

THE BLOOD OF THE CROSS

by Horatius Bonar

*“The precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb
without blemish and without spot”
—I Peter 1:19.*

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PREFACE

That blood has been shed upon the earth, and that this blood was no other than the “blood of God” (Acts 20:28), all admit who own the Bible. But admitting this, the question arises, how far is each one of us implicated in this blood shedding? Does not God take for granted that we are guilty? Nay further, that this guilt is the heaviest that can weigh a sinner down?

If so, then is it not a question for the saint, how far have I understood and confessed my participation in this guilt incurred by my long rejection of the slain One? How far have I learned to prize that blood, which, though once my accuser, is now my advocate? How far am I now seeing and rejoicing in the complete substitution of life for life—the divine life for the human—which that bloodshedding implies?

Is it not also a serious question for the ungodly, is this blood shedding really and legally chargeable against me? Is God serious in saying that He means to reckon with me for this? Is this blood at this present hour resting over me as a cloud of wrath ready to burst upon my head as soon as my day of grace runs out? Is it on account of my treatment of this blood that I am to be dealt with at the seat of judgment? Is my eternity really to hinge on this?

If so, what course can I pursue? Can I, like Pilate, take water and wash my hands saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just man?” (Matthew 27:24). No: that is hopeless. My long rejection of it must involve at least something of the guilt; how much remains yet to be seen. If I cannot clear myself, and if I cannot extenuate my crime, then I must either

brave the trial and the sentence, or make haste to enter my protest against the deed as the only course now remaining for me.

In such a matter there is room neither for delay nor uncertainty. Let the matter at once be inquired into, and put beyond the reach of doubt. Is it possible that anyone can rest with less than a certainty of forgiveness so long as a charge is hanging over him? Either he does not understand its meaning, or he is resolved to set it at naught.

No certainty can be greater than that I am guilty of the crime. Can I rest satisfied with anything but an equal certainty that this crime has been canceled? To be sure of guilt, and not to be sure of pardon, is a fearful condition indeed. To know that there is a Saviour whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and yet not to know with equal certainty that all the blessings flowing from His blood have become mine, must be misery beyond endurance. Uncertainty in such a case is the very mockery of my grief.

Was the gospel meant to bring us no certainty here? Is our believing it designed to give us no assured peace? Is this assured peace a plant not of this clime? Must we wait for it till we reach the land of peace? Is it not our portion here, and is it not by having this that we are enabled to face and battle with the darkest storms of life? [1]

Did the sight of that blood assure us at once of our guilt, and shall not the sight of it now assure us equally of our forgiveness? Did it formerly speak certain terror, and shall it not now speak certain peace? Or do we say, but I am not sure whether I am really receiving it—this is my difficulty. Be it so. Did you find the same difficulty in knowing whether you were rejecting it? Was it so easy to discover the rejection, and is it so hard to discover the reception? You knew when you put it from you, and do you not know when you would take it to you? Is there not something unnatural, something strange in this?

If you are not sure whether you have received or rejected the blood of propitiation, then in so far as your *peace* is concerned, it is all one as if you knew that you had rejected it. For uncertainty can bring no peace to the troubled spirit. It can heal no wounds; it can kindle no hope. It leaves the soul in sorrowful darkness, just as if the true light had not arisen, or had withdrawn itself from view; just as if the peace-bringing blood had never been shed, or had been hidden from your eyes. Uncertainty! Who that realizes an accusing law, and a sin-hating God, can remain uncertain without also remaining most thoroughly and absolutely miserable? [2]

God has provided for this certainty, and taken out of the way all that might mar it, or generate the reverse. He has not only shed the blood of His dear Son, but so presents it to us *as sinners*, as to leave us no alternative, but either to deny His testimony concerning it, or to be at peace with Him in simply receiving it as that through which peace has been made by His Son upon the cross. Shall we then cleave to this uncertainty as if it contained some mysterious blessing? Or shall we remain contented with it, even for an hour, seeing we cannot but feel that it is no blessing, but a blighting *curse*?

The amount of *uncertainty* in the present day is great. Thousands who name the name of Christ are not ashamed to own it. Few seem to have firm and abiding peace. Few walk in the blessed consciousness of being forgiven, and saved, and reconciled. No wonder that we should be so feeble and sickly; no wonder that we should have so small success in laboring for God. Conscious of personal friendship between Him and us, what is there that we will not do or dare? What is there that He will not do for us and by us?

Is this a time for uncertainty when judgments are darkening over us, and God has arisen to smite the nations for their sins? Nothing now will keep us calm but certainty. Such a storm will need a sure anchor. A man may cheat his soul into tranquility when days are prosperous and skies are blue. He may say, "I hope it will go well with me at last," and sit down contented with his meager hope. But when heaven and earth are shaken, he cannot but tremble. His peace gives way at the first ruffle of the tempest. He had no certainty to lean upon, and his false security was broken in an hour.

So it must be with everyone in these days of evil, that is resting satisfied with less than a certainty—a certainty reared upon the one foundation. And how many hearts are secretly throbbing now, when they hear afar off the sound of advancing terror. They are confessing to themselves now that their rest was unreal, and their hope a fancy. They are filled with fear, and "grope for the wall as the blind." They feel that they have hitherto taken hold of an uncertainty, and flattered themselves with the idea that a man might very well be a Christian, and yet know it not. But now they are moved. They feel that this is "a covering narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it." They had tried to make themselves believe that they were Christians of long standing, and now they find themselves no further on than ten or twenty years ago, when first they awoke from their sleep of death.

It is well, however, that the discovery be made, however late. It matters not how roughly the speaker is awakened, if only he be roused in time to flee from encompassing danger. It is not yet too late. The cross is still standing on the earth. The crucified One is still upon the mercy seat. If the favor of God has hitherto been a dark uncertainty, it may yet be made sure. The way of reconciliation through the blood is as open as ever.

Reader! Rest not till you have got matters *thoroughly settled* between God and our soul. This settlement must be on solid and immovable grounds. But these grounds God is presenting to you in the blood of His only begotten Son. Consider them well. They are your all for eternity! You need not fear risking your soul upon them. Oh! Well for you, if you were but settled there. There would follow a lifetime of peace in this world, and eternity of glory in the world to come.

FOOTNOTES:

1. You may see life in death, heaven in the deepest hell, glory in shame, when thou seest all thy sins done away in the blood of Jesus—*Shepherd's Sound Believer*.

2. It is no right faith but when we are bold with quiet minds to show ourselves in the presence of God. Which boldness comes from assured confidence in the goodwill of God. It is assuredness that maketh the conscience quiet and cheerful before God—*Calvin's Institutes*.

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 1

The Accusation

“Ye wish to bring this Man’s blood upon us,” were the words of indignant scorn with which the High Priest resented the accusations which the apostles, in their preaching, brought against their nation, and specially against its rulers (Acts 5:28). They were the words of well-feigned contempt, but they were words of fear.

“Ye wish to bring this Man’s blood upon us,” was the utmost extent of an answer attempted by the High Priest to these accusations—as if he would thus insinuate that they were as false as they were absurd and impossible. “This Man’s blood! What have *we* to do with it; what mean you by charging us with the guilt of it?”

The High Priest had not mistaken the meaning of the apostles, nor misconstrued the drift of their charge. He was altogether correct in his statement. The apostles did intend to “bring this Man’s blood upon them.” There was no need of calling witnesses to prove that they both said so, and meant so. They denied it not. They were not ashamed of having made the declaration, nor afraid to repeat it. They made no secret of it. They reiterated it in every sermon; they dwelt and insisted upon it continually. It formed part of their message everywhere. “Ye are the crucifiers of the Lord of glory; your hands are stained with the blood of God’s own Son.” This might be said to be the commencement or preamble of each sermon, each address (Acts 2:23; 3:15).

Bitterly was this felt by those against whom it was directed. The arrow went deep and rankled sore in the wound. The anger of the priests arose. They denied the charge. They treated it as a slander upon their good name, and reviled the apostles as calumniators. The charge of blood they resented and repelled.

This does seem strange. For, but a short time before, they had come forward voluntarily to take upon them the guilt and the consequences of this bloodshedding. How eagerly they shouted, “His blood be upon us and on our children!” *Then* they made light of this blood. They valued it at thirty pieces of silver. They rushed forward to shed it, as if they could not rest till they had poured it out like water upon the earth. But *now* they shrink from the imputation, and are stirred up to anger when it is cast upon them. Nay, so much do they resent it, that they seek to imprison or put to death those who make it.

Why this sudden change of feeling? Why this sensitiveness to the charge of blood-guiltiness? It cannot be from dread of the men who bring it forward. They are few in number, and have no power to injure. The charge which they make is accompanied with no threat; nor does it bring with it any temporal evil or danger. It can issue in nothing disastrous or fatal, so far as man and time and the laws are concerned. Why then this nervous irritability under the charge brought against them by these unoffending men—these fishermen of Galilee?

Conscience had made them cowards. Its murmurs were irrepressible and unwearied. It tormented them before the time. Their attempts to smother and silence it only turned its course and sent it *inward*, to work the disease into the whole frame, thereby producing that singular revulsion of feeling which has been noticed, and occasioning that wrathful sensitiveness which they so often exhibited under the preaching of the apostles. Bold enough before the deed was done, now they are full of continued alarms, as if haunted by a specter, or beset with weapons which they feared might every moment pierce them, and avenge the blood which they had shed.

Conscience said,

1. His blood *is* upon you; and you know it. You shed it, and you cannot deny the deed. You thirsted for the shedding of it. You gloried in the deed.
2. It was innocent blood, and you knew it. It was the blood of one who had never wronged you, who had done evil to none, but good to all; against whom no charge of sin had been proved.
3. It was blood shed by means of treachery and falsehood. You had to buy and bribe the traitor. You suborned witnesses, whose testimony you knew to be false. Everything connected with that trial casts dishonor upon those who did the deed, or procured it to be done.
4. It was perhaps, after all, the blood of God's own Son! He claimed this title. Many admitted it. There were signs of its being authentic. What then if it be really true?

Could there be a crime like this?

Such might be the workings of their spirits, the secret suggestions of consciences not at rest, but ever and anon starting from the slumber into which they had been in some measure lulled. No wonder that the men were cut to the heart, and roused up to fiercest anger by the preaching of the apostles. The serpent had twined itself around them. It might at times be torpid or asleep. But every fresh mention of the blood, or of the name of Him whom they had slain, awoke it, and sent its sting into their vitals. Hence they hated the mention of that blood and that name. Vengeance was in their hearts and on their lips against everyone who might venture upon an illusion so hateful. In words they repelled the charge as slanderous, but the inner man confessed it. Addressing the apostles they might use the language of denial,

Thou canst not say, *I did it.*

But the fear, the anger, the remorse which awoke within them, betrayed the consciousness of guilt in a way which could not be mistaken. If they were not the actual murderers, they were at least accomplices in the deed of murder; and as such they were self-convicted and self-condemned.

True children of Cain! Both in their crime, and in their evasive denial of it! When Jehovah charged the first murderer with his brother's blood, how insolent, yet how evasive the answer—"Am I my brother's keeper?" As if he had said, "Do you mean to charge me with Abel's blood? What do I know about it or its shedder?" So with these Jewish rulers. They commit the crime, and then they challenge the proof of their guilt. Their hands are still stained with the crimson, yet they can say, "Do you mean to bring this Man's blood upon us?"

True children of Cain! For where was there rest now for them? Fugitives and vagabonds they now must be, at least in spirit; carrying within them a hidden wound which they try in vain to cover; disturbed with horrors which they cannot allay; trembling at the sound of the shaken leaf or the rustling breeze.

True children of Cain! They go out from the presence of the Lord, and seek to drown their terrors in worldly undertakings, in dreams of vanity, or in the lusts of pleasure. The worm that never dies has begun to gnaw them! Yet they will not look on Him whom they have pierced. They turn away in anger when He is set before them!

The blood they had shed would heal them; for it speaketh better things than that of Abel; but they will not be healed. The blood that alarmed would also have laid all their alarms to rest. But they turn away from it. It accused them, no doubt; yet it brought forgiveness with it for the very crime which it laid to their charge. It spoke to them as to murderers—sinners for whose crime and conduct there could be no excuse. But it also said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—even "the chief" (I Timothy 1:13-16).

They might be "blasphemers, persecutors, and injurious"; but "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant." Nay, and of some of them at least it might be said, "They did obtain mercy, that in them the chief, Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them, who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." [1]

FOOTNOTE:

1. The reader may perhaps call to mind here the conversion of Colonel Gardiner. He seemed in a moment to get a sight of the crucified one; his soul was overwhelmed; he walked up and down his chamber in intensest agony of heart, thinking himself the vilest sinner under the sun, as having all his life been

crucifying Christ by his sin. “He immediately gave judgment against himself as most justly worthy of eternal damnation, settling it with himself that God’s justice necessarily required that such an enormous sinner should be made an example of everlasting vengeance”—See his *Life* by Doddridge.

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CHAPTER 2

Israel Guilty

But how far was this accusation true of *all* Israel? It is evident that the apostles spoke indiscriminately and universally, not merely singling out certain individuals—the active doers of the deed, the more direct participators of the crime. They manifestly charged the whole nation with the guilt. Speaking to those whom they designate, “Ye men of Israel”—“all the house of Israel,” they accuse them of having “taken and by wicked hands having crucified and slain” this “Man approved of God.” “Let all of the house of Israel know that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:22-23, 26); and again, “Ye killed the Prince of Life” (Acts 3:15).

Moreover, in several other passages this is spoken of by God as the peculiar guilt of the nation—that guilt which is now weighing them down with its curse—that guilt which shall, above all others, awake to remembrance when they see their returning King. “They shall look on Me whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10); and again, “Every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him” (Revelation 1:7). This then is the great national crime—the crime that is pursuing them through all the earth. For this blood God reckons all Israel responsible. It is not merely Caiaphas, or Herod, or Pilate; it is not merely the individuals who scourged and buffeted, and mocked, and nailed Him to the tree: it is “all Israel” that is accounted guilty. They are all counted guilty of *rejecting* Him; as it is written, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not”; so they are all counted guilty of crucifying Him. And accordingly the curse and the desolation have come down upon all.

But how is this? How are they all guilty? Why has the stroke of vengeance come upon the whole nation?

Because the same spirit was in all. They “consented to His death,” like Saul in the case of Stephen, and “kept the raiment of them that slew Him.” They acquiesced in the deed, if they did not perpetrate it. They stood by and hindered it not. They did not protest against the deed, nor give any sort of testimony in condemnation of the doers. Therefore, they are held as acquiescing, nay, as participating in the sin.

It is thus in human law. If we belong to a corporation or society which resolves by a majority of its members to do an unlawful deed, we are held liable for all the consequences and penalties attaching to that deed, unless we enter our individual protest. Till we do this, we are held responsible for the act, whatever it may be. Most naturally and most righteously is it so. Law and equity have always united to maintain this.

It was thus that God dealt with Israel, and is to this day dealing with them still. It was thus that the apostles made good their fearful accusations wherever they went. They sought to “bring this Man’s blood” upon the heads of all whom they addressed. Upon this they took their stand. With this sharp-edged weapon they assailed the consciences of the men of Israel. And what a weapon both for weight and sharpness! Irresistible in the hands of the Holy Spirit for convincing of sin. Wherever they preached Christ, they proclaimed men guilty of the blood of Christ. They maintained that though, perhaps, not the actual murderers, yet they were truly, legally, righteously guilty; personally responsible for the infinite crime.

And the *conscience* of Israel pleaded guilty to the charge! They could neither deny nor extenuate it. They did not fully admit the guilt; but the way in which they met the charge showed how the inner man was responding to its truth. They were enraged; but their very anger was the outburst of a smitten conscience. They might turn the accusation into matter of scorn; but their scorning was the expression of hidden fear.

Hence their hatred of the apostles. They looked upon them as men in possession of a secret, the promulgation of which was intolerable. Could they but silence these bold proclaimers, they might have rest; for then the *witnesses* of the deed would be hushed, and the *evidence* destroyed. But so long as these witnesses remained—going round the inhabitants of the land with their story, and producing the personal evidence of its truth—they could not but be troubled. The crime was *felt* to be a real one; and the mention of it by such witnesses was like the stinging of an adder. Hence also the fearful agonies of conviction into which those were cast whose hearts the Spirit touched. They felt that all was true. They were murderers: murderers of the Lord of glory. Their hands were full of blood. No wonder that they were “pricked in their hearts,” and cried out, “What shall we do?” It was crime enough to cover a world with confusion of face; making its knees to smite against each other, and its lips to grow pale with shame and fear.

The messenger said, “Thou art the man.” Conscience said, “I am, I am! What shall I do? His blood is upon me: how shall I escape the curse which such a deed must certainly draw down! What a doom must now be mine!” It was thus that the Holy Spirit “convinced them of SIN.” He did not take up the whole catalog of their transgressions, and present it in all its black array to their consciences. He took up just one sin, but that was the sin of blood; and that blood was none other than the blood of God’s own Son. This was the arrow which He selected from His quiver; the sharpest and deadliest of all. It “pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; it was a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” There were ten thousand other shafts ready fitted to the string against these sinners; but none so resistless, so terrible as this.

God has for eighteen hundred years been specially laying the sin of bloodshedding at the door of Israel. He has proclaimed them guilty, by the ruin wherewith He has smitten them so fearfully. It has been no common ruin, proving thereby that it was no common crime. Denial of it has availed them nought. God has, by His righteous acts, declared that He reckons them guilty. If not guilty, why these long ages of calamity? If not guilty, why the shame, the scattering, the banishment that have been theirs since their cup was filled?

Conscience was whispering its forebodings when these apostles stood before the nation and declared it guilty. The whole dark future they could not foresee; but that they had sinned, and that they had shed blood which God required at their hand, they seemed unconsciously to admit, even when trying to evade or to scorn the accusations of the apostles.

Thus God spake, and Israel trembled. Thus the messengers of Jehovah made the charge, and Israel grew pale at the mention of it. Passing by every other sin, the accuser fastened upon this as the most crushing, as well as the most unanswerable of all.

Thus God found a way into Israel's conscience; and thus it is (as we shall see) that He finds a way into the sinner's conscience still. He forces home this as His main charge, the charge which sinks deepest and rankles sorest—"guilty of the body and blood of the Lord!" [1]

FOOTNOTE:

1. How did the Spirit convince those three thousand, those patterns of God's converting grace? Did not the Lord begin with them for one principal sin, their murder and contempt of Christ, by imbruing their hands in His blood? There is no question but now they remembered other sinful practices, but this was the *imprimis* which is ever accompanied with many other *items*, in God's bill of reckoning—*Shepherd's Sound Believer*, p. 8.

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 3

The World Guilty

We next ask, how far is the general world involved in this special guilt? Is it, like Israel, "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord?"

The world must come in for its share of guilt. The Gentile as well as the Jew, must be reckoned a partaker in the deed of blood. Even if the world could clear itself of the crime of murder, it cannot clear itself from the guilt of “consenting to His death.” And is this “consent” not equivalent to blood-guiltiness? Must the hand be red with blood ere the charge can be made good? Is not the acquiescence of the heart enough?

Yes. Israel was but part of the general race—foremost indeed in guilt, but still followed close behind by the Gentile multitudes. The Jew forms the inner circle of those who crowded the hall of Pilate, and cried, “Crucify, crucify Him”—the inner circle of the multitude who stood around the cross exulting and deriding. The Gentile forms the outer circle. But the crowd is the same. Each circle of it, outer as well as inner, is animated with the same murderous enmity to the Son of God. Each individual in the mass breathes the same spirit, if he does not make Jerusalem ring with the same words. In truth it was the world that did the deed. It was *man* that crucified the Lord of glory. It was *man* that rejected the true light which came into the world. It was *man* that loved the darkness rather than the light. It was man that said, “This is the heir, come let us kill Him.” [1]

But how is this? Just as in the case of Israel, all are included in the responsibility, for all have acquiesced in the deed. All are held guilty of the deed done beneath these skies, and upon this soil where they dwell, unless they come forth and protest against it. God holds each hearer of the Gospel guilty of the blood of Christ, *until he disown the act*; protesting against it, and owning this crucified one as his Saviour and Lord. I am not now speaking of those who never heard of a Saviour’s name or death. I am not urging their guilt. I speak of those before whom a crucified Saviour has been set. In making known to them His death, is not God just *asking their opinion of it*, and putting it to them, whether they will own or disown the deed? Is He not saying to each of them, “What think ye of this death, this blood?” He presses this point home upon each hearer of the Gospel. If they give no heed to the message, but turn away in indifference—or if they reject the message and despise the Saviour of whose death it speaks, then are they counted guilty of the blood of Him whom Israel slew. For thus they are “consenting to His death.” And every moment that a sinner thus remains in unbelief, turning away from the Gospel he is chargeable with blood-guiltiness. The crime, the curse, the doom of the murderer hangs over his head.

It was thus that Whitefield used to appeal to the consciences of the crowds that hung upon him; and it was thus that his appeals were responded to. In Tanner’s account of his own conversion, we have a striking example of this. He was a ship carpenter, working at Plymouth, who, along with five others as ungodly as himself, resolved to go to hear Whitefield, in order “to knock him off the place where he stood.” The first sermon overawed him and drew him back to hear a second, which went to his heart. It was upon “Christ’s mercy to Jerusalem sinners,” from Luke 24:47. “From these words,” says Tanner, “God the Spirit led him to show the atrocious sin of crucifying the Lord of glory; second, He noticed the instruments who perpetrated this dreadful deed, which were the Jews and Roman soldiers. Then came the never-to-be-forgotten moment as it concerned me. I stood at his left hand. He was not at this time looking towards me, but had just been observing, ‘I suppose,’ said he, ‘you are reflecting on the cruelty of those inhuman

butchers who imbrued their hands in innocent blood.’ When, on a sudden, turning himself towards me as if designed (and I do believe the Lord designed it for me), he looked me full in the face, and cried out, *Sinner! Thou art the man that crucified the Son of God!* Then, and never before, I felt the Word of God quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. I knew not whether to stand or fall. My sins seemed all to stare me in the face. I was at once convicted. My heart bursting, mine eyes gushing forth floods of tears. I dreaded the instant wrath of God, and expected that it would instantly fall upon me.” [2]

The first part, then, of our message to each careless sinner that may read these pages, is, “You are a crucifier of the Lord of glory.” His blood is upon you; and it is the blood of the Son of God. It is this that God is requiring at your hand. From the first moment that you heard of that blood you have been held as consenting to its shedding. God made it known to you, that you might disown the deed. This you have not done. You have felt and acted *precisely as if that deed had been entirely right and just*. It has awakened no abhorrence, no amazement on your part; it has called forth no condemnation. From all that you have said, or felt, or done, one might conclude that it had met with your unmingled approval. And that approval God holds you as giving, by your continuing in unbelief. He reckons you guilty of the blood of His only begotten Son.

Do you sit under this fearful charge which God Himself makes against you, even here, as an earnest of what will be brought against you in the day of dark reckoning when you stand before the throne? Think what it implies. It means that you are a second Cain, though guiltier far than he. Better blood than that of Abel’s is crying out against you. Your hands are red with blood. And it is not the blood of the guilty, shed righteously, but it is the blood of the holy and the just—the blood of Him “who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth”—who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”—who though He was rich, for your sake became poor, that you by His poverty might be made rich. This is the blood that is laid at your door. It is innocent and it is divine. Such is your crime and such its infinite aggravation.

Do you shrink from the charge? Do you plead “not guilty?” Then what means your long rejection—your deliberate unbelief? These are the proofs of the accusation. They bear full and fatal witness against you. No evidence can be more conclusive than that which they furnish against you.

Do you say, “I do not reject, I do not disbelieve”? If so, then you have *received* Him. Is it so? Have you received the Son of God? Then what has this reception of Him done for you? If it be such a reception as God can recognize, then are you already a son of God, for it is written, “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). Is it so; and are you in truth a son? If not, then where is your reception? Are you not guilty of rejection still? If you have received Him, then with Him you have received forgiveness, and with forgiveness peace, and with peace everlasting life. Is it so? Are you at this moment in possession of these? No. Then are you not still guilty of this very rejection? And if so, then are you no less truly guilty of the blood of the rejected One.

Do you grow indignant, as if your good name were slandered? Are you exclaiming, “What! Do you mean to bring this Man’s blood upon us?” Yes, I do. For God has done so. He charges it to your account. He lays it at your door just as Abel’s blood was laid at the door of Cain. Upon you must that blood lie till you clear yourself of it, by ceasing from your acquiescence, and coming forth to protest against the deed, and thus washing your hands clean of the stain.

Do you say, “But how am I to enter my protest against it?” Simply by believing on the name of the crucified, owning Him as your Saviour, and receiving Him as your all. This is the only way in which you can now protest against the deed, and come out from under the curse with which that deed has burdened you. And this is the way which God has appointed for the sinner’s entering his protest, and being delivered from the doom of the blood-guilty. He has given you time to protest. Many long years has He afforded you. Of these you have not yet availed yourself, and thus have added unspeakably to the infinite crime. Yet still does He extend that space. It is not yet too late. He is willing, even up to this hour, to receive your protest; and in receiving it, to receive *you* also; not only acquitting you from the charge of blood, but treating you as righteous; [3] not only delivering you from the eternal curse which that blood was drawing over you, but turning that curse into a rich and endless blessing.

Do you scoff and say, like the murderer in the olden time,

A little water clears us of the deed;
How easy is it then!

Bear then the guilt and brave the Judge. Refuse to answer His demand for a reckoning on this score. And see how it will fare with you. Ah! The hour is coming, when the guilt of that blood will be fully seen; but seen too late. It might have been washed away here; it cannot be washed away yonder. It will spread itself over your eternity in the horrors of undying remorse and shame—horrors which only blood-guiltiness can awaken—horrors which no fallen angel can experience—horrors which none can taste save men who have first shed this blood and then rejected it. [4]

FOOTNOTES:

1. Then was the world brought to a voluntary confession of the sin of murdering Jesus Christ—*Owen on the Death of Christ*, referring to Acts 2:37.
2. Tanner’s *Life*, pp. 11-12.
3. At the risk of its being thought out of place, I shall ask the reader’s attention to the following illustration of the truth embodied in the above sentence. It is from Reichard’s *Initia Doctrinae Christianae*, which contains an exposition of the Lutheran doctrine of justification. I need not give the original. “Justification is that divine act by which man, the sinner, is absolved from all the guilt and punishment of his sins by reason of the satisfaction of Christ; and is so reckoned

and treated of God, as if he had not only committed no sin, but as if all his life he had lived most holily. At the same time, we must remember that this divine blessing is not of a physical, but of a moral kind, and refers wholly to *imputation*; since the substitutionary satisfaction of Jesus Christ is reckoned by God as entirely ours. For this divine proceeding is like a forensic transaction, in which there are judges, accusers, and accused, advocates, laws, witnesses, and in the end an acquittal from the charge....It consists of two parts; the one, by which, on account of Christ's merit, our guilt is totally removed; the other, by which Christ's obedience is held as ours. For seeing the divine law demands, not only that we should commit no sin, but that we should do all manner of good (neither of which is in our power), it is plain that the satisfaction of Christ avails us in a twofold manner; partly as He bore in our room the guilt and punishment of our sins, and partly as He obeyed the divine law most perfectly for us."

4. Does the reader here call to mind the well-known lines:

Will all the mighty ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

Making the green, one red.

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 4

God's Controversy with the World

One of God's chief controversies with this world is respecting this blood. He has many other such controversies, but this is one of the chief. For here His estimate and man's are at utter variance with each other, in respect both of the value and efficacy of this blood, no less than regarding the guilt of shedding it.

On many points they differ in their estimates. As to the value of the soul, of earth, of time, of eternity, they differ. But here they differ most of all: and on this difference the sinner's eternity hinges. For it is according to what he thinks of this blood that he is saved or lost. This is the turning point of his salvation. He may count it strange or hard that his everlasting welfare should be thus determined. Yet God declares that it must be so. He will not consent to treat that blood so lightly as the sinner. Nor will He consent to deal favorably with the sinner that slights or scorns that blood. Here He is inexorable. For the honor of His own Son is involved in it; and that honor must be maintained inviolable.

And why should it be thought an incredible thing that it should be so? Grant but that this blood is what it is, the blood of God's beloved Son, and it is not difficult to see why He should, on such a point, be so awfully inflexible. Nay, shall we not say, how can it be otherwise? And wonder only how He can bear so much as one single slight offered to blood so precious in His eyes.

It was the blood of one whom He loved with an immeasurable love; and who was worthy of all that love, even to the uttermost. It was the blood of Him who was the brightness of Jehovah's glory, and the express image of His person. How, then, was it possible that He could overlook any affront to the blood of one so exalted and so loved? How could He allow the foot of man to trample on it with scorn, or the eye of man to glance past it with indifference? He could not. He must first cease to own Him as His Son, or to claim for Him the homage of creation, as heir and Lord of all. Besides, had He not given up this Son for the ungodly? Had He not bruised Him and put Him to grief? Had He not allowed that blood to be shed for man? And if so, then how could He fail to resent anything like ingratitude on the part of those for whom He had delivered up His Son? Specially how could He fail to be displeased with any contempt or indifference shown by them to that blood which, for their sakes, had been so freely poured out? Nothing but love to us could have led Him to such a sacrifice. He spared not His Son, just that He might spare us. He allowed His life to be taken that ours might be restored. And having provided a ransom so precious at such a cost, what need we reckon on but that He should be jealous as to the reception which this love of His was to have among men, and jealous of the treatment which that blood was to meet with at the hands of sinners?

We may wonder indeed that a man should look on that blood with indifference, as if it were a common thing. But we need not wonder that Jehovah should regard that indifference as one of the blackest and most hateful of all transgressions. Whatever man's indifference to it may be, that cannot alter God's estimate of the blood. It must remain the same. And, so long as it does so, He must hold controversy with the world upon this point. Men may think it a small one. He does not, cannot think so. They may imagine that it is of little consequence what their opinion of the blood may be, or whether they have any opinion on it at all. He cannot lower His estimate and price; He cannot abandon the controversy till the sinner has come up to His estimate, and learned to be at one with Him respecting the blood of His only begotten Son.

If God and we, then, are at variance, how is this variance to cease? Is it by His adopting our judgment, or by our adopting His? It cannot be the former. That were blasphemy even to imagine. It must be the latter. If God and we are to be at one, it must be by our thinking as He thinks, and feeling as He feels in this matter. We must take His estimate of the blood of His Son, else the variance cannot cease. It must be prolonged forever.

What think you, then, of the blood of Christ? Is that which is so precious in God's eyes as precious in yours? Has the controversy between Him and you upon this point been solidly adjusted? And are you at one with Him in His estimate of the blood of His dear Son? If so, it is well. For this is faith; and it is by this faith that you are saved. It was unbelief that led you to form so low an estimate of that blood, and it is faith which has led you to

throw aside your own estimate, and adopt that of God. Thus it is that we believe. The Holy Spirit shows us the real nature of that blood we have been slighting. He shows us whose blood it is—what wonders it is intended to effect—what power it has to cleanse—what efficacy to give peace. He tells us what God has written concerning this blood. He tells us God's opinion of its value. And making known these things to us He leads us to immediate peace. The new estimate which He enables us to form of this at once infuses peace. If that estimate which God had given of it be true, then all that is needful for our peace has been accomplished. That infinitely precious blood sheds peace and sunshine into our souls. We see that blood as God sees it, and our consciences are unburdened—our souls are set at rest.

It is not in the nature of things that we could have peace till we have altered our estimate of that blood, even though no vengeance hung over us for despising it, still our not valuing it would effectually shut out our peace. For in proportion as we see its value, in that proportion do we see how completely it has availed to make our peace, to magnify the law, to atone for sin, to open a fountain for all uncleanness. Nothing but infinitely precious blood could do such things. This blood has done them all. We see this and the burden falls off. We see this, and our consciences are troubled no more. The blood of His cross has finished our peace. And that finished peace is all we need to banish every fear.

Poor world! In what is thy controversy with God respecting this blood to the end? In life or death to thee? If in life, then thou hast much yet to *unlearn*, as well as much to *learn*. Thou hast to unlearn thine own judgment, and to learn God's. In so doing there is yet life for thee. If in death, then what a death it will be! It will be God's vengeance for slighted blood.

Poor world! Dost thou think that there is no controversy between thee and God on this point? Then what means thy indifference? God is not *indifferent* in this matter. And if thou art indifferent, is there no controversy? Will God allow thee to be indifferent to that on which His whole heart is set? You know how indifference often provokes more than open hatred; so that, even although there might be no hatred, this indifference is enough to "provoke the eyes of His glory."

The day of controversy with God will soon be done. He will not always allow man to war this warfare. Judgment lingereth not, and damnation slumbereth not. The day for the final settlement of all such controversies is at hand. The kindling fire will close them—the sentence of the Judge will settle them.

Do you not know in what way, and on whose side this great controversy shall be settled? Shall it be settled in your way, or in God's; on His side, or yours?

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 5

What God Thinks of This Blood

He counts it as infinitely precious—more precious than all corruptible things such as gold and silver. Its *value* can only be measured by the greatness of Him from whom it flowed. Its *efficacy*, too, is boundless in His eyes. He deemed it available for the worst of cases—for the very extremity of guilt and pollution. He sees in it also the blood of the “Lamb without blemish and without spot.” No tinge of sin does He behold in it. The lamb which Israel was commanded to bring was to be a “he-lamb of the first year, without blemish, for a burnt-offering” (Numbers 6:14). And in this type God made known what that Lamb was to be, by whose bloodshedding, in the fullness of time, sin was to be put away. Even the eye of Jehovah could discover no spot in that Lamb or in its blood. The blood that cleanseth must itself be clean; and such was this.

From the time that man sinned, God began to declare His mind respecting this blood, and to show the value which He set upon it. Not only did He begin to make known to sinners that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin; but He began to declare His estimate of that blood, that man might learn that it was no common blood. From the day of man’s sinning till the time of a Saviour’s coming there was a continual testimony kept up by God respecting it. Both by deed and word, by promise, by prophecy, and by type, this witness-bearing was maintained from age to age. Blood without blemish—blood of infinite price—this was the substance of the testimony. And in that testimony was wrapt up the whole gospel—glad tidings of great joy to man.

On the foreseen efficacy and availableness of that blood He began and carried on the work of reconciliation before the Reconciler had come. On the credit of it He began to save sinners four thousand years before it had been shed (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:15). For it was the *value* of it, irrespective of the time when it should be actually shed, that made it a righteous thing in God to bless the sinner, so long before its shedding. The *time* of the shedding was of less moment in the eyes of Him with whom one day is as a thousand years; but the *value* of it was absolutely essential, if there was to be such a thing as substitution, or sin-bearing, or cleansing. That value He never allowed man to lose sight of for a day (Hebrews 9:19-22).

During all these four thousand years, He was continually speaking of that blood, pointing to it, calling every eye to gaze upon it, proclaiming His estimate of it in manifold ways. Everything spoken or done under the former dispensation had reference to it, or was brought into connection with it. Each altar that was reared, from Abel’s down to that of Israel’s in the wilderness, was a divine witness to its efficacy. Each part of the tabernacle—its curtains, its posts, its floor, its laver, its tables, its vessels, its ark, its priests—all were made to bear witness to this, either by the actual sprinkling of the blood upon them, or by the crimson-hue of their carefully wrought and divinely appointed texture.

Though it was not possible that the blood of bulls or of goats could take away sin, or could have any value in the sight of God, yet even that blood was looked upon as sacred and holy, because prefiguring the blood of the better sacrifice. So excellent was the substance that it seemed to lend excellence to the shadow; so glorious was the antitype that it cast brightness upon the perishable type, and imparted to it a beauty, a value, and a reality, such as we attach to the picture or the statue of a beloved friend. So efficacious was this blood of the Lamb of God, that it made available the blood of the sacrificial Lamb for the worshippers of Israel, as to all outward privileges in the service of God. The want of blood shut the door of the tabernacle against them, and kept them without. Without that blood they were treated as outcasts, as men with whom Jehovah refused to deal, and to whom the privilege of even coming into His courts was denied. With that blood they might enter in; for that blood was their title to admittance—their only but their sufficient warrant for taking their place among the worshippers of Jehovah. Nay more, the very altar on which that typical blood was shed and sprinkled was counted holy. “It shall be an altar most holy,” are the words of God to Moses (Exodus 29:37). Such was the all-pervading virtue of the “better blood,” which remained to be shed in the ages yet to come. And then, as if to add something still more to this, it is said, “Whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.” We read of “the very shadow of Peter passing by,” being looked to for healing; and in the case of the blood of Christ, it is as if its very shadow, cast backward over Jewish rites, availed to consecrate them, diffusing an unseen influence over all the services of the sanctuary, and affixing a mysterious value to its ordinances, by reason of its own unutterable efficacy and excellence.

In the case of the typical blood this value was what we may call fictitious. It was not a value inherent in the thing itself, but pertaining to it solely by reason of its connection with that which was to come. But this fictitious value of the type illustrates most vividly the real value of the Antitype. If God did so much for Israel, because of the ceremonial blood which yet derived all its efficacy from the other, what will He not do for those who avail themselves of that other which imparted the efficacy? If a sinner of old might come into the courts of the Lord as an accepted worshipper, simply because presenting to God the blood of bulls and goats, may not a sinner now come into the real, the immediate presence of Jehovah, with still greater certainty of acceptance, simply making mention of that divine blood which has flowed from the Lamb of God—the Word made flesh—who made His soul an offering for sin, and gave His life a ransom for the sins of many (Isaiah 53:10; Matthew 20:28)?

The law having but “the shadow of good things to come,” could “never with these sacrifices, which were offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect,” that is, perfect as pertaining to the conscience—perfect in so far as the entire removal of guilt from the burdened conscience was concerned. Had it been able to do so, then “the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins” (Hebrews 10:1-2). But what the law could not do with its rivers of ritual blood, that the one sacrifice of Christ has done, at once and forever. And they who will but consent to employ it in their transactions with God will find that it can accomplish for them those things which the apostle declares could not be accomplished by all the offerings of the sons of Levi. It can “make the comers thereunto perfect”; it can so purge the worshippers,

that they “shall have no more conscience of sins.” Let us but employ this blood as Israel employed the other, and we shall find how thoroughly efficacious it is to purge the guilty conscience, to give peace to the troubled soul, and to bring us into the presence of God with boldness and with joy (Hebrews 4:16; 9:14).

An Israelite, when his conscience was burdened with sin, had just to go to his fold and take thence a lamb, and bring it to the altar; and though that could not do everything for his conscience, yet it could do much. But our Lamb is already slain and offered—nay, accepted too. We have but to avail ourselves of it—to employ it—nothing more. It is at all times available—at all times ready for our use. And we use it, when, simply believing what God has told us of its efficacy and of His delight in it, we go to Him in the full assurance of faith, with no other plea, either within us or without us, but the blood alone.

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 6

Ways in Which God Proclaims Its Value

It is the price which He has given for the flock—the Church. A ransom of no common value was needed, and He counts this blood so precious as to be sufficient for this. It was a great company that was to be ransomed—a multitude that no man can number (Revelation 7:9); and of each of these saved ones the sins were as the sea sand, or the leaves of the forest. They were “lawful captives” (Isaiah 49:24)—their chains heavy, their dungeon impregnable, their oppressors mighty. It was a vast ransom that was needed; but that ransom was found. The blood was deemed enough. Righteousness could ask no more. God was satisfied with the price.

So precious does God esteem it, that He deems it sufficient to pay all legal demands in full: nay, to magnify the law, so that it becomes as righteous a thing in God to acquit as to condemn the sinner. The curse of the law is no longer inevitable and necessary. God is at liberty to remove it, and in its place to dispense the blessing. What must be the value of that blood which can thus transmute the curse into a blessing—the righteous curse into the righteous blessing!

So precious does God esteem it, that on account of it He throws open the way into the holiest, as it is written, “Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19). It is the blood that has prevailed to open up this way, to unbar the gate, to rend the veil. And thus that way which would otherwise have been death to the sinner to attempt to tread, becomes the way of life—the “living way”; nay, the only way of life—the only secure way for him to walk upon—the only secure spot in a fallen world on which he can plant his foot. And now it is safe for the sinner to enter in, and it is honorable for God to admit him. The sanctuary is not defiled by his entrance, for the

blood is there to prevent this. He does not need to be alarmed, or shrink back, for that blood which opens the way gives him also liberty and boldness in coming, removing that terror of a guilty conscience which would keep him back, and enabling him to come “with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).

So precious does God esteem it, that on account of it alone, without one particle of addition from any other quarter, He can forgive, save, justify, accept even the chief of sinners. It is through means of this blood that He keeps their consciences clean and unburdened, so that, though their sense of *sin* deepens and augments, their sense of *guilt* no longer oppresses them as before. By keeping their eye fixed upon this precious blood, He keeps their souls in perfect peace, for He shows them how that blood proclaims wrath to have been already exhausted upon another, and condemnation to have passed away. And thus it is that He carries them on from day to day—that He may present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy in the day of the appearing of His Son (Jude 24; Hebrews 13:20-21).

So precious does He esteem it, that because of it He can come in and make His abode with the soul—dwelling in it as His chosen temple. It is the sprinkling of the blood upon the soul (which takes place so soon as we take God’s Word for its efficacy) that makes it fit for being the tabernacle of the Holy One. It is the sight of this blood that makes the sinner feel safe and happy in such near contact with God; for otherwise how could He feel at home with such a guest—the unholy with the Holy?

So precious does He esteem it, that He makes it the answer to the various doubts and perplexing sophistries with which self and Satan would entangle the soul, either when coming to God, or after it has come. Do the sins of past years lie heavy on it? He says, Behold the blood! Does a sense of personal unworthiness darken it? He says again, Behold the blood; and in it, that which fully makes up in My eyes for all such unworthiness! Do iniquities prevail—rushing in like a flood through every avenue of the soul? He says again, Behold the blood; it “cleanseth from all sin” (Ephesians 1:7; I John 1:7). No amount of defilement can dilute the efficacy of that blood, or make it less free to the polluted soul.

So precious does He esteem it, that on account of its rejection He will condemn the world. Contempt for it is reckoned a sin so great, that the world’s doom will hang on this. “Counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing,” or treating it as if it were such, will be the cause of that “sorer punishment” of which the apostle speaks so awfully, as overhanging the unbelieving soul (Hebrews 10:29). Even now, this is his condemnation, his sin of sins. He is a despiser of the blood. For this the “wrath of God abideth upon him,” even here. He may not feel its weight; but still it is there.

And this is God’s answer to all our self-righteous pleas in vindication of our own worthiness or goodness. “Ye have shed the blood of My Son.” This is enough. We may fancy that we are of good repute with men, possessing much that is lovable and excellent about us; but this is God’s reply to such ideas of self, and such pleadings in behalf of self.

“Ye crucified Him whom I sent into the world.” Nor are you ashamed of the deed. You do not disown it. Nay, you act as if you deemed that there was nothing amiss about you in this respect. Can you then justify yourselves? Are not your hands full of blood, which, if it do not justify, will inevitably condemn you; which, if it do not raise you to heaven, will sink you to the lowest hell?

It is not in one way, but in many that God has made known to us His sense of the value of this blood—so that there might be no possibility of a mistake on our part—so that if we had eyes we could not but see, if we had ears we could not but hear. It is not one proclamation, but a thousand that He has made of it. For, each of the different points which we have been referring to is a new proclamation.

It would be well that we fully understood this, for then should we see how far behind we are in our appreciation of this blood. Who is there amongst us that possesses aught like an adequate knowledge or estimate of this infinitely precious blood? We use *words* expressive of its value; but beyond the *words* we seem to be profoundly dark. Most men imagine that they know its value sufficiently already, and that what they need is not a higher estimate of the blood, but a deeper impression wrought in them by the estimate which they now possess. But is it so? Is this the whole evil? Is this its root? No. Whatever they may now suppose that they have, let them know this, that it is just in their estimate of the blood that they are deficient. Unwilling as they may be to credit this, yet it is true. The seat of the disease is here. The root of bitterness is here. And it is a much deeper root than they are willing to own.

Instead then of taking for granted, that their estimate of the blood is correct and suitable, and that all they need is to work themselves into a better frame, they ought to look far deeper, and ask, Have I at this moment any right or real estimate of this blood at all? If I had, could I be thus disquieted and shaken with doubt? Are not these doubts the unambiguous evidence that I am at fault in my *estimate*?

If so, then, let the remedy be applied to the real seat of the disease. Let us turn our eye to the blood, and to the various ways in which God has proclaimed its immeasurable value. Let us look narrowly into each one of these, and read in them the true value attached to it by Him who gave it to be shed. I know no better way of removing doubts, and that not for a season, but of displacing them forever, than bringing fully and deliberately before us those different facts in which God has so brightly embodied His proclamation of its value. Let us never cease to gaze upon them. And when the spirit droops, or Satan whispers doubt, let us gaze at them again; returning continually to those same points, which, as the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, will broaden and brighten upon our gaze, till we understand, in some adequate measure, the infinite excellency of this divine blood, one sight of which is enough to allay the storm of the most guilt-stricken conscience that ever trembled under a broken law.

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 7

The Careless Sinner's Thoughts Concerning It

Perhaps there is nothing connected with Christ and His work, which the careless sinner slights so much as the blood. In his eyes it has no value and no attraction. He dislikes all reference to it in connection with salvation. Thus he tramples it under foot.

He thinks less of it, lays less stress upon it, ascribes to it less of sacredness and of value than a Jew, or even a heathen, ascribed to the blood of their victims. Its very name is repulsive, as if the mention of it suggested only what was unpleasant and unnatural. To owe salvation to this blood alone, seems not only unreasonable, but hateful. Words such as these, "by His stripes we are healed," have no relish, and no meaning to him. They who make reference to the blood, are perhaps accused of want of refinement and delicacy, or despised as enthusiasts and mystics. Thus, "the blood of the Lamb" is trifled with, or despised, or scoffed at in the wantonness of unbelief.

It was so when Christ was on earth. From his cradle to His cross this contempt was exhibited. Herod sought to shed His blood in infancy. The people of Nazareth, "where He had been brought up," laid hands upon Him that they might slay Him. Frequently, throughout His ministry, His life was aimed at, as if it would have been a light thing to shed His blood. And when betrayed at last, thirty pieces of silver was the "goodly price" at which His blood was valued! It was all that man would give for it! Then in their eagerness to shed it, they urged Pilate to put Him to death, crying "Crucify Him, crucify Him," preferring Barabbas to Jesus, setting a higher price on the blood of the robber than on that of the Son of God. And as if to show their utter disregard for it—as if in mockery of it—they volunteered to bear the curse which that blood might bring down on its shedders—"His blood be upon us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). Then, lastly, on the cross it was poured out like water. The thorns, the scourge, the nails, the spear, were man's instruments for draining that blood, that, flowing down upon the ground, it might be trodden under foot, and treated as the vilest thing on earth. So vile did they reckon it, that though bent on shedding it, they would not allow this to be done within Jerusalem. It must be shed "without the city," as if it would have been pollution to the temple of God, and the dwellings of Israel, to have allowed it to be shed within the consecrated walls of Jerusalem. They treated it as the blood of one who was not only unworthy to *live*, but unworthy even to *die* within the city (Hebrews 13:11-12; Leviticus 16:27; Numbers 19:1-10).

Such were man's thoughts respecting the blood, in the days when Christ was here. Such was his estimate of its value, such his idea of its sacredness.

And in this, do we not see not only indifference, but contempt—not only contempt, but mockery—not only mockery, but HATRED? In this treatment of the blood of Christ, do we not discover the natural heart of man speaking out, or rather acting out its ENMITY?

It is still the same. There has been no relenting on man's part: no softening of the carnal heart. His estimate of the blood has not risen higher since these days. His indifference and his enmity are unremoved. And sometimes we find the former of these, and sometimes the latter, in exercise. When the subject is not pressed home upon his conscience so as to confront him, it is indifference that we find. When that blood is presented to him, and he is told of its power either to cleanse or to condemn, and of his own interest in it, so that it must either be *for* or *against* him forever, then his displeasure awakes: the hidden enmity of his soul comes up, and he manifests a feeling of hatred, such as would have placed him, perhaps, among the foremost ranks of the crucifiers. [1]

Even should he remain calm and candid, he will not admit the preciousness of the blood, or the claims which it has upon him. Claims! He rejects the thought. He thinks it does well if he admits that it is the blood of a holy man shed without cause. But as to the *claims* of blood shed eighteen hundred years ago, this seems monstrous. He does not see how blood shed so many centuries ago can affect his present or his future condition, either for condemnation or salvation. He deems it unreasonable in us to ply him with such an idea, and thinks it would be unjust in God to deal with him in such a way and on such terms as these.

Even should he be disposed to listen with more than candor—with something like commencing anxiety and teachableness, he still stumbles at this stumbling stone. He does not see how this blood *alone*, without one good thing in himself, can justify. Forgetting that it is *what God sees in the blood* that gives it all its justifying and cleansing power, he refuses to receive the truth concerning forgiveness of sin solely through the blood of the cross. He does not understand how the sight of that blood alone should give peace to the troubled spirit, and allay its rising storms. It seems incredible that in simply believing God's testimony concerning that blood, our consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God.

Such is man's sense of the value of this blood! How different from God's! And is it conceivable that God can allow such a difference of opinion to exist between Him and the sinner, on a matter in which His own honor, and the honor of His Son are concerned, and yet treat this difference as trivial? Is it possible that God would give that blood to be shed for sinners, and yet allow them to treat it as they please, either rejecting it or despising it as each one may think fit?

Careless sinner! Trifle not with that blood. It is too precious to be sported with or slighted. And woe be to him who, either by indifference, or denial, or derision, shows that he has dared to form an estimate of it different from that of God.

FOOTNOTE:

1. Unbelief in its essence, is nothing else than mockery of the Lord—*Frederick Arndt, Sermon on "Christ between the two thieves."*

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 8

The Thoughts of the Awakened Sinner Concerning It

His sleep has been broken. The voice of God has spoken to his inner ear, and the Spirit has laid hold upon him in power. He is no longer at ease as heretofore. His iniquities have risen up before his face, and his soul is wounded within him.

Forgiveness now seems of all things the most desirable, and most absolutely necessary. To be without it, even for another hour, seems terrible. The pressure of God's wrath is felt to be intolerable. "My punishment is greater than I can bear," is the utterance of his overburdened spirit.

One who had thus passed through this dark defile thus describes his feelings. "I continued dull and thoughtful, nor could sights and songs divert my trouble. Though the sun shone beautifully, and the day was pleasant, it brought no comfort to me. I came to my house heavy and disconsolate, and would have prayed, but could not. My grief was too great, and increased night and day exceedingly.... When I was walking in the fields or roads, everything appeared so strange and wild, that I often resolved not to look up, and wished to fly to some solitary place, where I might dwell in a cave lying on the leaves of trees, and feeding on the natural fruits of the earth. Whosoever I met, I envied their happiness. Whatever I heard grieved me, and whatever I said or did so troubled me, that I repented that I stirred or broke silence. If I laughed at anything, my heart smote me immediately.... Often such a confusion of thought came over me in bed, that I was forced to rise and walk about the chamber. My sorrows were so multiplied, that I was even buried in affliction. Then was I weary of life, and often prayed that God would hide me in the grave; or at least suffer me to be mad, that I might not be sensible of my many misfortunes. The night was more burdensome than the day. I started at everything that stirred in the dark, fancying that I should see apparitions in the corners of the room, behind me, or in my way, and being continually afraid of meeting the devil. The more I was assured of a divine Ruler, by His repeated scourges, and the want of Him in my heart, the more Satan pressed me to believe myself quite forsaken; and when I looked up toward heaven, I said, 'Ah, I have no part there; the gate of that holy city is closed to every sinner, and no impure thing can enter therein.' Alas! What shall I do in the day of judgment! How shall I meet the Lord, when He shall come in flaming fire. Such clouds covered me that I stood still and fixed my heavy eyes on the trees, walls, and ground,

amazed above measure, and often crying with a bitter cry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ No temporal blessing could satisfy my craving soul, or make me wish to stay behind on the earth a day. The shining of the sun, the beauty of the spring, the voice of singing, the melody of birds, the shade of trees, or the murmur of waters, afforded me no pleasure. No. All was strange, and dark, and gloomy, and desolate. All was vanity and vexation of spirit. All the earth seemed full of darkness; nor could meat, drink, or raiment give me any comfort. I wanted only to know if I had any part in the Lord Jesus.” [1]

When thus aroused, the sinner begins to bethink himself, and to ask, Is there any way of escape? He is told of the blood of Christ. But then he remembers that this is the very blood he has betrayed, and trodden on so long. He sees it to be precious blood. He sees it to be the blood of the Holy One. He is confounded. How can his contempt for it be forgiven?

Still he sees that it is through this blood alone that salvation can come to him—that this is the only channel through which God can dispense forgiveness. But then perhaps its infinite purity and holiness alarm him. “What has an unholy soul to do with blood so spotless”; blood of which he was one of the shedders. He would almost shrink from it, as Cain from the blood of Abel. Had it been less pure, he thinks it would have suited better one so impure as he.

But as the Holy Spirit opens his eyes, and lets in the light, he sees that it is just its purity that makes it so suitable; and that had it been less pure, it would not have done for him. Had one stain been found upon it, there could have been no hope for the guilty. And thus fixing his eye upon it, and seeing it in these two aspects, its purity and its preciousness, he is satisfied. His conscience is pacified. He feels what it is to have “peace through the blood of the cross.” For to see that blood, and to know what God thinks of it, is health and peace and consolation to the soul.

It is not my looking to the blood in conjunction with my looking to my own act of seeing that brings this peace. It is my simple and direct looking to the blood. It is in looking that I am blest; not in thinking about my looking. To look to the blood is to be cleansed; to look away from the blood, or to self, or to the world, or to sin, is to arrest the cleansing process and to neutralize the healing power. The more I see of the matchless value of that blood, and understand the substitution of life for life, which that blood proclaims, and to which it is ever pointing, the more will my peace be like a river.

Look at yon Israelite approaching the altar! His conscience is burdened. Guilt has cast its shadow over his soul. But he comes to the altar. He sees the blood that is sprinkled upon it, and streaming down its sides, and he is comforted. The burden rolls off. Peace takes possession of his soul. For, that which he saw in the blood dispelled his fears by showing him the wrath of God against his sin passing off to the substitute and exhausting itself on it. It is the sight of the blood alone that relieves his laden conscience. He does not first look at the blood and then at himself before he can take comfort. He does not imagine that he must couple together the sight of the blood and the reflection upon his own act of seeing before he can be unburdened. He does not thrust away the blessed light that is

streaming in from that peace- speaking altar, till he has satisfied himself that he is looking aright. He does not say, Am I standing in the right position—have I approached with becoming reverence—have I fixed my eye properly upon the altar—am I exercising my visual organs aright—is my seeing of the right and genuine kind? No. He is so engrossed with the altar that he has no time nor heart to think about himself. He says in the gladness of his soul, “Yonder is the altar, and that is the lamb, and there is the blood streaming down; I am satisfied; this is all I need; the sight which my eyes now behold gives the full answer to all my doubts, and rebukes my saddening fears.”

Or take the Israelite in his dwelling, when the destroying angel, with the sword of God, went abroad, smiting the firstborn of Egypt. What preserved the Israelites? The blood. That was a defense which was impregnable. From it even the missioned angel must turn away. The blood stood sentinel at the gates of each Israelitish dwelling, and its inmates were secure.

What should we have thought of any son of Israel reasoning himself out of his privilege by doubting the efficacy of the blood? What should have thought of such an one standing trembling within his house, as if he could not reckon on safety? The lamb has been killed; but he is afraid it has not been killed aright! The blood has been sprinkled; but he is afraid that it has not been sprinkled aright! Both lintel and posts are streaming with it; but he fears his motives are not right, and his feelings are not what they ought to have been! Thus he stands troubled and trembling, not knowing but that the angel may break through and smite him. Should we not accuse such an one of sad and sinful unbelief? Should we not say, The lamb has been slain, the blood has been sprinkled, the posts are all red with it—is not this enough to quiet your fear? What would you have more? Would you slay another lamb to make up the deficiency? Has not God told you that *one* is enough? If the blood be ineffectual wipe it off and run the risk. Do you say, “But I do not *see* the blood, it is on the outside and therefore invisible to me”? Well, but God sees it, and that is enough. The angel sees it, and that turns him away. Is it not written, “When I *SEE* the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13)?

So with the anxious spirit. We bring it good news. The Lamb has been slain, the Lamb of God, as it is written, “It pleased the LORD to bruise Him” (Isaiah 53:10). His blood has been shed, and sprinkled, and accepted; and that shed blood is for the remission of sin, and for reconciling us to God. That blood is intended to set us in the place of the innocent; to bring us nigh to God just as if we had never separated; to be our recommendation to God, so that coming with it as our plea, we may expect to be treated by God as HE is treated whose blood we thus recognize and rest on. [2]

Oh! What a message of peace should these words convey to the weary soul—“when I see the blood.” *Our* seeing may be imperfect and dim, but it is not on *our seeing* that we are called to rest. It is *God’s seeing* that is our security; and the knowledge of this is the expulsion of fear and doubt, the entrance of peace and joy.

Thus an old divine speaks: “What other religions seek, the Christian religion only finds, even a solid foundation for true peace and settlement of conscience. While the Jew seeks

it in vain in the law, the Mahometan in his external observances, the Papist in his merits, the believer only finds in the blood of this great sacrifice. This, and nothing less than this, can pacify a distressed conscience, laboring under the weight of its own guilt. Conscience demands no less to satisfy it than God demands to satisfy Him. The grand inquest of conscience is, '*Is God satisfied?* If He be satisfied, I am satisfied.'" [3]

If then we are content to take this blood as our plea and recommendation, we may go to Him with all confidence and glad anticipation. As sinners whose only introduction to Him is the blood, He is most willing to receive us. To come with anything else than the blood as our introduction is most certainly to secure for ourselves rejection; but to come with it alone is to ensure that blessed welcome which the blood has never yet failed to obtain for the vilest sinner that ever went to God with it as his only plea.

The words which once gave peace to a convicted soul [4] were these: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." The good news which these words contain are for you as well as for him. He found in them something whereon both to live and to die—something which lifted off the burden of his guilt and became the spring of a godly and devoted life. And why should you turn away from the free love which that blood proclaims? [5]

FOOTNOTES:

1. Life of Rev. John Cennick.
2. It is thus that a deep thinker of the present age addresses himself to such as you, "Do you rejoice when the atonement made by the priest has removed the evil stain from your name, restored you to your privileges as a son of Abraham, and replaced you in the respect of your brethren? There is an atonement which takes away a deeper, worse stain, an eating cankerspot in the very heart of your personal being! This, to as many as receive it, gives the privilege to become sons of God (John 1:12); this will admit to the society of angels, and insure to you the rights of brotherhood with spirits made perfect! (Hebrews 12:22-23). There is a sacrifice, a sin-offering, and a High Priest, who is indeed a mediator, who in not type or shadow but in very truth, and in His own right stands in the place of man to God, and of God to man"—*Coleridge, Aids to Reflection*.
3. Flavel, Works, vol. 1, p. 149.
4. Col. Gardiner.
5. But, alas! Some object, and say, that their very faith, which must carry the rest of their filth to the fountain of Christ's blood, is defiled. How, then, can they expect to be made clean? *Answer:* The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficiently able to wash all our filth away; and the filth of faith, as well of other actions. Therefore, when faith, as a hand, is carrying the filth of the soul away to Christ to be washed in His blood, let the foul hand go with the foul handful; give to Christ faith and all to wash.

6. 2. But what shall I do, when, notwithstanding of all this, my conscience shall still accuse me of uncleanness, and cry out against me as filthy and abominable?
Answer: Take it away also to the blood of Jesus, that there it may be purged (Hebrews 9:14); and here alone will we “get our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Hebrews 10:22). The conscience must be steeped, so to speak, in the blood of Jesus, and so it shall be clean. And taking our filthy hearts to this cleansing fountain to be washed, we will get them delivered and sprinkled from an evil conscience, that it shall no more have ground of accusation against us. When we have to say, that we have put our filthy souls in the hand of the great cleanser, Jesus Christ, and brought all our pollutions to His blood, what can conscience say to us? The Lord, it is true, may suffer our conscience still to bark upon us, and cast up our filthiness to us, that we may be more humbled, and be put to lie more constantly at the fountain; yet when we have fled to Christ, and taken our filthiness to the open and appointed fountain, we can answer the accusations of conscience in law, and have peace—*Brown, Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, pp. 178-179.

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 9

The Thoughts of the Saint Concerning It

After many a struggle, and after many a refusal to admit into his soul the peace that comes from the knowledge of this blood, the sinner’s eyes have been fully opened by the Holy Spirit to see its efficacy and suitableness. To one who had no consciousness of guilt burdening him—no distraction of soul nor misgivings of conscience as to his standing in the sight of God, the blood must appear as unnatural as unnecessary; but to one whose conscience is awake, whose indifference about sin is gone, who has known what it is to groan by reason of the “body of death”—the blood is the very thing that he feels his need of, to pacify the conscience and to bring him to God as one from whom, in believing, the wrath due to his iniquities has passed away forever (Colossians 1:20-22).

He has seen sin in the light in which God sees it; but he has also seen the blood in that same light also. He has looked at the blood from the point at which God looks at it, and his soul has rested from its conflicts and its fears. Hitherto he had looked at it from a position of his own, and through a medium of his own coloring, but the Holy Spirit has removed him from that false position into the true one, and has brought him out from the false coloring with which he was surrounded into that transparent atmosphere in which all things are seen as they are.

The estimate which in other days he had formed of the blood is now seen not only as inadequate, but false. It was that false estimate that so long stood between him and peace,

and it is the remains of that false estimate still cleaving to him that at times rise up to darken or trouble his spirit. But that estimate is no longer his. He has been taught another by the Spirit of truth. This new estimate is that of God. It is founded upon the price which the Father puts upon the blood of the beloved Son.

In believing, the sinner relinquishes his own estimate and adopts that of God. In doing so he finds peace.

The blood is his peace. How?

1. *Because he sees it to be divine.* It is the blood of God (Acts 20:28). Creature-blood could avail nothing. It could not reach high enough; it could not go low enough for his want and guilt. The blood is the life; [1] and no life save that which is divine—no life save that of the Prince of life could answer for his. There must be some sort of equivalent; and that equivalent God alone could furnish. And He has furnished it by sending His own Son, and so substituting *a divine life* instead of a *human life*, a *divine death* as the payment in full of that *eternal death* which was the sinning creature's portion. The sight of this divine bloodshedding—this infinite payment—is peace to his soul.

2. *Because he sees it to be so precious.* It is not only divinely perfect but divinely precious. No limit can be set upon its value. The question which a troubled spirit puts is, *Is this blood, this life, valuable enough to stand instead of mine?* If it be so, and if God be willing to accept the substitution, I am satisfied. The answer is, That blood is valuable enough to answer for yours, and God is willing to accept the exchange. Nay, it was He who first proposed it; it is He who is pressing this exchange upon your notice and entreating you to receive it, that so there may be nothing left for you to pay. In believing, we consent to take God's payment, which we learn to be so infinite in value; and, in taking it, we are set free from the whole duration which was our portion, till that payment should be wholly made. And this is peace!

3. *Because he sees it to be so suitable.* It provides for the very things he needs. It meets every part of his varied case, leaving nothing unprovided for which could burden, or alarm, or disquiet him. Every question that a guilty conscience can put, it fully answers. It is not a mere general remedy which we must contrive to make suit our case as well we can. It is a special remedy which adapts itself to every individual case, just as if provided for it alone. No fear can arise, for which it does not furnish an antidote. No doubt can agitate the soul, which it is not fitted to soothe and lay to rest. No question can be asked, to which it does not most promptly reply. And this is peace!

4. *Because he sees it to be so spotless.* It is "the blood of the Lamb without blemish and without spot." This attracts his eye. There are many things attractive about the blood, but this is one of the most attractive. There is not one stain upon it. It is infinitely pure. Had there been one stain upon it, his peace would have been imperfect. But its purity is so manifest and so divine, that he feels the absolute security of the foundation on which his

peace is built. It is the blood of a sacrifice in which even the eye of Jehovah could detect no flaw.

5. *Because he sees it to be so unchangeable.* It loses none of its efficacy by time or repetition. It is the same in this age as when it was shed at first. It is the same today as when first we applied to it for healing and for cleansing. Nothing can rob it of its potency. It has cleansed millions; it can cleanse millions more; it has washed out stains, in number past calculation, in dye most thoroughly crimson. Yet it is unpolluted. It has taken on no stain. It is still as able to pacify the conscience and to release the soul from guilt. All along it has spoken “better things than that of Abel”; and to this day it still speaks the same. As the atmosphere that girds our earth remains untainted in spite of the millions that breathe it—as fit to nourish life, and to transmit the sunbeam as at the first—so this blood of God’s own Son abides unstained by the myriad of sins that it has purged away—as fit as ever to cleanse, to heal, to gladden, and to transmit the sunshine of Jehovah’s reconciliation into any eye that will but open to let it enter.

Of all this he sees that there is abundant *evidence*, evidence which completely satisfies him, and makes him feel that in trusting in that blood, he is trusting to one of the *surest things in the universe*. He hears the voice of God, from the beginning proclaiming its power and its purity. He sees the finger of God pointing forward to the one sacrifice in which no flaw could be found. He listens to the testimony of “the law and the prophets” on this point, and finds how entire is their concurrence. He sees Satan doing his utmost to discover some imperfection in his victim, but finding “nothing in Him” (John 14:30). He hears the voice even of him that betrayed it, saying, “It is innocent blood” (Matthew 27:4); and that of the Roman centurion, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47). He sees too in the *resurrection* of the crucified One, one of the most decisive of all the testimonies. It was “through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” “that He was brought again from the dead by the Father” (Hebrews 13:20). The sin that was laid upon Him had slain Him and borne Him down to the grave; but in so doing, it had shed that blood that taketh sin away; so that it was not possible He could be holden in the chains of death. The blood had satisfied, and having been accepted as payment in full, He was raised forthwith out of that very tomb into which He had gone down under the weight of our guilt. The blood was thus proved to be sufficient to atone for that guilt which was laid upon Him—and in this blessed proof the believing soul rests. He hears too the songs which are sung in heaven respecting this blood; and sees the delight there felt in Jesus as “the Lamb that was slain” (Revelation 5:9, 12). And that in which the saints above rejoice, is surely what he may safely rejoice in here. *They* cannot be mistaken in their estimate of the blood. They cannot err in their praises of the blood. They must know what they are doing, when delighting in the Lamb that was slain.

What more then can he need as evidence of the preciousness, the efficacy, the spotlessness, the sufficiency of this blood, to which he has come, and on which he is resting? It has been proved in every way and found sufficient. It was enough for the saints in other days, it is enough for them now. It is enough for the saints above, it may well be enough for the saints below.

But what are the effects which the saint experiences, as resulting from this blood? They are such as the following:

1. *Through it he has the remission of sin.* He remembers how it is written, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, *the forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). He remembers also how Jesus Himself said, “This is My blood of the new covenant shed for many, for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Keeping his eye fixed upon the blood, he realizes every moment the forgiveness which it proclaims, and the blessedness of which that forgiveness is the source. And if at any time a doubt disquiet him, he looks anew to the blood and is reassured. [2]

2. *Through it he is brought nigh and kept nigh to God.* For thus it is written, “Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off, *are made nigh* by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13). In coming nigh at first, he came with that blood as his only introduction: and, in continuing nigh, he feels the necessity of always realizing the efficacy of the blood. It was this that enabled him to draw near “with a true heart and in full assurance of faith,” and it is this that keeps him in the same posture still. It is this that makes him feel safe in the presence of the Holy One, safe in dealing with Him about his sins, safe in dwelling always in the secret place of the Most High.

3. *Through it he is put in possession of eternal life.* The blood is his security, as well as the ground of his claim. “The blood is the life,” and the life of another having been taken instead of his, death is no longer his portion, but life—“whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life” (John 6:54). In recognizing the efficacy of the blood, and in consenting to take his stand before God upon it alone, he *drinks* it, and in drinking it he receives the earnest of the everlasting life of which in believing he has become the heir.

4. *Through it his conscience is purged.* “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:13-14; I John 1:7). Though a sinner, he is entitled to plead “not guilty” by reason of his connection with this blood. To do anything else would be to deny the full efficacy of the blood. Though in himself guilty, his conscience is as completely set at rest from the accusing terrors of remorse, as if he had never transgressed the law. He finds that “the blood of Jesus Christ *cleanseth* him from all sin”; not “hath cleansed” but “cleanseth”—is always doing it, hour after hour. The stream is ever flowing over him and ever carrying off the iniquity, that is oozing out at every pore.

5. *Through it he is set apart for God.* By it he has been bought, and by it he has been separated from a present evil world. Hence he can join in that song, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God” (Revelation 1:5-6). By this blood he has been ransomed, and this of itself sets him apart. But the mark of the blood is upon him. He has become a consecrated vessel—a vessel of the sanctuary—no longer for the use of self or of the world, but for the use of God alone.

As one on whom the blood has been sprinkled, he feels that he dare not be another's; he must be Christ's alone. He dare not turn the sanctuary of Jehovah into the temple of idols, the dwelling of the Holy Ghost into the abode of devils.

6. *Through it all holiness comes.* The blood has opened the channel, and holiness flows in. He dares not use this blood for unholy purposes. He dares not say, "I am sprinkled with the blood, therefore I may make light of sin, I may live as I please." No: he says I am sprinkled with this blood, therefore I must be holy. They who know it not may live on in sin; but I who know it, dare not. Others who reject it may reason in such a way; but I cannot. The blood is too precious, too holy, to be used for any but holy purposes. If he were attempting to use it for any other, it would immediately change its voice and bear witness against him.

7. *Through it he overcomes.* "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:11). It is the sight of this blood that nerves him for the conflict, and gives him the assurance of victory. He, whose blood it is, was the conqueror, and in His name we move forward to battle, certain of being more than conquerors through Him that loved us. The blood with which we are sprinkled gives us both strength and courage. With it we are invincible—nay, victorious.

8. *Through it his garments are purified.* Of the blessed above it is written, "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14). It is this that so thoroughly purifies our raiment, making it, for beauty and for glory, to resemble that of our great High Priest Himself. Not one stain of earth is permitted to defile it. And thus clothed, we are not only made fit for having fellowship with God, but for standing "before His throne," for "serving Him day and night in His temple." The brightness of angelic raiment cannot equal ours, for it is divine. We can take our place amid angels, yet never blush. We can compare our robes with theirs, yet feel no shame. So perfect, so resplendent have they been made by this blood of the Lamb.

9. *Through it all blessing flows.* The "good things to come" spoken of by the apostle (Hebrews 10:1), are all connected with this blood. It is the blood that makes it befitting in God to bestow these blessings, and which emboldens the sinner to draw near in order to receive them. All that is excellent and glorious is connected with this blood. This is the river that bears to him all blessings on its crimson stream, pouring in without ceasing everything that God has to confer. "Of what use is this fountain to believers? (asks an old writer). Many and great; all their graces flow from it; all their duties are to be washed in it; all their comforts are maintained by it." [3]

Thus it is that the saint rejoices in this blood. It was the knowledge of it that first shed peace into his soul, and it is the same knowledge that maintains, throughout life, that peace which then began. It was in being led by the Holy Spirit to the knowledge of this blood that he became a saint, and it is in continuing to know it that he becomes a saint. His only answer to the whispers of conscience, is "the blood that was shed." His great protection against the fiery darts of the wicked one, is "the blood that was shed." His

preparation for the duties of each day is a fresh application of the blood, in which he bathes his conscience anew each morning as he rises. [4]

It speaks to him “Better things than that of Abel”—far better things indeed.

1. *It speaks of a brother's love, not of a brother's hatred.* It has no voice for him but that of love; love strong as death, nay, stronger. Its language is, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” It has a voice which says, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore.”

2. *It speaks of peace returned, not of peace fled away.* Abel's blood seemed to say that peace had left the earth, and in its place all discord and revenge and fierce variance had come. But this better blood tells us that peace has again found an abode on earth, that the broken links between man and man are to be reknit, and that the sunshine of genial harmony between heaven and earth is displacing the dark discord that threatened to reign forever. It speaks of reconciliation between God and the sinner—reconciliation upon securest grounds—the reconciliation of a covenant “ordered in all things and sure.”

3. *It speaks of grace, not of wrath.* In Abel's case it was all wrath; the blood cried for vengeance out of the ground; this blood breathes no vengeance, no wrath. All in it is grace—grace to sinners—grace to the murderers—grace to the uttermost. Free love to the unlovable and the unloving is the very essence of the message which it brings.

4. *It speaks of forgiveness, not condemnation.* It calls up no thunders. It wields no lightnings to execute the sentence of righteousness against the ungodly. “Forgive,” is its only utterance. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Its burden is, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

5. *It speaks of the blessing, not of the curse.* “Bless, and curse not,” is the commission with which it is entrusted in its embassy to man. It has borne the curse; it has absorbed it; it has transmuted it into a blessing—a blessing which it is pouring freely out on all who will but receive it. Its message is, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

6. *It speaks of life, not of death.* Cain's blood-guiltiness seemed to seal up man's ruin, and shut him up to helpless death. There seemed nothing in reserve but death. Even a brother's heart could meditate death against a brother, and a brother's hand inflict it. But in this better blood all is life—life everlasting—life that has come to us through death—the death of the substitute. It is this blood which says, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John 11:25-26).

7. It speaks not to alarm but to soothe the conscience. Abel's blood must have been echoing in the ears of Cain all his days. He might go out from the gate of Eden, the presence of the Lord, but he could not get beyond the sound of that voice. It would keep his conscience ever open, ever bleeding, ever tortured. But this better blood speaks peace. It purges the conscience and lays its alarms to rest. It heals, it restores, it gladdens. To be sprinkled with it is what the conscience desires. To hear its voice is what the conscience feels to be necessary for comfort and rest. Its still small voice can in a moment calm the tumults of the most torn and troubled breast.

8. It speaks not of man the fugitive and vagabond, but of man restored to Eden. It was the blood of his brother that chased Cain from the gate of paradise. It would not allow him to dwell even within sight of it, though outside the sacred fence. But this better blood brings back the sinner to the gate of Paradise again—nay, brings him in, or at least gives him the pledge that he shall one day re-enter these blessed gates, and dwell within these blessed bowers. It transforms him from a fugitive and a vagabond, such as he is by nature, into a fellow citizen with the saints and an heir of the incorruptible inheritance, the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. [5]

Realizing these things, the saint moves on his joyful course. The blood is ALL to him. It is his peace; it is his medicine; it is his daily comforter. And resting in it he rejoices in hope of the glory to be revealed. Contrasting the blood of Abel with that of Christ, and comparing the blood of the sacrifices with that of the Lamb of God, he daily gets new insight into its wondrous excellencies, and is made to feel its full and perfect sufficiency. He needs no more to keep his soul in perfect peace, even when conscious of no common unworthiness and pollution. He needs no more to heal all his wounds, to cleanse away all his defilement, to strengthen him for every toil, and to enable him to conquer in every battle with the enemy.

And in proportion as he learns to enter more fully into the thoughts of God concerning the blood, in that proportion does his peace deepen and his joy overflow.

All its suitableness and manifold riches are not disclosed in a single day. He is ever making new discoveries in this illimitable field: ever digging into new veins in this unfathomable mine. His song on earth is, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood...to Him be glory and dominion for ever" (Revelation 1:5-6). His song in heaven will be the same, only louder and fuller, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10).

FOOTNOTES:

1. The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Leviticus 17:11).
2. It was thus that a minister of the last century wrote to a friend on a deathbed, “Your being kept in the faith of the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and preserved from falling in the last trial, must be entirely owing to grace helping in that very time of need, even the free grace that is in Christ Jesus sufficient for you, and showing itself perfect in your weakness. This needs no merit nor effort of yours, to make it effectual; you are not weak enough to be helped by it, if you think to assist it in the least, either by the least doing, or remotest willing to do, yet it must both show your utter weakness and infirmities, and show itself sufficient to make you strong in weakness. The boundless merit of the blood of God needs not the least grain of weight from you added to it, to make it outweigh the demerit of all your heinous sins, with all their aggravations, or to make it sufficient to keep you from being found wanting when weighed in God’s balance. It scorns the least offer of assistance from the sinner to make him perfectly just in the sight of God. And if you believe it to be the blood of the Son of God that is exhibited to you in the divine testimony, you cannot suspect that you lack anything to make you inherit eternal life. If you have but dark views of the reconciled face of God, this must be because you see as through a glass darkly the merit of the reconciling blood, but when you once have ceased to walk by faith, being present with the Lord, and seeing Him as He is, alive from the dead by His own blood, the brightest light of the Father’s face that shines on Him will fill your soul.”
3. Romaine’s Works, p. 127.
4. Let this be our daily work and exercise, for we are daily contracting new filth. Yesterday’s cleansing will not save us from new filth today; nor will our running to the fountain today, serve to take away new spots tomorrow; new spots call for new washing, so that this must be our very life and exercise, to be daily and continually running to the fountain with our souls, and giving Christ, the great purger, much to do.
5. We must not think to be perfectly washed, so long as we are here; for we will be contracting new filth daily, our feet will be to wash (John 13:10). We will not be without spot or wrinkle, till we come home to that place, wherein entereth nothing that defileth—*Brown, Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, p. 167.
6. The following quaint old stanza may help to illustrate some of the preceding remarks:

Abel was silent; but his blood was strong;

Each drop of guiltless blood commands a tongue,

A tongue that cries—’tis not a tongue implores

For gentle audience, ’tis a tongue that roars

For hideous vengeance; 'tis a tongue that's bold
And full of courage, and that cannot hold.
Oh! What a noise my blessed Saviour's blood
Makes now in heaven! How strong it cries! How loud!
But not for vengeance. From His side has sprung
A world of drops; from every drop a tongue.
O sinner, hear of Jesus' blood the cry,
God wills to save thee—wherefore wilt thou die!—*Frances Quarles.*

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 10

The Thoughts of the Lost Soul Concerning It

In Judas we have an instance of a lost soul—a soul just departing to the everlasting prison house. Of him we read, “Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.” And his testimony respecting the blood is given in the following confession, falling from his dying lips, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Matthew 27:3-4).

But a few hours before, he had betrayed it—he had sold it for thirty pieces of silver. But now remorse has fastened itself upon him; his conscience, which had slept, is now awaking; his guilt, like a poisoned garment, covers him around, and darts in its tortures at every pore.

One object occupies his whole vision, so that he can see no other; it is the blood he had betrayed. High above all the sins of a sinful life this towers in awful preeminence. It is his sin of sins; the sin which sets aside every other, as if in comparison with this they did not deserve the name. One scene haunts him, like a specter from beneath, hanging upon his steps and whispering terror into his soul—the bargain for blood—the innocent blood! He cannot shake it off. It clings closer and gathers darker around him.

He is just about to go “to his own place”; and he leaves behind him his testimony to the innocence of the blood. He tells us with dying lips that it is “innocent blood.” As he is

about to plunge into hell, he turns round to his companions in guilt, and says, “It is innocent blood.”

It is its *innocence* that makes it so awful, even to think upon. It is its *innocence* that strikes into his vitals as with a scorpion’s sting. Had there been one stain upon it, his agony might not have been so hopeless, so horrible. There might have been some relief, some hope, some ray of light. But it is innocent blood! Its innocence! Oh, it is this that torments him before the time. It is this that sends him howling along like some raging demoniac, seeking refuge among the tombs—seeking refuge in hell, as if hell might be some relief, because removed from the place where the innocent blood had been sold, and was crying to heaven against its seller. Oh! He would do anything now rather than look upon that innocent blood. He would flee to any place of darkness, where it might be hidden from his eyes!

Then, as if to double all his agony, when he casts down the price of blood at the feet of the murderers, all the reply he meets with is the cutting bitterness of cold remorseless malignity, “What is that to us? see thou to that.” Ah! Poor wretched soul, thou art lost indeed: and this is all the sympathy with which thy companions greet thee—a foretaste of the sympathy with which devils below shall salute thee when thou goest down to their abode of woe!

We see then, that it is specially the *innocence* of the blood that shall be of all others, the cutting, stinging thought of a lost soul. The blood he has slighted and trampled on was not only so precious, but so innocent! It is this that shall make hell so intolerable. The blood he has betrayed was without blemish and without spot; yet he has treated it as if it were polluted and vile! He has treated it as if it were the felon’s blood—the blood of one whose crimes demanded its shedding. Its innocence stares him in the face. Its innocence is gall and wormwood in his cup, the sting of the worm that never dies. Oh! Could he but discover one stain on it, it would help to cool his burning tongue; it would help to unloose his adamant chain, to quench the fire that is consuming his bones. But all in vain. It is *innocent* blood; and shall be so forever. Its *innocence* shall be the consummation of his agony. It might have exalted him to heaven; but now it is sinking him eternally to the lowest hell.

Heedless sinner! Such may shortly be thy doom! Thou despisest the blood, or at least thou slightest it. Perhaps thou art one of those who betray it, time after time, at a communion table. How awful thy condition! The wrath of God abideth on thee *even now*; and thou shalt shortly be in hell, if grace prevent not. There thou shalt be with Judas, hearing his bitter cries, and joining thine to his. Thou hast followed his footsteps here as a betrayer and despiser of the blood, and ere long thou must reap the recompense which he is reaping.

Thou shalt meet him and his fellows; and oh, what a meeting! “Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming” (Isaiah 14:9). They will recognize and salute thee. “Ha! Art thou too become like unto us; thou art brought down to the grave; thou art fallen from heaven; thou art cast out as an abominable branch, going down to the stones

of the pit as a carcass trodden under foot. Art thou too become like one of us—thou that hast named the name of the Redeemer, thou that hast heard the good news of His life-bringing death; thou that hast kept company with His disciples as if thou wert altogether one of them?” And as thou criest out in thine agony, cursing them as thy tempters, thou receivest no reply but the sneer of heartless mockery, “What is that to us? see thou to that” (Matthew 27:4).

Thus shalt thou be eternally shut in. Whether thou wilt or not, thou must have thy companionship with Judas, with the lost, with the devil and his angels. Thou canst not escape. Thou canst not rise. The innocent blood presses thee down—a heavier millstone than that which shall sink Babylon in the mighty waters. And as thou plungest downward in that wild abyss of smoke, and fire, and vapor, ascending up forever and ever, this shall be the cry of thy tormented spirit, “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.”

Must it be so? Art thou resolved to perish, and to crush thy immortal spirit beneath the weight of this innocent blood? Must mercy be slighted, life rejected, and forgiveness flung away as dross? Must Satan be served, the world worshipped, self indulged, and God set clean aside as a being better far forgotten and disowned? Must hell be chosen, when the gate of the Kingdom stands wide before thee, and the kindest welcome proffered that ever friend gave to friend, or parent to child?

Must it be so? Is thy mind made up to brave the worst? Is thy life here to be one of reckless unbelief and folly? Wilt thou have no compassion upon thyself, but go on courting the evil, as if it were the better lot?

Heedless soul! Stand still for one moment in thy foolishness. Listen! A voice comes wildly up as from the regions beneath. It is the voice of wailing, and its burden is, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” It is the voice of Judas! His wailing is not done. It was the first awful note of it which earth heard ere he plunged beneath. But the prolongation was reserved for other ears than man’s, other realms than these of this still sweet and sunny earth. It is the faint far-off echo of that cry, that is now ascending. Man! Dost thou not hear it? But a little while, and thou shalt join it, to swell its tone of infinite and eternal sadness, if thou madly mockest all warning, and persistest in thy unbelief.

Do not so. Thou hast gone near enough to the gates of hell; yet go not in. Turn back. It is not yet too late. Even *thou* mayest be saved. The gate of light stands as widely open as the gate of darkness. The way of life, the narrow way, is as free to thee as is the way of death.

There is still forgiveness. And the glad tidings of it are as glad as ever. No sin of thine has altered that gladness or made the tidings a forbidden joy to thee. We can tell you as truly as ever that “these things are written that *thou* mightest believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing *thou* mightest have life through His name” (John 20:31).

“The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.” Remember it is ALL sin—even yours. It can wash, it can pardon, it can justify even thee. It can wash, it can pardon, it can justify even thee. Take it now, for cleansing and salvation. It will purge thy conscience; it will reconcile thee to God; it will fill thy soul with peace. And are these blessings so common and so cheap, that thou canst afford to slight or to postpone them?

The great day of reckoning for the blood draws nigh. He whose blood was shed is coming to take vengeance on its shedders. It will be a sore reckoning for millions. And who shall then attempt to scorn the accusation as if it were idle or untrue? “Blood-guiltiness” shall then be brought in as the verdict against this world—and in that awful verdict your name shall be found.

The Blood of the Cross, Horatius Bonar

CHAPTER 11

The Good News Concerning This Blood

It is the blood whose shedding has provided a propitiation for sin, and whosoever will consent to take this as his propitiation becomes a partaker of the blessings which it contains. It was the High Priest’s laying of his hand upon the goat (Leviticus 16:21) that established the connection between it and the people, so that Israel’s sins passed over to the substitute; and so it is our believing that connects us with the Divine Substitute, and brings to us all the benefits of the divine bloodshedding.

It is our unbelief that intercepts the communication; it is faith that establishes it. Faith may seem a slight thing to some; and they may wonder how salvation can flow from believing. Hence they try to magnify it, to adore it, to add to it, in order that it may appear some great thing, something worthy of having salvation as its reward. In so doing they are actually transforming faith into a work, and introducing salvation by works under the name of faith. They show that they understand neither the nature nor the office of faith. It saves, simply by handing us over to the Saviour. It saves, not on account of the good works which flow from it; not on account of the love which it kindles; not on account of the repentance which it produces; but solely because it connects us with the Saving One. Its saving efficacy does not lie in connection with righteousness and holiness, but entirely in its connection with the Righteous and Holy One. [1]

Thus it is that unbelief ruins, because it cuts off all communication with the source of life; and thus faith blesses because it establishes that communication.

See these electric wires that are shooting their mysterious threads throughout our land, communicating between city and city, between man and man, however distant; dead, yet extinct with life; silent, yet vocal with hidden sound; carrying, as with a lightning burst,

the tidings of good or evil from shore to shore. Separate their terminating points by one hair's breadth from the index, or interpose some nonconducting substance—in a moment intercourse is broken. No tidings come and go. The stoppage is as entire as if you had cut every wire in pieces, and cast these pieces to the winds. But refasten the severed points, or link them to the index with some conducting material, and instantaneously the intercourse is renewed. Joy and sorrow flow again along the line. Men's thoughts, men's feelings, men's deeds, rumors of war or assurances of peace, news of victory or defeat, the sound of falling thrones, the shouts of frantic nations—all hurrying on after each other to convey to ten thousand throbbing hearts the evil or the good which they contain!

That nonconductor is *unbelief*. It interposes between the soul and all heavenly blessing, all divine intercourse. It may seem a thing too slight to effect so great a result; yet it does so inevitably. It shuts off the communication with the source of all glad tidings. It isolates man, and forbids the approach of blessing.

That conductor is *faith*. In itself it is nothing, but in its connection everything. It restores in a moment the broken communication; and this, not from any virtue in itself, but simply as the conducting link between the soul and the fountain of all blessing above.

The blood of the cross is that which has “made peace” (Colossians 1:20); and to share this peace God freely calls us. This blood of the cross is that by which we are justified (Romans 5:9); and to this justification we are invited. This blood of the cross is that by which we are brought nigh to God (Ephesians 2:13); and to this blessed nearness we are invited. This blood of the cross is that by which “we have redemption” (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14), even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace; and this redemption, this forgiveness, is freely set before us. It is by this blood that we have liberty of entrance into the holiest (Hebrews 10:19); and God's voice to each sinner is to “enter in.” It is by this blood that we are cleansed and washed (I John 1:7; Revelation 1:5) and this fountain is free, free as any of earth's flowing streams, free as the mighty ocean itself, in which all may wash and be clean.

These are good news concerning the blood—news which should make every sinner feel that it is just what he stands in need of. Nothing less than this; yet nothing more.

And these good news of the blood are no less good news of Him whose blood is shed. For it is by this bloodshedding that He is the Saviour. Without this, He could not have been a Redeemer; but, with it, He is altogether such a Redeemer as suits the sinner's case. In Him there is salvation—salvation without a price—salvation for the most totally and thoroughly lost that this fallen earth contains. Go and receive it.

Do you ask, How am I to find salvation, and how am I to go to that God, on the blood of whose Son I have trampled so long? I answer, Go to Him in your proper and present character—that of sinner. Go with no lie upon your lips, professing to be what you are not, or to feel what you do not. Tell Him honestly what you are, and what you feel, and what you do not feel. “Take with you words”; but let them be honest words, not the words of hypocrisy and deceit. Tell Him that your sin is piercing you; or tell Him that

you have no sense of sin, no repentance, no relish for divine things, no right knowledge of your own worthlessness and guilt. Present yourself before Him just as you are, and not as you wish to be, or think you ought to be, or suppose He desires you to be. Recount your necessities; make mention of the multitude of His mercies; point to the work of the blessed Son; remind Him how entirely righteous it would be for Him to receive and bless you. Appear before Him, taking for granted just that you are what you are, a sinner; and that Christ is what He is, a Saviour; deal honestly with God, and be assured that it is most thoroughly impossible that you can miss your errand. “Seek the LORD while He may be found”; and you will see that He is found of you. “Call upon Him while He is near”; and you will find how near He is. [2]

But tarry not, for the day is fast closing, and the thick gloom of evening is at hand. The last “woes” are preparing, and the gates of the kingdom shall ere long be shut. The acceptable year of the Lord is running out, and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Trifle not with your brief remaining span or inch of hasty time.

This earth shall soon shake beneath the footsteps of its coming Judge. Its hills and rocks must soon echo with the sound of the final trumpet. And therefore it concerns men, without delay, to be securing the shelter ere the storm be up. When once the wrath of the Lamb is kindled, who shall escape save those who are sprinkled with His blood? It is an eternal doom that is preparing for the ungodly, and the time that remaineth is short, in which the sinner may escape. He has no moments to fling away, for that which he flings away may be his last.

Fool! When wilt thou be wise? Thou art wise for time, and not for eternity. Dost thou not see these thunderclouds? Dost thou not hear the wild tumult of earth, the cry of nations, the shock of falling empires, the crumbling sound throughout the earth that speaks of universal dissolution and ruin? What are these things? The work of chance? A passing earthquake? The burst of frenzy for an hour? No. They are signs of gathering wrath. It is God coming down to smite the guilty earth—that earth upon whose surface you are treading.

Are you ready for His arrival? Are all matters of variance between you and Him adjusted? And has your reconciliation been sealed by the blood of the Lamb?

If not, how shall you meet His eye? How shall you abide His awful scrutiny? That scrutiny will comprise much. Nay, it will omit nothing; its minuteness and exactness will overwhelm you. But the most solemn part of it will be that touching the blood of the Son of God, and the good news respecting it which have been so long proclaimed to you. These good news have found no entrance, and the messenger who brought them has been denied all access day by day. Instead of prizing this blood and making use of it for your cleansing, you have slighted it; and in slighting it, you have slighted Him whose blood it is—Him through whose death there is life for you. And shall not the Lord visit you for such deliberate rejection of His grace; shall not His soul be avenged for such neglect of His “great salvation?”

FOOTNOTES:

1. When thou art told that we are justified by faith think not that this takes place because faith is a virtue in us by which we secure the approbation of God, or because faith is the parent stock of other virtues; but be assured of this, whenever thou hearest the word faith, that what is offered is something out of ourselves—*Melancthon*.
2. The reason why we so often find the awakened sinner so slow in apprehending the simple gospel of the grace of God, is that he cannot understand its freeness or fullness. He confounds it with thoughts about *righteousness*, and, therefore, is set upon searching for a *reason* for it. He wants to find a something in himself which, in some way, may distinguish him from *other* sinners, and thus make him, as he thinks, a fit object of this grace, and when he cannot find this in his *works*, he would fain search for it in his *feelings*. He wants to find a certain state of mind and feeling in himself before he can think himself *entitled* to lay hold upon the blessing which the Gospel of the grace of God presents. But this is absurd; since to “him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Now such grace as is here found is the most difficult thing for a man to perceive and apprehend; and this just because of the darkness which is in him, and of its exceeding fullness. It is the outflowing of the gracious mind of God. It is according to the infinite greatness of God’s own mind; and, therefore, the manner in which it meets and deals with the sinner, is of necessary quite contrary to all the thoughts and ideas of man’s heart. It is only quite *natural*, of course, that man should seek to measure the character of God’s dealing by his own; and although in doing this, he cannot but allow it to be far more perfect and excellent than his, inasmuch as he knows God is above himself, yet still he makes his own carnal apprehension of what favor is, the basis of his judgment about God, and, therefore, his judgment about it of necessity goes wrong. God’s gracious way of meeting the sinner is the outflowing of His own mind; and, therefore, far above the highest range of man’s thoughts. He meets the sinner just in his own position as a sinner. Like Saul, he may be “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious”; but God, without requiring any exercises of mind, any courses of humiliation for sin, or any predisposing qualification of any sort, meets him just as he is—A SINNER, with all the free abounding blessing of the Gospel of His grace. Be assured you will never find in yourself any title to believe: the grace which I perceive in Jesus, and not the sorrow I may have felt for my sin, is my ground for believing and resting upon Him I believe, not because I have passed through any previous state of feeling about my sin, but because I can perceive something of the fullness of the love and grace of God in Christ. Oh, that men should bound the riches of God’s free grace by their own poor thoughts of that scanty favor which is practiced among men! Your case, poor sinner, is really a desperate one. It may, or it may not, appear so to you, but it is so before God. Nothing can meet it but free grace; and this in all its characteristic fullness is to be

found in Jesus. His own words are—“Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out”—*Anonymous*.