

# THE SOCIOLOGY AND THEOLOGY OF CREATIONIST OBJECTIONS TO EVOLUTION: HOW BLOOD MARKS THE BOUNDS OF THE CHRISTIAN BODY

by Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.

*Abstract.* The staying power of creationist objections to evolution needs explanation. It depends on the use of “blood” language. Both William Jennings Bryan and, a century later, Ken Ham connect evolution with the blood of predation and the blood of apes, and both also connect evolution with the blood of atonement. Drawing on Mary Douglas and Bettina Bildhauer, I suggest that blood becomes important to societies that image the social body on the human body. Blood reveals the body as porous and vulnerable and therefore needing social work to be constructed as whole and bounded. Blood is the place where society conducts this work. I conclude that blood language is ineliminable from Christian discourse and indeed from discourses that model the social on the individual body. The solution, I suggest, is not to avoid the language of blood, but to continue to use it in ways that broaden its focus from human sin to human and animal suffering.

*Keywords:* Bettina Bildhauer; blood; William Jennings Bryan; creationism; Mary Douglas; Emile Durkheim; Eucharist; evolution; Ken Ham; theology and science; totemism

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## CREATIONIST APPEALS TO BLOOD

Scientists, Christians, humanists, and citizens all have an interest in understanding why creationist critiques of evolution do not yield, as well as what the alternatives might be. I want to explain the staying power of the creationist evolution critique by connecting three blood discourses. One, creationists object to the bloodiness of evolution, that is, to the way that competition, predation, and extinction build in violence. Two, creationists object to humans’ “sharing blood” with (other) apes. Three, creationists appeal to the blood of Christ in substitutionary atonement for human sin to restore the order of creation. Each of these features is so widespread as scarcely to need proof.

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Although creationists distinguish themselves more or less sharply in various ways, their self-distinctions attempt largely to make one more scientifically acceptable than another. No matter: it is not the purpose of this article to assess their scientific acceptability, but to apply sociological theories of the social body to analyze their reliance on the language of “blood.” What is distinctive about Bryan and Ham is that, early and late, they draw out explicitly the consequences for blood language that other thinkers use unselfconsciously. This makes Bryan and Ham more sophisticated, in terms not of science, but of rhetoric, theology, and sociology. What’s distinctive about Bryan and Ham is not that they share the three features, but that they use them reflectively to build staying power. Allow me to say a few words about each of the three features.

- (1) Evolution is red in tooth and claw. Predation, extinction, and death are self-evidently bad, according to creationists, when they become the ineliminable means by which God runs the universe. Here, creationists claim a moral high ground. Even theologians and philosophers far removed from creationism are newly concerned, since Darwin, with the problem of animal suffering (e.g., Murray 2008; Singer 2009 [1975]; Hoggard Creegan 2013). It is, in the words of Hoggard Creegan’s subtitle, a “new problem for theodicy.” Those attracted to creationism credit it with treating the new problem consequently, seriously, and straightforwardly. Henry Morris, founder of the Institute for Creation Research, writes of evolutionist Christians that “They apparently suppose that evolution may be God’s method of creation, but this is a serious charge to bring against God. Evolution is the most wasteful, inefficient, cruel way that one could conceive by which to create man. If evolution *is* true, we certainly should not blame God for it!” Liberal theologians “make God out to be a monster” (Morris 1980, 83, 84). A raft of creationist children’s books and a few creationist museums and theme parks show the power of this issue. The most common and potent way of stating this new problem in theodicy is in terms of blood: “nature red in tooth and claw.” Violence “itself”—that is, redness, bloodiness, loss of bodily integrity—becomes self-evidently a moral problem. Thomas Aquinas, one suspects, would have asked (like a habitat scientist) what larger order, hierarchy, or structure was being “violated”: referring violence to the individual would not have been automatic, but belonged to the order of the entire universe (Aquinas 1953[1273], part I, question 47). I mention the contrast not to settle the matter, but to raise sociological questions: What bodies are being violated—individual, social, cosmic? And what are the relations among them?

- (2) The question of humans “sharing blood” with apes and other animals raises questions of “race.” The fact that “blood” does duty for DNA and other markers does nothing to diminish the rhetorical power of blood for arguing about who counts as “them” and “us,” a sociological issue almost on the surface. Creationists divide according to what they find to be the moral high ground for their audience (McIver 1988 and Hughes 1992 provide extensive bibliographies). Bryan and a few contemporaries used blood language for racist purposes; Ham and most contemporaries use blood language to unite humans against other animals. In any case, the language of sharing blood explicitly or implicitly raises the issue of who shares a social body with the audience.
- (3) Blood language to describe a substitutionary atonement wrought by Jesus for human sin on the cross is universal among fundamentalists, not just creationists (Bowler 2009, 322–23, with numerous further references; Toumey 1994, 105). Indeed, this third is one of *The Fundamentals* from which “fundamentalism” takes its name (Ginger 1958, 29). That is, creationists take human sin to be the cause of predation and death even in the animal world: that’s the theological reason why, for them, predation and extinction cannot be the rule in evolution before the advent of humanity. Furthermore, Jesus’s blood shed for sin is effective for all who share his blood. A particular theory of the atonement dominates creationist texts in general—and in Bryan and Ham it explicitly underwrites both of the two preceding features. A few examples from other authors show how this is widespread.

No Adam, no fall; no fall, no atonement; no atonement, no Saviour. Accepting Evolution, how can we believe in a fall? (Quoted in Ginger 1958, 63) <sup>1</sup>

If the first Adam is not real, . . . and if therefore the Fall did not really take place, then neither is the second Adam real and there is no need of a Savior. (Morris 1985, 57).

If evolution is true, there was no Fall, and Christ’s atonement is “utterly meaningless,” a “complete hoax” (Otten 1965 in McIver 1988, 204).

If evolution is true, then there was no created Adam and Eve, no Fall, no Atonement, no Christ as Redeemer and Saviour (McIver 1988, 103 reviewing Hand 1972).

If men evolved from the beast, the sin in nature is an inherited animal characteristic and cannot be due to the fall of man through disobedience. This denies the need of a Redeemer, and thus the atonement idea of Christ is foolishness. (Cook 1986 in McIver 1988, 46).

Creationists tend to share those three positions (blood stands for evolutionary violence, sociological unity, and substitutionary atonement), even when they fail to connect them explicitly. But the most influential creationists then and now—William Jennings Bryan and Ken Ham—connect them *ex professo*. Each of these three features of creationism is widespread and uncontroversial as a characterization of what creationists believe. But their deep connections go unanalyzed. It is the structural importance of the blood discourse in Christian contexts apart from evolution—atonement, communion, images of Christ on the cross, images from Leviticus to Revelation about blood as a cleanser—that explains why blood critiques do not yield in the case of evolution.

I argue that Christian creationists' objections to evolution owe their persistence to "the power in the blood." Theologically, the blood from the cross is the blood of Christ; the wine of the Eucharist is the blood of Christ; the means of atonement is the blood of Christ; the unity of the church is the blood of Christ; the kinship of believers is the blood of Christ; the cup of salvation is the blood of Christ; icons display the blood of Christ; and the blood of Christ is the blood of God. "The blood of Christ" works analogically in Christian theology and totemically in Christian practice. It names a large-scale structure that holds together cosmology, fictive kinship, gender roles, ritual practices, atonement for sin, solidarity in suffering, and recruits history and geography to illustrate its purposes. When conflict reveals the body as penetrable, we glimpse that the body does not define itself, but society uses its bleeding to redline its borders. Lately, issues as diverse as atonement, evolution, women's leadership, and same-sex marriage seem to some Christians to threaten, and to others to revive, the symbol system that the blood of Christ structures, cleanses, and unites. Thus, conservatives invoke the language of blood and liberals seek first to avoid and then at length to reclaim it. (Rogers Forthcoming).

Sociologically speaking, blood marks the bounds of the body (Bildhauer 2006, 1–13). Society interprets threats with images of blood and defends against threats with spilling of blood. Society responds to threats in terms of blood and by means of blood. In thinking of bodies, social or individual, we imagine a bounded entity and hide from ourselves its entrances, exits, permeations, and vulnerabilities: when blood gets out, it gives those bounds the lie and paints the fiction red. Blood gives alarm, because it reveals a leaky body. That goes for the body social as for the body individual. Blood exposes, stains, and alarms the body's boundary. Therefore, society's work to maintain the fiction of a bounded, secure, integral social body—the boundary between "us" and "them," between security and danger—takes place not in terms of the body which is to be defended, but in terms of what marks its boundary, blood.

## HOW CREATIONISTS FIRST APPEALED TO BLOOD

Evolution now seems to some Christians to threaten, to others to revive the whole analogical system by which Christianity rests on the incarnation of Christ and lives by his blood. Evolution seems to creationists to threaten creation of humans in God's image and relativize complementary gender roles that appeal to creation "male and female." Sociologists of religion like Durkheim, Mary Douglas, and Nancy Jay show why the outrage of the detractors tends to the language of blood as well as why defenders seek both to avoid and to reclaim the same language.

The creationist appeal to blood falls into two stages. Both stages toggle between blood of kinship and blood of Christ. That is, both use blood-talk, as Bildhauer predicts, to define group (kinship) boundaries and, as Douglas predicts, to lash their kinship boundaries to their cosmology—where founding sagas (Genesis, atonement) meet accounts of how the world works (microevolution, young-earth creationism). What distinguishes the two stages is the way they use blood of kinship to claim the moral high ground. Both times the high ground depends on "race." In the early twentieth century, the rhetoric was implicitly *pro*-racist; in the early twenty-first century, the rhetoric turns explicitly *anti*-racist.

At first creationists objected that humans and apes shared "blood." Thus, William Jennings Bryan objects, in his pamphlet "The Menace of Evolution" to the "evolutionary hypothesis that takes from man the breath of the Almighty and substitutes the blood of a brute" (Bryan 1920; similarly in Bryan 1922, 60). "These and all other creatures must be blood relatives if man is next of kin to the monkey" (Bryan 1922, 32). Bryan favors a cosmology of sharp separation over a cosmology of continuity. Mary Douglas has taught us to ask: What is the correlate in social structure of this separating cosmology?

Bryan supports

declaring it unlawful for any teacher, principal, superintendent, trustee, director, member of a school board, or any other person exercising authority in or over a public school, college or university, whether holding office by election or appointment, to teach or permit to be taught in any institution of learning, supported by public taxation, atheism, agnosticism, Darwinism, or any other hypothesis that links man in blood relationship to any other form of life. (Bryan 1920)

In Bryan's closing statement for the Scopes trial, the language of blood joins the moral argument against evolutionary violence to the racial argument about apes and "men":

Analyze this dogma of darkness and death. Evolutionists say that back in the twilight of life a beast, name and nature unknown, planted a murderous seed [that] throbs forever in the blood of the brute's descendants, inspiring killings innumerable, for which murderers are not responsible because coerced by

a fate fixed by the laws of heredity. It is an insult to reason and shocks the heart. (Bryan 1925)

The composite blood objection is that humans share blood with “brutes”—and the blood of the brutes throbs with violence. It is not too much to wonder whether this is a racist argument in a U.S. South between Reconstruction and Jim Crow. A “brute” can be human or animal. The white audience thinks of blacks as brutish and violent, fearing kinship (and miscegenation) with them: “When there is poison in the blood, no one knows on what part of the body it will break out, but we can be sure that it will continue to break out until the blood is purified.” Bryan worries about “freedom in sex relations,” “cultural degradation,” and “decline,” while blaming those worries on the libertinism of his scientific opponents (Bryan 1925).

The social correlates to the cosmology are now clear. Separatist cosmology here belongs to segregationist society; fear of brute violence and brute sexuality encodes black violence and black sexuality. However sincere the concerns for theodicy and morality, the social correlates here underlyingly lend social power to the cosmology and ethics. Having associated blood with violence, descent, kinship, and sex, Bryan has rung nearly all the changes on the word. What remains yet unspoken is of course the blood of Christ. The reader will be gratified to learn that Bryan did not fail to mention it. Rather he saved it for the peroration. Either Bryan again channels the almost ineliminable Christian constellation of the term, or, if you believe with Durkheim in social agency, the language of blood recruits him to complete the pattern:

Again force and love meet face to face, and the question, “What shall I do with Jesus?” must be answered. A bloody, brutal doctrine—evolution—demands, as the rabble did 1900 years ago, that He be crucified. That cannot be the answer of this jury, representing a Christian state and sworn to uphold the laws of Tennessee. . . . If the law is nullified, there will be rejoicing wherever God is repudiated, the Saviour scoffed at and the Bible ridiculed. (Bryan 1925)

#### HOW CREATIONISTS NOW APPEAL TO BLOOD

A critic may object that Bryan is no longer a worthy opponent, but a scarecrow. As evolution becomes more accepted, the arguments of Bryan’s successors have grown more complicated. To distinguish humans from “brutes” no longer seems to occupy the high ground. If the objection depends on drawing a line, it’s too easy to draw it in the wrong place, on the human rather than the animal side and reveal yourself a racist of the worst sort. Therefore, the more recent version of this argument claims the moral high ground of *anti*-racism, while holding on to the language of blood. The transformation goes to show that societies have a limited fund

of metaphors to think with and would rather repurpose than replace them. “Blood of man—blood of apes” may be out. But the exception once again proves the rule. Change of theory cannot avoid but must still invoke the language of blood. The current creationist theory depends on images of blood all the same. They abound in a book called *One Race, One Blood* (Ham and Ware 2007) and its predecessor, *One Blood: A Biblical Answer to Racism* (Ham Weiland, and Batten 1999), by young-earth creationist Ken Ham.

*One Blood* opens with the most embarrassing failure of original Darwinism, its implicit and explicit racism. As we saw by examining Bryan, however, racism was common to both Darwinists and their evangelical opponents. The author of the *One Blood* books compares twenty-first century evangelicalism to nineteenth century Darwinism. Similarly, they hold Darwinists responsible for Nazi uses of race theory, but they neglect to hold Christians responsible for Nazi uses of Christian supersessionism. In short, they compare their ideal with the other side’s real.

Two other theological arguments animate the *One Blood* books, one from scripture and one from soteriology. An argument “from soteriology” reduces to the form, “if not, then salvation doesn’t work anymore.” The paradigm cases are the great Christological arguments. Why must Jesus be considered human? Because if not, human beings are not saved. Why must Jesus be considered divine? Because if not, human beings are not saved. Since arguments from scripture are brittle, arguments from soteriology are almost always stronger and more interesting.

Here, the argument from soteriology underlies the title of the book. The *One Blood* of the title is not only the one blood of the one human race. It is also the one blood of Jesus that *saves* the human race. How do we know this? Because the book makes the soteriological argument: *If* there is more than one human race, then Jesus saves only his, leaving the rest unsaved. That contradicts Christian missionary practice, so it is absurd. Because the blood of Jesus saves the whole race, the whole race *must* be of one blood. Everyone must descend from the one Adam.

Despite the centrality of that claim, the blood arguments are scattered, disconnected, and short, while the scripture arguments are long, continual, and sophisticated. This is because the blood arguments remain powerful and primordial enough to go, not without saying, but with a wave and a nod, while scriptural arguments are left to support a weight they can hardly bear. The blood argument belongs so deeply to the underlying, unspoken mythic picture—Jesus on the cross, shedding blood for all, the one sacrifice—that it can go without extensive exposition:

Christ suffered death (the penalty for sin) on the cross, shedding his blood (“and without the shedding of blood is no remission,” Hebrews 9:22) so that those who put their trust in His work on the cross can come in repentance of their sin or rebellion (in Adam) and be reconciled to God.

Thus, only descendants of the first man Adam can be saved. The Bible describes *all* human beings as sinners and as being *all* related: “And He has made all nations of men of one blood to dwell on the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). The gospel only makes sense if all humans who have ever lived (except for the first woman) are descendants of the first man, Adam. Eve, in a sense, was a “descendant” of Adam in that she was made from his flesh . . .” (Ham et al. 1999, 21–22).

#### SOCIOTHEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF CREATIONIST APPEALS TO BLOOD LANGUAGE

The power of the blood is all the greater for being able to appear so briefly. It can be taken for granted as a premise. It is not yet subject to question—to such questions as, “Is this a good Christology or theory of sacrifice?” Theologically, three things are wrong with Ham’s argument.

- (1) *Overcoming Evil.* Ham’s God can only avoid evil, not overcome it. The creationist argument treats mutations as “mistakes,” and these “mistakes” add no “new information” but cause “degeneration” (Ham et al. 1999, 43–45). This fits in very well with the doctrine of the Fall, by which life runs down or degenerates. But of course, it is a stretch to call mutations “evil.” Most of them are maladaptive. A few are not. They are more a sort of trial and lots of error, or an amoral drift, than intentional evil. They are what traditional Catholic theology calls, not moral evil, but “ontological evil,” a harm to functionality. Ham’s theory addresses this problem of theodicy.

But Ham’s theory assumes a God so helpless in the face of evil that God’s only choice is to prevent it, rather than use it. Ham’s theory overlooks an important biblical pattern, according to which it marks God to bring good out of evil. Not that God causes evil, but God can *use* evil to bring good. So even if you regard mutations as “degenerative” or even “evil,” the question remains, can God bring good out of them? The central stories of the Bible, from Israel’s enslavement to Christ’s crucifixion, involve God’s *dealing* with evil rather than preventing it. Out of Egypt Israel reaches Canaan; out of death God brings salvation.<sup>2</sup>

It may well be that Ham’s God, who keeps the divine hands clean by not treating with evil, is the more attractive God. It may be that Ham’s God is the morally superior God. But that is not the God that permits freedom; and it is not the God that substitutes a ram for Isaac, leads Israel out of bondage and into Canaan, or allows Christ crucified to found the church. Christianity, along with all other religions worth their salt, deal with evil and suffering rather than denying them. Indeed, to deal with evil and suffering is largely their point. The only alternative would be to have evil



and suffering without point. A God who takes creatures out of this world without dealing with evil and suffering is well known to Christian theologians; that is the rejected God of Gnosticism. But it would be fitting for God to bring evolution from mutation: that would be in character for the God of the Bible.

- (2) *The Trouble with Sin.* The second trouble with the creationist argument is that it depends on *human sin to account for ontological evil*. It troubles creationists less that animals are violent *after* the Fall of Adam, than that, according to evolution, animals are violent *before* the Fall of Adam. Without a theory of backwards causality (no problem for more sophisticated theologians!), violence *before* Adam does not make sense and must therefore be denied. But (according to Marilyn Adams), that mistakes the problem. Violence is not the deepest part of the problem—vulnerability is. The problem is that it hurts so much. We are flesh, so that our vulnerability to suffering is *out of scale* to the harm that others can cause to us, or worse, that we can (even innocently) cause to others. If the problem is suffering (of which sin is a subset), Christ solves the problem in a different way, as God's solidarity rather than God's payment (Adams 2006).
- (3) *Confining the Blood of Christ to the Bible.* The third trouble with the creationist atonement is that it confines itself to a single point at the crucifixion, failing to radiate backward and forward to give meaning to other sacrifices before and after it, as in other forms of Christianity. This comes from the Reformation's elevation of scripture over Eucharist, or writing over ritual. It is still odd that although references to the blood of the crucified Jesus are rare, references to the blood of the Eucharistic Jesus are absent. It is particularly odd because it is the office of the Eucharist, in other forms of Christianity, to create and maintain the kinship of the group. Young-earth creationists pile so much weight on pseudobiological kinship in Adam, that none falls on Eucharistic kinship in Christ. If you must avoid Eucharistic kinship as Catholicizing, then kinship hangs on exegesis, even exegesis that misreads Genesis as a textbook. Even if kinship in Adam is more universal than kinship in Eucharist, the signaling is too costly: this peacock keels over. Costs are high enough to limit scripture's capacity truly to nourish the community and absorb the world.

#### WHY BLOOD-LANGUAGE IS UNAVOIDABLE: HOW BLOOD CONSTRUCTS THE SOCIAL BODY

What is the solution to the sociological power of creationism's critique of evolution? Is it perhaps to ban blood language altogether, like a kind of

pornography? I argue that blood language cannot be eliminated; it must be better used.

Mary Douglas takes as axiomatic that anomalies, transgressing conceptual categories, generate pollution, taboo, sacredness: purity and danger. But what's their *mechanism*? It is the socially available image of the boundary, appearing in socially constructed space. This bound that both society makes, and that makes society, typically projects itself onto the *individual* body, there to recruit each member to the social work of representing society in small. The business of boundedness gives both society and each individual a "body," a self-enclosed unit of humanity. Something that crosses its boundary demonstrates an apparent power over social construction. The boundary is the apparent social good, but the boundary-crosser does the social work.

For Bettina Bildhauer, the *Oxford English Dictionary* sums up the usage of word "body" as "the material frame of man [*sic*]," where the word "frame" suggests to her

a bound entity, carrying and unifying the human being. But this idea of a body as a material, bounded entity is far from self-evident . . . Far from providing a smooth envelope, skins constantly receive and emit fluids through pores and cells, so that it is impossible to determine which atom, say, is still part of the epidermis and the intestinal lining and which is not, and which pork molecule has turned into a human molecule. Even the 'inside' of a body is full of skins, opening up many surfaces . . . We live as much in processes across and through skins as in processes 'within' skins . . . [so that d]espite the usefulness of the . . . body as a separate, enclosed unit, . . . this view is not at all obvious, and *instead needs a lot of cultural work to be upheld.* (Bildhauer 2006, 6)

Even if you agree with a reader who expostulated that "All humans see the body as a unit," perhaps as an underlying cognitive bias, the *sociological anxiety* remains according to which blood marks the social work of defending and manifesting that unity.

The vigor with which society reacts to blood is the vigor with which it marks and defends its own boundaries, so that members of societies that parallel the social body with the individual human body both affirm and challenge the body in terms of blood. It is the bloody body, not the "clean" one, that calls forth social work. Blood is the marker, the index, the rubric of the social work to uphold the body. Blood is the site of society's labor; the social body depends on society's bloodwork.

We see the pattern of affirmation and challenge play out in liberal versus evangelical models of atonement. Evangelicals argue strenuously that "blood" in the New Testament means "death," because "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin" (Hebrews 9:22). Liberals argue just as strenuously that blood means "life," citing cross-cultural studies as well as Leviticus 17:11, 14; Genesis 9:4, 12:23. We see affirmation

and challenge today in evolutionary versus creationist models of biology. But affirmation and challenge *both* reinforce the terms *in which* Christians argue—they argue in terms of Christ's blood.

No such opposition is innocently or intrinsically *there*. Rather the oppositions expose a *societal interest* in society's own boundary; they exist to define and stabilize a society's picture of itself as bounded, as "this" not "that," "us" not "them." Much religious creativity consists in enlarging this boundary, so that those formerly "them" are now "us," and out of death comes life, so that "death is swallowed up in victory"—that is, becomes enclosed in a larger body. With larger bodies we do not exactly get beyond the notion of boundaries but extend it productively to overcome itself. We can never leap right out of society in which we think, but we can use its categories in novel ways:

To deconstruct [a binary] is not to negate or refuse either term. To deconstruct [the] terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power. Here it is of course necessary to state quite plainly that the options for theory are not exhausted by *presuming* [for example, the concept of the body], on the one hand, and *negating* it, on the other. It is my purpose to do precisely neither of these . . . . [My procedure] does not freeze, banish, render useless, or deplete of meaning the usage of the term; on the contrary, it provides the conditions to *mobilize* the signifier in the service of an alternative production. (Butler 1995, 51–52)

Jesus performs such a mobilization, for example, when he turns an instrument of oppressive power, crucifixion, into another invitation to the feast, saying "this is my body given for you" and "this is the blood of the new covenant": that is his alternative production.

Blood can mark these reversals because it flows and covers. The bloodied body comes to resemble its own inside; the bloodied body can resemble an organ in a larger whole. The inside of a body is always bathed in blood; the outside only at signal points, including birth, wounding, and sometimes death. That is because blood marks not only external bounds but internal structure, not only wounds but veins. Sociologically as well as biologically, blood carries the life of the body, both within and out of bounds. By it the community enacts unity and preserves health.<sup>3</sup>

Such associations render blood "natural" for Christians to use as an organizing principle. What resists analysis in terms of Christ's blood proves either *irrelevant* to the relations among the community, its God and world—or a body too *foreign* for the system to digest: something that Christ's blood could not cure. Such an exception could only threaten the whole system, would call up Durkheimian effervescence or outrage. So creationism responds.

## WHAT CHRISTIAN ACCOUNTS OF EVOLUTION REQUIRE

The sociological result is that blood language cannot be eliminated, but can be used in different ways. The narrow usage of blood to atone only for sin bespeaks a tight, narrow boundary around the social body, one that limits it in theory to human beings and in practice to a small, embattled social group. Social groups in theory defining themselves to include human ancestors and in practice more secure in their intellectual, economic, and political power find themselves free to expand the role of blood language to encompass human and animal suffering. To remain both theologically adequate and sociologically robust, Christian accounts of evolution need more blood, rather than less. With this remark, I am not trying to repair creationism, but to prefer alternatives. Christian accounts of evolution need, that is, a more adequate theology of the atonement—one that need not reduce suffering to sin. One example, briefly mentioned above, is that of Marilyn Adams. Another is that of Teilhard de Chardin, much too brief, but still suggestive. In “The Mass on the World,” he interprets the whole world as an altar, on which animals preyed upon and species extinguished suffer and die, and on which the successes of evolution are lifted up. Christ the Logos presides over the whole. Upon every achievement of development or growth, Christ pronounces “This is my body.” Upon every death and extinction, Christ pronounces “This is my blood” (Teilhard 1979, 123). More ancient examples would include Irenaeus of Lyon and Athanasius of Alexandria (Rogers 2013).

In either case, the Durkheimian structure that I call “the analogy of blood” causes that connection, the connection between blood and Blood, to *persist*, however we explain it, and although it waxes and wanes. The analogy of blood marks the whole social structure *within which* theological debates play out. Quite apart from noncreationist Christians, evolutionary scientists and other citizens concerned for the health of public discourse, public funding, and public education therefore gain an interest in wider blood discourses that focus on suffering rather than sin (or treat sin as a form of suffering) because they are better able to use the ineliminable blood rhetoric to *accommodate* evolution.

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## NOTES

1. Creationists took up this slogan so often that scholars have had trouble tracing its author. See Numbers 2006, 373 n. 32. The all-too-careful distinctions between “scientific creationism” and “biblical creationism” (e.g., Morris 1985, 298–300) only reassure creationist readers that the “scientific” arguments rest on biblical motives after all; they give away the code. “[M]any creationists’ texts must be *revised* for public consumption (e.g., Gish 1979 or Morris 1985)” (Root-Bernstein 1984, 93 n. 52).

2. The claim that God can deal with evil does not mean, according to classical theology, that God creates evil that good may come; the classical claim is that God permits freedom and copes with the consequences. For Christian theology to take on board a scientific account of geology and evolution, it needs an analogical continuum of freedom that goes all the way down, such as prevailed in the Middle Ages. According to this view, every created thing is created to seek its good by its proper movement. In the paradigm case, humans seek the good by reason, and this is called human freedom. Above them, God pursues the good without limit, and this is the divine freedom. Below them, animals move toward their good, such as Alpo, by instinct. Below animals, plants move toward their good, such as sunlight, by growing. The medieval theory went as far as rocks, which have their good in the center of the Earth, and seek it by falling. But we may extend the theory to say that among the proper movements, or appropriate freedoms, of genes is to vary or of tectonic plates to drift. If maladaptive mutations or volcanic eruptions should result, that is the price of freedom: the only alternative would be a static, unfree world in which, we suppose, we would not choose to live. As the historian of Darwinism and religion Peter Bowler has written, “Perhaps an ‘open-ended’ form of evolution is the only way that God could create beings with free will” (Bowler 2009, 192).

3. Scholars of Catholicism might raise an interesting objection to my account. If it were really *blood* rhetoric that mattered to Christian practice, even more than “body,” then Catholic Christianity would not have been able to support communion in only one kind, that is, bread alone. According to this objection, one would expect wine alone. On the contrary, I argue that the medieval Catholic idea that priests alone should drink the consecrated wine—and not the laity—does not undermine the idea that blood is precious, but reinforces it. The blood of Christ became so precious that only religious experts could handle it. The danger of spilling it grew so great that laypeople dared not approach it. The very fact that the Eucharistic blood became taboo, while the Eucharistic bread remained available, elevated blood to the more powerful.

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