ first arose in Spain,” states the on-line Catholic Encyclopedia.⁶ In the Romish calendar, the month of July is dedicated to the honour of Christ’s blood. On 30 June, 1960, Pope John XXIII addressed a gathering of devotees on the eve of “The Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s Most Precious Blood” in these words:

Following our predecessors’ example we have taken further steps to promote the devotion to the Precious Blood of the unblemished Lamb, Jesus Christ. We have approved the Litany of the Precious Blood drawn up by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and through special indulgences have encouraged its public and private recitation throughout the Catholic world.⁷

On 1 July, 2000, Pope John Paul II, addressing the “Catholic associations devoted to the Most Precious Blood,” exhorted them to think on the “mystery of the Blood of Christ.”⁸

Jesuit John A. Hardon, addressing a conference on the “Precious Blood of Christ” (1987), speaks of the blood in these terms:

God took on a human nature so that in that human nature He could die. In order to die, the soul had to separate from the body. But for the body to have the soul separate, the body itself had to be deprived of His Blood ... that draining of the human body of His blood was the only way that Christ, sinless Son of God and Son of Mary that He was, the only way that He could die ... Why does Peter identify the Blood of the Lamb of God as “Precious?” Well, it is surely Precious because it is the Blood of no human being. It is the Blood of the living God who took on human nature, capable of shedding His Blood. Why was the Blood of Christ Precious? Because it

⁶<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12373b.htm>. A confraternity is defined as “a voluntary association of the faithful, established and guided by competent ecclesiastical authority for the promotion of special works of Christian charity or piety” (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04223a.htm>).

⁷http://www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=1157

⁸<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pope0264dr.htm>

is the Blood of God who took on human nature in order to be able to suffer and to bleed and, let us add, in order to bleed to death. Why Precious? Because it is the Blood of the living God.⁹

Those words would be quite acceptable in many a Fundamentalist pulpit. But Hardon is mistaken. Christ did not die by having the blood “drained” from His body. There was still blood in His body after His death (John 19:34). Christ died by an act of His will (John 10:17-18) not from blood-loss. When He has suffered in body and soul the wrath of God due to God’s elect, He gave up the ghost (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30).¹⁰

Hardon laments that the modern church has neglected devotion to the Blood. He writes,

I really believe that one of the symptoms of modern society (and I would even include, sadly, modern Catholic society) one of the symptoms of a growing, gnawing secularism is the lessening and the weakening of devotion to the Precious Blood ... Suppose I picked a thousand Catholics at random, I mean, believing, Churchgoing Catholics and would ask them: What litanies has the Church approved for the universal recitation by the faithful? I honestly doubt if very many out of a thousand would know that one of those litanies is the Litany of the Precious Blood.¹¹

⁹http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Christology/Christology_013.htm

¹⁰Hardon disagrees with particular redemption, for he teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: “The Precious Blood of Jesus obviously belongs to all men inasmuch as for all men without exception it was poured out on Calvary” (http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Christology/Christology_013.htm); the capitalisation of the pronoun “It,” referring to Christ’s blood, is Hardon’s). Rome teaches a universal, inefficacious atonement: “The Church following the apostles, teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: ‘There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [Dublin: Veritas, 1995], p. 137 [Paragraph 605]). The Reformed creeds, following the Word of God, teach that Christ died for His elect church only (cf. John 10:11, 26; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25; Isa. 53:8, 11), not merely making salvation possible for those who of their free will accept it, but actually securing salvation for as many as were given Him of the Father. Universal redemption is therefore Romish, not Reformed, doctrine.

¹¹http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Christology/Christology_013.htm

The Litany of the Precious Blood, which is particularly to be recited during the month of July, the month dedicated to the adoration of Christ's blood, contains lines such as these:

Blood of Christ, stream of mercy,
Blood of Christ, victor over demons,
Blood of Christ, courage of martyrs,
Blood of Christ, strength of confessors,
Blood of Christ, bringing forth virgins,
Blood of Christ, help of those in peril,
Blood of Christ, relief of the burdened,
Blood of Christ, solace in sorrow,
Blood of Christ, hope of the penitent,
Blood of Christ, consolation of the dying,
Blood of Christ, peace and tenderness of hearts,
Blood of Christ, pledge of eternal life,
Blood of Christ, freeing souls from purgatory,¹²
Blood of Christ, most worthy of all glory and honour.¹³

While Fundamentalists would balk at the idea of worshipping the blood (although language such as “make much of the blood,” “exalt the blood,” etc., comes dangerously close) and would rightly reject unscriptural notions such as purgatory, it is noteworthy that they too lament the modern lack of emphasis and devotion to the Blood. They are the ones who complain about the so-called “bloodless” pulpits and the “bloodless” hymns of modern Evangelicalism.¹⁴

6. Anabaptism

The Anabaptists comprised a number of radical, heretical sects which sprung up like toadstools at the time of the Reformation. The reformers

¹²“Roman Catholic mysticism,” states Klaas Schilder, “conjured angels into existence who caught up the blood of Christ in vessels as it flowed from His side, in order to pour it over all souls later, even over those in purgatory” (*Christ In His Suffering*, trans. Henry Zylstra [Grand Rapids: Baker, repr. 1979], p. 368).

¹³http://catholicyouth.freeservers.com/litanies/precious_blood1.htm

¹⁴We insist that the doctrine of the powerful, efficacious, particular atonement must be faithfully proclaimed, and the heresy of universal redemption is opposed (*Canons of Dordt II*), and we do not sing uninspired “hymns” (“bloodless” or otherwise) as there is no scriptural warrant for doing so; we sing the God-breathed Psalms (Ps. 105:2; II Tim. 3:16).

fought for the Word of God and laboured for the Reformation of Christ's church on two fronts: against Rome and against the Anabaptists. Some of the Anabaptists were guilty of fomenting rebellion.¹⁵ Mainly for this reason they were persecuted by the state. Some of the more radical Anabaptists denied the Trinity and claimed direct extra-biblical revelation from God, claiming to have the Spirit.¹⁶ Thus many of them are rightly regarded as precursors of the Charismatics. The reformers considered them to be heretics.¹⁷ The *Belgic Confession* specifically condemns the errors of the Anabaptists in several places.¹⁸

For example, *Belgic Confession* 18 opposes an Anabaptist heresy of particular relevance to the Fundamentalist's blood dogma:

we confess in opposition to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother, that Christ is become partaker of the flesh and blood of the children.

Article 18 was written specifically to refute a leading Anabaptist, Menno Simons (1496-1561), who taught the idea of "celestial flesh." According to an article by Cky. J. Carrigan, Menno derived this view from Melchior Hoffmann (1495-1543) and Casper Schwenckfeld (1490-1561). He quotes Menno:

¹⁵For example, the Münster Rebellion (1534) was an attempt by radical Anabaptists to establish a theocracy. *Belgic Confession* 36 condemns such behaviour: "we detest the Anabaptists and other seditious people, and in general all those who reject the higher powers and magistrates, and would subvert justice, introduce community of goods, and confound that decency and good order, which God hath established among men."

¹⁶Luther rebuked them with these words: "I slap your spirit on the snout."

¹⁷Calvin, who married a former Anabaptist, "refuted them with sound doctrine or converted them to the Reformed faith" (David J. Engelsma, *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers* [Grand Rapids: RFPA, 2005], p. 45).

¹⁸It was very important for the authors of the *Belgic Confession* that they distance themselves from the Anabaptists. "Under Philip II, of Spain, an ally of the Romish Church, the Reformed believers in the Lowlands were sorely persecuted as revolutionaries. This Confession was written primarily as a testimony to the Spanish king to prove that the Reformed believers were not rebels, as was charged, but law-abiding citizens who professed only those doctrines which were the teachings of Holy Scripture. In 1562 a copy was sent to the Spanish king, accompanied by a petition for relief from persecution, in which the petitioners declared that they were ready to obey the government in all lawful things, although they would 'offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to fire,' rather than deny the truth of God's Word" (http://www.prca.org/bc_index.html).

Our doctrine and belief is that this same Word, Wisdom, and First-born, as we have confessed, in due time descended from heaven, and that He became a true, mortal man subject to suffering and death by the power of the most High and His Holy Spirit, *not of Mary* but in Mary, above all human comprehension.¹⁹

We confess and say, and that in accordance with the Lord's Word, that the Scripture exempts none from sin but Him that is free indeed, namely, Christ Jesus ... whereby it is plainly shown that He is *not of Mary's flesh*.²⁰

While Menno and other Anabaptists denied that Christ derived His flesh from Mary, many modern Fundamentalists teach a form of Anabaptism, by falsely maintaining that Christ did not derive His blood from Mary, and thus denying Christ's *central* human nature (cf. Matt. 1:16, 18-25; Luke 1:31, 34-35, 42-43; Rom. 1:3; 9:5; Gal. 4:4).²¹ Of course, most modern Fundamentalists are Anabaptistic in other ways, such as their Arminianism and their denial of paedobaptism.²²

7. Seventh Day Adventism

The Fundamentalist notion that Christ brought His literal blood with Him into heaven is not only shared with Dominican and Roman Catholic theology; it is also the doctrine of Seventh Day Adventism. Also, like Seventh Day Adventism, many Fundamentalists teach a literal sprinkling of Christ's blood in heaven. Thus the Fundamentalist blood dogma's view of

¹⁹Cf. Ronald Hanko: "Some taught that Christ brought his human nature with him from heaven and that by his birth and conception he merely passed through Mary's womb like water through a tap" (*Doctrine According to Godliness* [Grand Rapids: RFP, 2004], p. 135).

²⁰"Menno Simon's Incarnational Christology" (<http://ontruth.com/menno.html>; italics mine).

²¹Cf. Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, pp. 507-510.

²²"We detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received, and moreover condemn the baptism of the infants of believers, whom we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised, upon the same promises which are made unto our children" (*Belgic Confession* 34). The Anabaptists, like modern Baptists, denied that God makes His covenant with believers and their children (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39; I Cor. 7:14). All the Anabaptists suspended salvation on the free will of the sinner.

Christ's heavenly mediation also shares a dubious historical lineage, this time that of a cult: Seventh Day Adventism.²³

8. Charismaticism

A mystical "pleading of the blood" is found among many evangelicals, especially those of the Pentecostal and Charismatic variety. James A. Fowler critiques a growing tendency to "plead the blood" in a mystical sense:

This is a popular phrase within some Christian circles.

They "plead the blood" to relieve fears and depression.

They "plead the blood" to cast out demons.

They "plead the blood" to remove a curse.

They "plead the blood" to heal and work miracles.

They "plead the blood" to get what they call the "baptism in the Spirit" and to speak in tongues.

They "plead the blood" to be delivered from difficult circumstances, and to keep them from all accidents.

They "plead the blood" to protect their home and family.

They "plead the blood" for revival, for intercessory prayer and for worship.

They go on to say, "Since the life of Jesus is in His Blood, if we plead, honor, sprinkle and sing about it, we actually introduce the life of God into our worship. We sprinkle the Blood with our tongues, by repeating the word, 'Blood, Blood, Blood of Jesus.'"

The more we plead the blood the more power we have, power to conquer the world for Jesus, power to clean up the church, power against Satan, as we use the blood as a weapon of spiritual warfare, which fights sinful infection like our white blood cells fight infection in our physical body.²⁴

²³The Seventh Day Adventist notion of Christ's literal sprinkling of His blood in heaven is complicated by its being tied up with the "great disappointment" (William Miller's unfulfilled prophecy of Christ's return between 21 March, 1843, and 21 March, 1844); their bizarre doctrine of the "investigative judgment;" and their strange idea that Satan is the scapegoat who will bear the sins of mankind just before Christ's return to earth (cf. Anthony Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963], pp. 92-94, 116-122, 144-160).

This kind of prayer is not uncommon in Fundamentalist prayer meetings in Northern Ireland, although most of them prefer the phrase, “cover the [meeting, person’s name, etc.] in the blood.” The idea is similar.²⁵

An inappropriately named website called “Bible-Knowledge.com” offers advice on “How to Plead the Blood of Jesus for Deliverance and Protection.” By following the instructions on this site, it is claimed, you can ward off illness, car accidents, natural disasters, attacks on your family, bankruptcy, credit card fraud, redundancy and demonic assaults. Disaster will strike if you do not plead the blood regularly. The warning is given:

I have personally found out the hard way—that if I want God’s full protection on all of the above—that I have to Plead the Blood on the night before the beginning of the next month. In other words, if I want God’s protection for the month of May—then I have to Plead the Blood on all of the above on the last day of April. I have been burned several times when I forgot to do this and was subject to several abnormal attacks on the first day of that new month.²⁶

If you want to protect your property, just apply a “Bloodline:”

You can walk around the entire property Pleading the Blood as you walk completely around it in a circle. What you are doing is applying a Bloodline around your property ... I have read of cases where Christian farmers have done this to protect their livestock and flock from attacks from wild predators. In one case in particular, a farmer was having a problem with some of his farm animals being killed by a wild wolf. He went ahead and applied a Bloodline around his entire property. When he woke up the next day, he found a dead wolf ... Pleading the Blood and applying a Bloodline around your house and property can also help protect you from earthquakes or tornadoes ... Another area in which you can Plead the Blood on is whenever you are getting ready to get on a train or plane to go

²⁴<http://www.christinyou.net/pages/bloodchrst.html>

²⁵Many Fundamentalists in Northern Ireland are especially fond of invoking the power of the blood of Jesus to protect their homes and family, and they plead the blood for revival.

²⁶<http://www.bible-knowledge.com/How-to-Plead-the-Blood-of-Jesus.html>

out of town. Simply Plead the Blood on the train or plane either right before you board it—or do it the night before.²⁷

Of course, none of this has any basis in Scripture and is simply an attempt to manipulate God. Fowler complains of this as the attitude that “all one has to do is push God’s ‘blood-button,’ and God will respond like a remote-control God.” The third petition, “Thy will be done” (Matt. 6:10), is absent from such prayers.

9. Conclusion

The Fundamentalist doctrine that Christ’s blood is divine or divine and human or incorruptible and indestructible militates against His unmixed and complete humanity and is thus condemned by the ecumenical creeds, along with the early heresies of Gnosticism, Docetism, Apollinarianism and Eutychianism, with which it possesses affinities (sections 1-4). Along with the Anabaptists, many Fundamentalists deny that Christ possessed a *central* human nature, for He would not have derived His blood from Mary if it was divine or divine and human or incorruptible and indestructible blood (section 6). Many Fundamentalists agree with Dominican and Roman Catholic theology that Christ’s shed blood (or at least much of it) was later reunited to His body and so is in heaven (section 5). Seventh Day Adventism is a cultic cousin of the Fundamentalist blood doctrine in that they both teach a heavenly ascent and literal sprinkling of Jesus’ physical blood (section 7). The fundamentalist blood dogma shares with medieval and modern Romanism an unbiblical devotion to Christ’s physical blood (section 5) and with much of Charismaticism it participates in a false and mystical “pleading of the blood” (section 8).

Thus the Fundamentalist blood dogma is contrary in various ways to biblical and Reformed Christology. It opposes the orthodox doctrine of the Person and natures of Christ, for it militates against His unmixed, complete and central human nature (sections 1-4, 6). As regards the work of Christ, it posits a false view of His heavenly ministry (sections 5, 7). It corrupts the worship of Christ, because of its false and mystical devotion and prayers (sections 5, 8).

to be continued (DV)

²⁷<http://www.bible-knowledge.com/How-to-Plead-the-Blood-of-Jesus.html>