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### *The meaning and use of the term "blood" in scripture*

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JOHN S. GAISFORD

THE MEANING AND USE

OF THE TERM

" B L O O D "

I N S C R I P T U R E

M . A . T H E S I S , D E C E M B E R 1 9 7 5

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## A B S T R A C T

There have been two, seemingly opposed, schools of thought about the interpretation of "blood" in Scripture. It is held to signify either "life" or "death". This thesis demonstrates the possibility of effecting a synthesis between these interpretations, showing that both ideas must be present.

Each occurrence of "blood" has been analysed and divided between sacrificial and non-sacrificial categories. Frequency of occurrence has been carefully considered to determine its implication for statistical evidence. An introduction discusses its significance in primitive societies, showing that it was regarded as the vehicle of life, with an awe-inspiring potency, requiring elaborate taboos and ritual. Old Testament sacrificial contexts indicate a similar belief that the use of blood is carefully regulated because it is the prerogative of God and equals "life" or "life released", whereas in non-sacrificial contexts it signifies "life" or "death" equally. A "Hebrew mind", therefore, requires a synthesis which accommodates both interpretations. In establishing this synthesis it is demonstrated that while some who hold the "blood equals death" theory reject any other interpretation, those who claim that basically "blood equals life" accept that both concepts can be present. A. M. Stibb's criticism of Westcott and others is refuted and his own conclusions questioned.

In the analysis of the New Testament use of the term both concepts are again fully present. In non-sacrificial contexts "blood" clearly means "death", but in sacrificial and eucharistic contexts "life" or "life surrendered" is implied. In discussing the sacrifice of Christ, it is argued that "the blood of Christ" means the life of Christ released by death, offered to God and received back by man. Death and life are inextricably connected but the emphasis must be on life surrendered and made available for man's redemption

I would like to record my indebtedness to Cannon Professor Douglas R. Jones not only for his guidance and oversight in the research for this thesis, but also for his initial encouragement and inspiration in the field of study. I am grateful also to Professor Eric Sunderland for his helpful booklist for reading on the Chapter on primitive societies.

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### PREFACE

In his review of S. C. Gayford's book "Sacrifice and Priesthood" in the 'Churchman' June 1954, W. M. F. Scott wrote, "Gayford's whole position seems to have been undermined by recent studies on the biblical meaning of the word 'blood', e.g. A. M. Stibbs "The Meaning of the word 'blood' in Scripture" and E. Morris (J.T.S., October 1952)" but later he concluded, "Certainly the last word has not yet been said on this controversy."

While not presuming in such a field to write the 'last word on this controversy' it seems that the evidence to hand would indicate the reasonableness of exploring the subject further and of vindicating, if possible, the position maintained by one who is almost a namesake! Despite controversy regarding the meaning of the term, few scholars would deny the importance of 'blood' both in the sacrificial system of Israel and in the non-sacrificial uses of this word. The use in the literature of the Old Testament, and the significance which it conveyed must have had an influence on the New Testament interpretation of the term. In particular this must be true of the interpretation of the sacrifice of Christ, the method of preaching this message by the New Testament writers, and the important discussion on this subject in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It has been agreed on several occasions that 'blood' as used in the Old Testament means 'life' and 'life released or surrendered through death'. Alternatively, it is suggested that 'blood' as used in the Old Testament means 'death', often violent death, and only 'death'. There are thus diametrically opposed interpretations of the meaning and significance of this term.

Despite the vigour with which these two positions are defended, it does seem possible to effect a synthesis, and it is the purpose of this thesis to postulate and (one hopes) to indicate the reasons for such an agreement, evaluating its relevance for the New Testament interpretation.

The method of approach has been as follows. Each of the occurrences of the word  $\text{דָּם}$  and its cognates, e.g.  $\text{דָּם־בְּחַיִּים}$ ;  $\text{דָּם־בְּחַיִּים־וְדָם־בְּמָוֶת}$  listed in Davidson's Concordance and compared with Mandelkern's Concordance has been listed separately on cards. These have been analysed by book to discover how often the word occurs in each. They have been further analysed into 'sacrificial' and 'non-sacrificial' uses of the term and again with reference to their occurrence within the Old Testament literature. Finally an analysis was made into the frequency of occurrence of such almost technical phrases as 'avenger of blood', 'innocent blood', 'shedding blood' and 'blood is upon them/him'. These analyses will be found in the relevant appendices.

An investigation was then initiated into the meaning and significance of blood in other primitive societies, and in societies both contemporary with or preceding the Hebrews, to determine whether there was a common basic apprehension of this term. Finally, each of the Biblical references was checked against major commentaries for each book and the information noted.

The results of this investigation and the conclusions drawn form the subject of this paper. A general introduction illustrating the significance of blood for primitive societies will be followed by an examination in turn of the evidence for each of the interpretations mentioned above. The possibility of a synthesis will be discussed in an attempt to discover whether there is a 'Hebrew' mind on the matter. Finally the importance of this synthesis will determine the interpretation of the New Testament use and meaning of this concept.

## INTRODUCTION:

Throughout the ages blood has been regarded as a mysterious substance. Even today, with advanced medical knowledge of its physical properties and the realization that it is just another fluid,<sup>(1)</sup> many people are still affected by the sight of blood flowing from a wound, however slight. It is not surprising, therefore, that primitive man was affected even more so, coming to realize as he did the significance of blood in relation to life. Although the true function of blood was not understood until its circulation was demonstrated (as by Harvey "Exercitatio" 1628) yet primitive man realized by observation that life depended upon blood within the body of man and animal: loss of blood meant loss of strength, and a man's life seemed to drain away with the blood from a mortal wound. Homer, for example, can speak of the soul ( $\Psi\upsilon\chi\eta$  Iliad XIV<sup>518</sup>) or the blood ( $\alpha\iota\mu\alpha$  Iliad XVII<sup>86</sup>) as passing away through the inflicted wound, while for the Hebrews, as will be seen, the identity between life and blood is affirmed explicitly. (Lev. 17<sup>11</sup> "For the life of the flesh is in the blood").

In a similar way, in modern parlance, we speak of abilities and special talents being "in the blood", as though the blood were the living vehicle or substance by which these talents were passed on through the generations, from parent to child and further. There are, perhaps, strong parallels with this thought in the practices of many primitive tribes. Thus, "Among some Australian tribes the youth is smeared with blood drawn from the arms either of aged men or of all men present, and he even receives the blood to drink. Among some tribes on the Darling this tribal blood is his only food for two days" (Frazer "Totemism and Exogamy" vol. i, p.43) and Frazer goes on in his

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(1) "To modern minds blood which has left the body is no more than any other fluid". E.R.E. 1909. H. W. Robinson, p.71 & ff. "Blood".

footnote to give further examples of sick clansmen being given blood to drink. He concludes, "In all these cases the idea is that the life of the clan is in the blood and may be transferred with the blood from one member of it to another".

Again, the importance of consanguinity can be seen in the common (almost maudlin) phrase "blood is thicker than water" when defence of one's family against criticisms, or support in adversity, is required or expressed. As expressions which have passed into common usage in our language these phrases indicate the strong belief in the potency of blood in the minds of earlier generations.

It was natural, therefore, for primitive man to assign to blood, even when shed, a potency and to regard it as full of latent life. Thus G. F. Moore can write about ". . . the universal belief that blood is a fluid in which inheres mysterious potency, no less dangerous when misused than efficacious when properly employed. In pouring it on the sacrificial stone, they were perhaps recognising the feeling that this was the safest disposition of it"<sup>(2)</sup> while the idea that unavenged human blood cries for vengeance, which is common in the Old Testament, is still found in the Arabs of Moab ("Blood cries from the earth and continues to cry until the blood of an enemy has been shed" Janssen).<sup>(3)</sup>

Similarly E. O. James wrote, "The recognition that it (blood) is the life principle in man and beast alike goes back at any rate to the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic and ever since has been regarded as the seat of vitality par excellence. Therefore at a very early period it was equated with the animating principle or soul-substance, associated with certain essential parts of the body and its secretions: among these the liver is prominent, doubtless because it contains an abnormal amount of blood".<sup>(4)</sup>

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(2) G. F. Moore "Sacrifice" article in Encyclopaedia Biblica

(3) Quoted by Frazer in Folk lore in the Old Testament" 1919, p.101

(4) "Sacrifice & Sacrament" 1962.

It will be profitable, therefore, to examine some of the ancient beliefs and practices involving blood which indicate the awe with which they regarded this substance and the use to which it was put.

In the first place creative power was assigned to blood in that, in Babylonian literature, for example, man was thought to have been moulded out of clay, mixed with blood. (5)

In the Qur'an XCVI<sup>2</sup>, "God is said to have created man from clotted blood" while in Egypt the Sun (Ra) was said to originate from drops of blood. Again, blood has been thought to have revivifying power so that blood was dripped on the bodies of departed kinsmen or was given to sick persons to drink. The life of the kin is thus transferred in this way. In an Australian funeral ceremony, for example, the "Relations gash themselves over the corpse, till it and the grave are covered with their blood; this is said to strengthen the dead man and enable him to rise in another country". (6) Among other Australian tribes blood is poured over a sandhill in which a mythical ancestor is thought to be buried, while the Arunta women approach the grave after the interment and cut their heads until the blood flows on the grave. (7) These customs are paralleled in many primitive communities throughout the world, and several reasons are postulated. It is thought that the lacerations will benefit or please the ghost and that it is a sign of the mourners' sorrow at their loss. W. Robertson Smith indicates the possibility that it creates a

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(5) J. G. Frazer "Folk Lore in the Old Testament" 1919, vol.i, p.6  
"According to Berosus . . . the god Bel cut off his own head and the other gods caught the flowing blood, mixed it with earth and fashioned men out of the bloody paste; and that, they said, is why men are so wise, because their mortal clay is tempered with blood divine".

((6) J. G. Frazer "Totemism & Exogamy" p.75

(7) Spencer & Gillen "Native Tribes of Central Australia" p.507 ff.

blood covenant between the living and the dead,<sup>(8)</sup> while T. H. Gaster stresses the theory that the departed spirits are sustained by the blood.<sup>(9)</sup>

In Greek mythology Odysseus, on a visit to the underworld, dug a trench into which he poured the blood of black victims. The shades gathered round clamouring for blood and having drunk it their memories of the upper world and their powers of speech returned. In a similar way "at Roman funerals women scratched their faces till they bled to please the ghosts with the sight of blood".<sup>(10)</sup>

Just as early man connected the shedding of blood with the loss of life, so it is reasonable to suppose that he associated the offering of blood and its associates with revival of life. Blood was used in this way not only in funeral ceremonies or over dead bodies; it was also used to strengthen weak or sickly patients. E. O. James gives examples of Carib fathers drawing their own blood to nourish a delicate child, while Orinoco mothers would prick their own tongues to strengthen sickly babies.<sup>(11)</sup> In some tribal customs the sick and aged are smeared with blood to restore their health; while among the Masai a new warrior lives entirely on blood, flesh and milk for several days after his circumcision.<sup>(12)</sup> Again, the flesh and blood of dead men are commonly eaten and drunk to inspire bravery and wisdom, or other desirable qualities.

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(8) Religion of the Semites. 1927. p.322 ff.

(9) Myth, Legend & Custom in the Old Testament. 1969. p.591 ff.  
cf. Jeremiah 16, v.6, "No one . . . shall cut himself . . . for them  
(i.e. the dead)"

(10) Servius on Vergil Aeneid, vol. iii 67 - quoted by E. O. James "Origins of Sacrifice" p.29

(11) E. O. James op. cit., p.27

(12) J. G. Frazer "Totemism & Exogamy" vol. ii, p.414.

Frazer in the Golden Bough gives examples of the custom among the Basutos of eating the heart of a very brave foe they have just killed, because this was thought to give them courage and strength in battle, and "The Tolalaki, notorious head-hunters of Central Celebes, drink the blood . . . of their victims that they may become brave" (p.498). He adduces evidence to show how common was the belief that in drinking the blood one acquired potency from the victim.

Further examples are given by E. O. James in his "Origins of Sacrifice". When describing the Ainu Bear Festival he wrote, "Care is usually taken to avoid the shedding of blood in the process (i.e. killing) but occasionally it is drunk warm by the men so that they may imbibe the courage and other qualities of the species and deepen and express their consciousness of their identity with it." (p.39)

Again, the red seeds of the roucou plant were mixed with oil to form a thick dye which was then smeared on the head and the hair (important seats of soul-substance) at critical junctures.<sup>(13)</sup> Presumably this substance was thought to have potencies similar to blood because of its similar colour. In the same way blood-coloured substances were thought to be especially potent in casting spells before hunting began. Among the Ojibwa Indians, for example, "the medicine man would draw pictures of the animal to be hunted. The heart would be indicated by a puncture upon which a small portion of vermilion would be rubbed . . . there, as in Palaeolithic paintings, the heart is regarded as the centre of life, injury to which causes death through loss of blood".<sup>(14)</sup> Blood, or blood-coloured red pigment being more durable, it would allow the spell to last longer. It is probable that for this reason vermilion was used in the Ojibwa drawings and red ochre in the Palaeolithic paintings of Niaux.

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(13) E. O. James op. cit., p.27

(14) E. O. James op. cit., p.26

A further example of the creative powers of blood can be seen in the many fertility rites where it is used. In the Intichiuma ceremonies among the native tribes of Central Australia blood was used to make the totemic species more prolific. "Thus: the men of the Undiara Kangaroo totem pour out their own blood on a rock in which the ancestral kangaroos are believed to reside, in order to drive them out in all directions and so to increase their numbers."<sup>(15)</sup> In a similar ceremony among the Emu clans the men "Open veins in their arms and allow the blood to stream on the ground till it is saturated. When the serum has coagulated they trace designs in it in white, yellow and black, representing different parts of the body of the emu . . . . The effect of the rite is to prevent the sacred species from disappearing, by quickening the embryos of the new generation."<sup>(16)</sup> Further examples are cited by James, all of which testify to a belief in the revivifying powers of blood, explained by the fact that it is the vehicle of life. "The life-giving essence is poured out on the sacred stones to promote and conserve life to constitute a mystic bond with the source of all beneficence sealed in the vital shedding of blood."<sup>(17)</sup>

Another possible example of the creative functions of blood can be seen in the first fruits rituals. Various vegetation rites developed with the object of establishing a bond of union between the worshippers and the deity so that they might secure his good offices and expel malign influences. Blood has often played a part in this seasonal ritual because of its life-giving properties. Indeed, it has been argued<sup>(18)</sup> that this is the background of the Cain and Abel story in the Hebrew tradition. (Gen. 4<sup>1-5</sup>)

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(15) E. O. James "Sacrifice and Sacrament" p.18

(16) E. O. James op. cit., p.18

(17) E. O. James op. cit., p.19

(18) E. O. James op. cit., p.27

Among the Matabele in Southern Rhodesia the crops were regarded as tabu until many oxen had been sacrificed, and in Northern Rhodesia the first fruits could not be eaten until the chief had offered a bull before the tomb of his grandfather. "The ground around the tomb was carefully weeded and the blood of the bull was sprinkled on the soil."<sup>(19)</sup> In Mexico, the Aztec rites frequently involved sacrifice, both human as well as animal, in their fertility rites. In the December rite, for example, the blood of children was used in kneading a dough to be formed into the likeness of a man.

Further examples of the use of blood occur in primitive medicine and healing rites, even though, as H. W. Robinson pointed out, it is difficult to separate ancient medicine from ancient magic.<sup>(20)</sup> Blood has been thought to be effective in curing epilepsy, while according to Trumbull, "A blood bath was the established cure for leprosy, from ancient Egypt down to the Middle Ages."<sup>(21)</sup> On occasions the patient might even be given his own blood to drink, an insight which is perhaps not very far removed from the modern realization of the importance of blood-group matching in modern transfusion. In times of pestilence it was a Chinese custom to affix messages to their doorposts written in human blood, as a means of warding off disease.<sup>(22)</sup>

A further example of the potency of blood in the mind of primitive man may be seen in the extreme precautions taken during menstruation, particularly during the first signs of puberty. ". . . the awe or horror which savages unquestionably entertain for menstrual blood" is how J. G. Frazer refers to this subject, adding in a footnote, "I am not likely to underestimate the force and influence of this horror as I was, I believe, among the first to draw attention to it."<sup>(23)</sup> In his exhaustive study, 'The Golden Bough', he

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(19) E. O. James op. cit., p.27

(20) E.R.E. p.716

(21) "The Blood Covenant" p.116 ff.

(22) C. Trumbull "The Threshold Covenant" p.71

(23) J. G. Frazer "Totemism and Exogamy" vol. iv, p.102

he gives many examples of the primitive practices adopted - separation of the young maiden from the rest of the tribe (Alaskan Indian); sewing up in a hammock (Macusis of Guyana); incarceration in a dark room for four days (Hindus); prohibition on seeing the sky (Tiyans of Malabar), and many others. The motive for these restraints is the deeply ingrained dread which primitive man universally maintains for menstruous blood. He fears it at all times, but especially in its first appearance; hence the severe restrictions upon women in their first menstruation. Restrictions of some kind are later imposed on subsequent recurrences of the "mysterious flow", though of a less stringent nature. However, separation from the community; prohibitions on eating certain foods, or bathing in the river, or treading the usual path into the camp, and even in some areas being seen by a man lest that man die as a result, are quite common. There is a basic fear that a menstruous woman may have a disastrous effect on the crops or the livestock or the fish by reason of the potency of blood. "The object of secluding women at menstruation is thus to neutralize the dangerous influences which are supposed to emanate from them at such times."<sup>(24)</sup>

Just as menstruation caused separation from the tribe during the period of the flow, so blood also was thought to be the agent in forming bonds between men or families or clans. Blood flowing through the clan was thought to contain the life of that clan and union with the life of another could be achieved by an actual exchange of blood, either by drinking or by transfusion. Trumbull in his work "The Blood Covenant" has collected many instances of this practice, from Africa, Asia, America, Europe and Oceania, and claims that it is fundamental in all primitive life. Certainly the practice is a natural development of the idea that blood is life.<sup>(25)</sup> Blood covenant is in some

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(24) J. G. Frazer "Totemism and Exogamy" vol. iv, p.102

(25) E.R.E., article on H. W. Robinson "Blood", p.717

sense a further extension of the idea that by drinking the blood of a creature, man can acquire its capabilities. By transfusing blood from one's veins into those of another a man could unite himself with another. Such a covenant would knit them together for life. This custom is, of course, very well-known and has been commonly portrayed even in modern literature. Indeed, in the recent film "If . . ." a covenant is sealed dramatically by incising the wrists and clasping hands, thus allowing the blood to run together.

The ties of kin are thus extended by the means of blood-brotherhood. Benzinger remarks, "Relationship is participation in the common blood which flows with equal fulness in the veins of every member of that circle; on this idea rests all the rights and obligations between the individual and his clansmen".<sup>(26)</sup> Similarly Jevons discussing the fact that Muslim women do not veil themselves in the presence of their "blood brothers" writes, ". . . it faithfully preserves the primitive view that the blood-brotherhood thus established is not a relationship personal to the two parties alone, but extends to the whole of each clan: any brother is, or becomes, the brother of all the brethren; the blood which flows in the veins of either party to the blood covenant flows in the veins of all his kin".<sup>(27)</sup> The unity of the household was reinforced by religious ties. J. H. Chamberlayne writes "The clan father performed the rites which included the blood sacrifice of animals. The various clan cults were no doubt subsumed under that of Yahweh when the clans became united into 'the bloodstream of Israel'".<sup>(28)</sup>

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(26) Encyclopaedia Biblica, col.2672. J. H. Chamberlayne adds that the loyalty of members of a pastoral clan is expressed in the laws regulating marriage which are designed to keep the blood pure. There was a basic fear of incest. The belief in the power of "the blood" is such that it is deemed to have a personality of its own and in any case was too sacred to be touched. (Kinship relationships among the early Hebrews. Numen 1963 pp.153-164)

(27) F. B. Jevons "Introduction to the History of Religion" p.99 cf. Trumbull p.38 "The inter-commingling of the blood of two organisms is therefore according to this view, equivalent to the inter-commingling of the lives, of the personalities, of natures, thus brought together".

(28) "Kinship relationships among the early Hebrews" Numen. 1963. pp.153-164

An extension in some sense of the idea of kinship through blood-brotherhood is found in totemism where by consuming the blood (or eating part of the flesh) of the totem animal, its inherent qualities are assimilated and communion with the deity established. "To kill and eat the totem is normally forbidden except under very carefully prescribed conditions and for the purpose of strengthening the bond of union by drawing upon this inexhaustible reservoir of ancestral power."<sup>(29)</sup>

In all the foregoing, examples have been given of blood being imbibed or used so that its potency might be assimilated. It is often the case, however, that blood which can convey potency can for this very reason be regarded with extreme awe. In these cases, therefore, there is often prohibition on the shedding of blood, lest perils ensue. As Robinson points out,<sup>(30)</sup> "It is not the actual killing, but the literal shedding of blood which constitutes the danger, since blood actually shed means mysterious soul-power let loose". It is perhaps for this reason that many curious methods of judicial execution were developed which might seem to us excessively cruel, but which were intended to prevent blood being spilt. Even in the killing of animals some tribes were unwilling to shed blood and cattle were either stoned to death or suffocated.<sup>(31)</sup> When, however, blood was shed, care was taken to neutralize its force by smearing it or pouring it on a sacred stone or an altar, or for similar reasons by covering it with dust or earth. Among some Australian tribes in circumcision rites, care was taken to prevent the blood reaching the ground. Instead it was caused to flow over the backs of men of the tribe.<sup>(32)</sup> Again, in West Africa, if blood dropped to the ground it was customary to stamp

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(29) E. O. James "Sacrifice and Sacrament" p.236

(30) E.R.E. p.715

(31) J. G. Frazer "The Golden Bough" vol. i, p.357

(32) J. G. Frazer "The Golden Bough", abridged edition, p.229

it into the soil; if it fell on to the side of a canoe, the piece of wood was removed and destroyed. It is thought that this care was exercised to prevent the blood from falling into the hands of magicians who might make evil use of it.

The belief that blood, particularly innocent blood, violently shed, can pollute the ground will be discussed later. Here it is sufficient to point out that this belief was a very real one, strongly held among primitive peoples (and among not so primitive peoples as well - "When Captain Christian was shot by the Manx government at the Restoration in 1660, the spot on which he stood was covered with white blankets that his blood might not fall on the ground.")<sup>(33)</sup>

Not only was extreme caution taken over the shedding of blood and its disposition, but just as on occasion blood was imbibed in order to inherit the special potency of the animal whence it came, so also on occasion the drinking of blood was tabu. This tabu is probably based on the common belief that the life of the animal is in the blood. ". . . The Estonians will not taste blood because they believe it contains the animal's soul, which would enter the body of the person who tasted the blood."<sup>(34)</sup> As will be seen later, among the Hebrews the tasting of blood was expressly forbidden for a similar reason. "The life of the flesh is in the blood"<sup>(35)</sup> and the greatest care was taken over the disposition of sacrificial blood.

It is perhaps for similar reasons that the organs of the body particularly related to the blood (i.e. the heart and the liver) should also have been regarded with awe and used appropriately. Thus Jastrow gives examples of several Greek philosophers relating the heart as the centre of life. "Diogenes specified the ventricles of the heart and Empedocles the blood of the heart -

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(33) cf. Sir Walter Scott note 2 to *Peveril of the Peak*, Chap v, quoted in J. G. Frazer "Taboo" p.244. "Taboo and the perils of the soul" 1936

(34) J. G. Frazer "The Golden Bough" p.228

(35) Leviticus 17<sup>11</sup>

an interesting compromise between blood and heart as co-extensive with life."<sup>(36)</sup>

More important perhaps is his indication of the antiquity of the belief that the liver is the seat of vitality and thus of the soul, and he adduces several Greek sources in support of his claim. Thus he instances Prometheus being chained to the rock with vultures eating his liver and Tityus, son of Jupiter, whose liver was picked out by the serpent.<sup>(37)</sup> Yet belief in the liver as the seat of vitality is not peculiar to the Greeks. Twice in the Old Testament it is mentioned as the life centre (Prov. 7<sup>23</sup> and Lam. 2<sup>11</sup>) and in Babylon it was regarded as the seat of soul-substance. Some primitive peoples believed that the liver of a dead guru transmits to the one who eats it the power of its former possessor; and in some parts it is believed that the dried and pulverized livers of buffaloes, when given to cows, ensure their fertility. It is not surprising that the liver should be so regarded when it is realized that it is basically a mass of blood and indeed our English word itself comes from the root meaning of life.

The liver was frequently used for divination purposes. Thus in Borneo, Uganda and Burma the natives would kill an animal and inspect the liver to determine the will of the gods.<sup>(38)</sup> In Babylon also the liver, and particularly the yothereth hakkavedh, the little upper lobe, was important for divination. In Ezekiel 21<sup>21</sup>, for example, Nebuchadnezzar is said to have looked into the animal's liver when he stood at the parting of the ways, and in Tobit 6<sup>4-16</sup> the liver of a fish is used in exorcisms. Indeed Jastrow refers to the theory that the oldest reason for sacrifice was to enable the inspection of the liver

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(36) M. Jastrow "The liver as the seat of the soul" p.146

(37) M. Jastrow op. cit., p.148

(38) M. Jastrow op. cit., p.153 "The soul of the animal, dedicated to the god and accepted by him reflects the soul of the god. Therefore if one reads the soul of the animal then one obtains an insight into the soul of the god."

to take place. If this were true then the Pentateuchal theories about sacrifice are of later origin and were attempts to invest sacrifice with a new meaning, divination having been prohibited. It is significant that Hebrew sacrificial legislation insisted that the liver be burnt on the altar; perhaps to prevent such divination.

It is at least arguable from all the above evidence that blood was regarded as of particular importance among primitive peoples as the seat of the soul or the vehicle of life. This concept is common to all the examples of the means to which blood was put and the awe with which it was regarded. It would, of course, be an invalid progression to imply that what is true of primitive tribes discovered in the nineteenth century must also be true of the beliefs among the Hebrews, but there are many parallels which serve to indicate that blood was regarded by the Hebrews in the Old Testament as the seat of life and to strengthen our contention that this was so. It has been necessary to discuss this non-biblical evidence as a preparation for our examination of the biblical material, and to this we must now proceed.

## OLD TESTAMENT I - SACRIFICIAL CONTEXTS

The insights vouchsafed by the Hebrews (and other ancient peoples) into the power and importance of the blood as the life-bearing agent has received remarkable corroboration by modern medical science. Thus Huxley in his "Physiology" writes, "The inner function of the blood has been compared by physiologists with the outer function of the air and food supply. It is absolutely essential to the life of every part of the body that it should be in such relation with a current of blood that matter can pass freely from the blood to it, and from it to the blood, by transudation through the walls of the vessel in which the blood is contained. Thus the blood is literally the vehicle of life throughout the organism." (p.116) It requires no stretching of the imagination to realize how this is echoed so clearly in the locus classicus in Lev. 17<sup>11</sup> "For the life of the flesh is in the blood." Yet there are those (and in particular A. M. Stibbs and L. Morris) who would claim that the idea that blood is synonymous with life in the Old Testament is false, and that basically it is a symbol of death, and often violent death. It will be necessary, therefore, to examine the available evidence and to formulate our conclusions.

In the several instances where Stibbs and Morris separately discuss the meaning of blood, use is made of "statistical evidence". Frequency of occurrence is analysed and the conclusion is drawn that the weight of this statistical evidence clearly indicated that blood signifies death. In order to challenge this argument a similar independent analysis has been made and this appears in the appendices. Numerical weight does not necessarily determine the concept behind the use of a word. It does indeed happen that the word is used several times of necessity in one context; it would be false therefore to argue from numerical weight. For example, the phrase "avenger of blood" occurs five times in the Book of Numbers; almost a third of the occurrences of this phrase in the Old Testament, and more than in any other book. Yet

these five occurrences all appear in the same chapter and context, and therefore numerical frequency should not be made to bear the weight of argument. However, since these scholars have used statistical evidence to support their views, it is necessary (and enlightening) to examine this statistical evidence carefully in order to determine how valid their conclusions are.

The word  $\square \bar{\tau}$  and its cognates occur 355 times in the Old Testament according to the Hebrew Concordance of B. Davidson and in the analysis in the appendices it will be seen that such occurrences can be divided between either sacrificial or non-sacrificial contexts. Thus there are 122 instances in sacrificial contexts and 233 instances in non-sacrificial contexts. In both categories the examples occur over a broad spectrum of books, the sacrificial uses of the term range over twelve books, while the non-sacrificial uses occur in 28 books. This in itself indicates the Hebrews' familiarity with the concept of blood and can give us an indication of the meaning conveyed by it to them.

Of the 122 uses of the term in sacrificial contexts six clearly indicate "life" as the meaning conveyed. Thus Lev. 17<sup>11</sup> "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" and Gen. 9<sup>4</sup> "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is its blood". In addition there are fourteen occasions when the eating or drinking of blood is prohibited, or where such eating or drinking is viewed with horror, or as an instance of reproach. Thus there is the already quoted example in Gen. 9<sup>11</sup>, together with Deut. 15<sup>23</sup> "Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it out on the ground like water." Ezekiel's prophecy of destruction is couched in sacrificial terms with birds and animals drinking the blood of the nation. (1) This serves to emphasize the normal prohibition on

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(1) Ezekiel 39<sup>18/19</sup> "Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth . . . and ye shall eat till ye be full and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you."

imbibing blood; it is an added horror that blood should be drunk by beasts and birds, let alone by man. Again, in I Samuel 14, after the slaughter of the Philistines, the people slew the plundered animals for food and began to eat. Saul then caused a stone to be set up (as an altar?) and commanded that all animals should be slain thereon. The blood was to be separated from the meat so that the people would not "sin against the Lord in eating with the blood". (verse 34)<sup>(2)</sup> In this case the animals were to serve simply as food, they were not necessarily regarded as sacrifices, yet still there was the prohibition on consuming the blood.

In view of the statement in Lev. 17<sup>11</sup> ("For the life of the flesh is in the blood and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life") the fifty occasions where the term is used in connection with atonement sacrifices also indicate an understanding of blood as life. It is true that all except five of these fifty instances occur in the Book of Leviticus, but this is perhaps to be expected since this is the main "rituals" for the Hebrews and it in no way detracts from the weight of the evidence. Indeed, there are a further 46 occasions when the term "blood" is used in this book and it is significant that in sacrificial or non-sacrificial context alike the basic

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(2) There is a certain amount of disagreement regarding this verse, both textually and in its interpretation. It has been suggested (cf. R. J. Thompson) that  $\text{U}^{\text{r}}\text{U}^{\text{r}} - \text{S}^{\text{y}}$  should be read as  $\text{U}^{\text{r}}\text{U}^{\text{r}}\text{U}^{\text{r}} - \text{S}^{\text{y}}$  as in Leviticus 19<sup>26</sup> and Ezekiel 18<sup>6</sup>, translated as "eating upon the mountains." Alternatively the phrase is accepted as it stands, but with two other interpretations. Either it means that the people were eating meat with the blood improperly drained off ("eating with the blood" cf. LXX which has "σὺν") or it is translated eating over the blood. In this case the sin lies in letting the blood run out on to the ground where they will eat their meal. Food and blood thus are not kept apart, and blood is just treated like water. Further, the blood did not go to the place that belonged to Yahweh and thus "spatial and actual separation between God's and man's dues were lacking" (H. W. Hertzberg on I Samuel 14<sup>34</sup>). Saul's action serves to separate the blood from the meat which is then consumed in a separate place. Whichever of the last two interpretations is accepted, the emphasis on not eating the blood is clear.

meaning is one of life. This evidence, together with the meaning of Lev. 17<sup>11</sup>, indicates that in each of these contexts the atoning power of blood is attributed to the life within it.

There are five instances where the word is used strictly in terms of cleansing. Thus Exodus 29<sup>21</sup> "Then you shall take part of the blood that is upon the altar and of the anointing oil and sprinkle it upon Aaron . . . and he and his garments shall be holy". Similarly, in Lev. 14, the blood is used in the ritual for cleansing lepers:- "The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and the priest shall put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed . . ." (verse 14). In many of the examples of blood used for atonement the aspect of cleansing is involved<sup>(3)</sup> and it can therefore be argued that the cleansing power of blood is attributable to the life it contains which is holy to God.

The situation is similar with regard to the sixteen occasions when blood is used in the sense of "to sanctify" or "to consecrate". Blood is used in the ritual in Exodus 29 in the ordination of priests.<sup>(4)</sup> Three animals were used in the ceremony, a bull and two rams. In each case, before the animals were killed Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the heads of the animals. The bull was slaughtered and the blood was divided. One part was used for cleansing the altar and the other part was poured out at the base of the altar. The fat, liver and kidneys were then burned on the altar while the rest of the animal was burned outside the camp.

The first ram was then killed and all the blood was thrown against the altar while the whole animal was burned on the altar. The second ram was

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(3) cf. Leviticus 16<sup>19</sup> "And he shall sprinkle some of the blood upon it with his finger seven times and cleanse and hallow it from the uncleanness of the people of Israel." This is part of the ritual prescribed in verse 16, "Thus he shall make atonement for the holy place."

(4) "And you shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination."  
Exodus 29<sup>26</sup>

killed and its blood divided. One part was used to anoint the right ear of Aaron and his sons, and their right thumbs and right great toes, while the other part was thrown against the altar. Blood from the altar, together with anointing oil was then sprinkled on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and their garments "and he and his garments shall be holy and his sons and his sons' garments with him" (verse 21). The fat portions of the ram were then used as a wave offering before being burned on the altar.

A similar ritual was enjoined in Leviticus 8, while in the ceremony of the Red Heifer in Numbers 19 Eleazar was commanded to "sprinkle some of her blood toward the tent of meeting seven times" (verse 4). The whole of the animal, including the blood, was then to be burned, and the priest responsible for this was regarded as unclean until the evening.

The connection between cleansing, atonement and consecration is most clearly seen in Ezekiel where it said, "And you shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar . . . thus shall you cleanse the altar and make atonement for it" (43<sup>20</sup>). In all these instances blood cleanses or sanctifies or atones by reason of the life, thought to be in it. (5)

In the Passover instructions in Exodus 12, a similar but protective concept must lie behind the six references to the use of blood. Here the Israelites were enjoined to "touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood which is in the basin and it will not allow the destroyer to enter your

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(5) Can it not be argued that the relation between atonement and cleansing and consecration depends upon holiness and the relation of the individual, the community, the altar or the sanctuary, to God in worship? In this case, cleansing restores the person to the possibility of taking part in worship, or to prepare the vessels, altar, etc. for worship; atonement enables the congregation to resume relations with God and thus to worship Him. Since blood is holy to God by His own directive (Leviticus 17<sup>11</sup>) this is the vehicle for atonement, cleansing and consecration. cf. Kraus, " . . . all the things that interrupt and destroy the relationship between God and His people must be removed by the sign of blood".  
Worship in Israel! p.123

houses to slay you" (verse 22). The potency of blood served to ward off the "destroyer".<sup>(6)</sup>

There are nineteen occurrences of the term which could be designated "neutral" in the sense that they appear in general statements. For example, Exodus 23<sup>18</sup> "You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread", and Exodus 34<sup>25</sup> "You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven". Although one could infer the importance of blood from the regulations here laid down, yet neither of the examples would fit the determined categories, nor would the other seventeen instances.

We are left then with five instances where blood is used in the inauguration of a covenant and one instance where it is possible that "blood" could be said to convey the idea "death". This latter is in Psalm 106<sup>38</sup> where the phrase used is "innocent blood" ("They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan and the land was polluted with blood"). The phrase "pouring out innocent blood" which will be discussed at greater length later, may well convey the idea of death. In this context, however, it could be argued that it is the offering of blood to idols as well as human sacrifice which is being condemned. This condemnation then is entirely due to the life content in blood which is holy to Yahweh. In this case, even this passage might be interpreted in terms of life.

Behind the use of blood in the inauguration of a covenant must lie the primitive idea that there is a union of one life with another through the sharing of the blood. In the Mosaic covenant it was blood which ratified the

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(6) Referring to the Passover as a pre-Mosaic feast adapted to Yahwehism, D. M. G. Stalker in Peake's Commentary on Exodus 12<sup>20</sup> ff. writes, "(This is an independent account, from J, of the institution of the feast . . . its interest lies in the manipulation of the blood". He goes on to show how the daubing of the blood on the lintel had significance while fear of a "demon-destroyer" existed, but that it was "incongruent with the thought of the advent of Him who came to redeem Israel from Egypt".

covenant and expressed externally what had indeed happened. Thus clearly in this context there is the idea of "Life".

From the above analysis it is clear that the overwhelming weight of the evidence in sacrificial contexts indicates an interpretation of blood as "life". Out of 122 occurrences of the term only one supports the idea of death at all clearly, and that too might be otherwise interpreted. Statistically, therefore, the evidence would seem to indicate that "blood equals life".

This statistical evidence is further supported by the concepts behind the use of blood in sacrifice. In his article in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, G. F. Moore sums up the thought of many scholars when he writes, "(the disposition of the victim's blood) . . . is the one universal and indispensable constituent of sacrifice".<sup>(7)</sup> He is echoed by H. W. Robinson who states that "the disposition of blood in most primitive forms of sacrifice shows clearly its central significance and no theory of sacrifice can be regarded as satisfactory which places blood at the circumference rather than at the centre".<sup>(8)</sup>

In the chronology of the Hebrew redactors sacrificial blood had been offered even before the Sinai Covenant when Aaron and his sons were consecrated as the first Levitical priests. Its potency had been recognized and the importance of correct manipulation acknowledged, but its offering was not restricted. Laymen were able to fulfil this requirement and in particular it fell to the head of the family. (In the instance discussed above Saul as head of the nation was responsible for the correct disposition of the blood. I Sam. 14). After the Sinai Covenant, however, the manipulation of the blood ordinarily became the responsibility of the Levitical priesthood. The layman,

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(7) Column 4217

(8) E.R.E. p.4

on occasion, might still slaughter the animal, but the disposition of the blood became the prerogative of the priest. Indeed, it can be argued that "The priest's role in sacrifice was chiefly to attend to the disposal of the blood which was sacred and which had to be thrown against the altar or poured or drained at its base."<sup>(9)</sup> This disposal of the blood fell to the priest whenever a priest was present and this was particularly the case in the Temple from the time of its consecration. In time the manipulation of the victim's blood became of supreme importance and it has been said that the slaying of the victim was no more than the essential preliminary to the supreme moment which was the presentation of the victim's blood - its offered-up-life - to God".<sup>(10)</sup>

As de Vaux has pointed out, although there are parallels with Covenant sacrifices, yet Israel preserved her originality and was by no means guilty of servile borrowing. This is particularly so in the matter of blood rites. "These had no part in either Canaanite or Greek sacrifices and yet they became an essential element in the  $\text{נִזְבֵּחַ}$  and the  $\text{זֶבַח הַשֵּׁמֶן}$ , and this ensured the basic continuity between these new forms and the ancient  $\text{זֶבַח הַפֶּסַח}$  which was perpetrated in the Passover".<sup>(11)</sup> In Yahwism then there is a development. Blood rites are efficacious and necessary. Yet their efficacy depended not just upon the inherent potency of the blood nor the rite itself, but because they were the means appointed by God.

Blood was indeed the most important share of the divinity in sacrifice. It belonged to God alone and by reason of its mysterious potency signified the flow of life between God and man. This potency had already been touched

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(9) H. H. Rowley "Worship in Ancient Israel" p.104

(10) R. H. Fuller "Lent with the Liturgy" p.71

(11) R. de Vaux "Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice" p.51

upon in connection with such actions as smearing blood on the lintels of the tent, at the Exodus from Egypt, as the means of preventing the Destroyer (Angel of Death) entering the tent. De Vaux claims that "the connexion with history is thus achieved by the medium of the blood rite which in primitive and pre-Israelite forms of the Passover already had an apotropaic force and now protects Israel from the effects of the Tenth Plague".<sup>(12)</sup> This lintel ritual has parallels among Arab tribes. The Bedouin in Kerak smear the walls and lintels with blood when they build new houses and take up residence, and this is thought to be an adaptation of the custom of sacrificing an animal when a new tent was set up (cf. I Kings 16<sup>34</sup> where foundation sacrifice is mentioned - "Hiel laid the foundation thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub".) This blood ritual has an apotropaic force, preserving the dwellers from misfortune. In certain cases the smearing of blood is even extended to the animals of the flock. In the ancient Passover Ritual the smearing of the blood has clearly an apotropaic significance, acting as it does as a distinguishing sign.<sup>(13)</sup> In later days, however, the Passover clearly had a different significance for Israel as she performed the rite. Von Rad points out, "The interpretation in Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16 which connects it with the saving history, sees in its performance an actualization of Yahweh's redemptive action in history, in which the rite of blood has no particular significance."<sup>(14)</sup> The earlier emphasis on protection by the use of blood indicates a belief in its potency because it is the agent of life. Indeed, it was treated with awe, primarily because it was thought to be synonymous with life itself.<sup>(15)</sup>

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(12) R. de Vaux "Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice"

(13) During the cholera epidemic at Hamath in 1875, Christians made the sign of the Cross on every door in the house, with blood from the slaughter-house. (Curtiss "Primitive Semitic Religion Today".)

(14) G. von Rad "Old Testament Theology" vol. i, p.253

(15) Leviticus 17<sup>11</sup>

Although the interpretation of some sacrifices as "communion meals" has been criticized, yet it is clear that in these sacrifices the god of the clan shared in the meal by receiving the blood and the fat pieces. The worshippers and the deity both partook of the meal, thus establishing communion; the portion for the deity being placed on the altar. This interpretation, however, depends to a large extent upon the primitive idea that gods had needs similar to man. They needed food and drink (hence "nectar" and "ambrosia" for the gods). In Hebrew thought this was not necessarily so and de Vaux indicates quite clearly that the fat and the blood in Israelite sacrifice were placed on the altar for Yahweh, not as food for Him, but simply because they belonged to Him exclusively. Yahweh was not sharing a meal. This is further borne out by N. Snaith:- "The reason for the burning of the fat on the altar was that it was the fat; it was not because the Lord was thought to share in the eating of the beast".<sup>(16)</sup> The prohibition against eating the fat was the same as that against drinking the blood and for the same reason, namely that in it was the life of the flesh. Blood is the vehicle of life and therefore is too dangerous for man to touch.

Life is known to be the prerogative of God. He is the author of life and therefore reserves its disposition to Himself. Since God gives life, only God can take life. Since blood is seen to give life to flesh, it is identified with life itself and the disposition of blood is strictly controlled. Man is expressly forbidden to eat it.<sup>(17)</sup> Originally this may have been simply hygienic, but in the Mosaic law it was seen in a religious context. Since blood equalled life, its disposition had to be on the altar.<sup>(18)</sup>

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(16) "Sacrifices in the Old Testament" *Vetus Testamentum* vii 1957, p.310

(17) Genesis 9<sup>4</sup> "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

(18) *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* 1966, article, "Religious Significance of Blood" R. T. Siebeneck.

It had to be dealt with ritually in sacrificial contexts or "covered" if shed in other circumstances. Until the setting up of the central sanctuary with the prohibition on sacrificing anywhere else, it was necessary for all slaughtering of animals to be done ritually. The blood from the slaughter was poured out at the stone pillar. (It is possible that this was done as a means of desacralising the rest of the animal for consumption in the same way that the first fruits were offered before the rest of the harvest was consumed.) After the establishment of the Deuteronomic legislation, animals for food had to be slaughtered elsewhere, particularly if a long way from Jerusalem, and regulations regarding the disposition of the blood in such cases were introduced. Prohibition on drinking blood was strictly maintained and it had to be poured out on the ground.<sup>(19)</sup> Blood was expressly the prerogative of God who determines its disposition and, as has been noted earlier, as a result of this manipulation of blood, attained great importance.<sup>(20)</sup>

The earlier discussion in the Introduction regarding primitive belief in life being in the blood has clear parallels, therefore, in Biblical sacrificial material. This is further borne out when, for example, G. Pedersen can write, "The blood of the animal was given to the stone or the altar; the soul was present in the blood in a special degree, hence the soul of the animal was given to the holiest part of the holy place itself. Not only was this a means by which the animal was sanctified, but it was also returned to the forces from which it had emanated".<sup>(21)</sup> This belief that the "soul" of

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(19) Deuteronomy 15<sup>23</sup> "Only you shall not eat its blood, you shall pour it out on the ground like water."

(20) A. Bertholet "Zum Verstandnis des A. T. Opfergedankens" J.B.L. 1930, p.221 "Vom hier aus könnte es dann naheliegender, auch die Blutmanipulation dahin zu deuten, dass der Gottheit Blut dargebracht werden sollte also das Kostbarste, was der Mensch ihr überhaupt zu geben hat. Blut wo möglich als Ersatz des Lebens selber, das nach alttestamentlicher Auffassung im Blut bekanntlich seinen Sitz hat". (Leviticus 17<sup>14</sup>)

(21) G. Pedersen "Israel" vol. iv, p.335

the animal is in the blood is supported by R. Dussaud who asserts, "L'importance considérable de ce rite tenait à ce que le sang, mis en liberté, véhiculait l'âme même du sacrificiant. Cette âme, lorsque le sacrifice était agréé, atteignait la divinité, se livrait à elle, s'imprégnait de sa sainteté, mais en même temps la liait".<sup>(22)</sup>

It is because of this "soul" or "life" that blood is used so frequently as the chief means of cleansing, consecration or atonement. A connection between these was hinted at earlier<sup>(23)</sup> and it is certain that blood was the main agent in all these rituals. In the cleansing ritual over a leper, blood from one of two birds was used to sprinkle the leper and the second bird, after which this second bird was allowed to fly away. After seven days a further sacrifice, of two male lambs was offered and the leper was anointed on the ear, thumb and great toe with blood.<sup>(24)</sup> In the rite of consecration or sanctification, blood was used to anoint Aaron and his sons as priests to the Lord.<sup>(25)</sup> It is worth noting that blood was applied to the parts of the body which could be important in performing priestly actions. The rest of the blood was thrown about the altar, establishing a relationship between the altar and those to be ordained priests. In Leviticus 8 Moses purified the altar by smearing blood on its horns. This ritual is absent from the account in Exodus 29. Noth argues that this purification is scarcely its original meaning which was probably rather a consecration of the sacrificial animal's blood. There is thus a development in thought regarding the use and significance of blood in ritual.

Just as blood was used as a means of establishing a relationship between persons or things in ordination, so blood was used in covenant sacrifices in

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(22) R. Dussaud "Les Origines Cananéennes du Sacrifice Israelite" 1921

(23) Footnote 5 supra.

(24) Leviticus 14.

(25) Leviticus 8. Exodus 29.

a similar way. In the inauguration of the Covenant in Exodus 24 Moses threw half the blood against the altar. Then, having obtained the agreement of the people to the Covenant, he threw the other half of the blood over them, saying, "Behold the blood of the Covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with these words."<sup>(26)</sup> Blood established a relationship between the two parties to the Covenant, in this case God and man, just as it could bind together human parties in a bond. Again, in the several passages describing atonement sacrifices, manipulation of the blood is seen to be the main ritual. In the rite of the sin offering<sup>(27)</sup> the blood is caught in a vessel; some is then sprinkled seven times before Yahweh, some is smeared on the horns of the altar, while the rest was poured out at the base of the altar. Sprinkling some of the blood before Yahweh perhaps signifies a consecration of the animal's blood which would enable the rest of the blood to have an expiatory effect when used on the horns of the altar. Thus not simply blood, but blood dedicated to Yahweh was used. Pouring out the rest of the blood at the altar signified a return to Yahweh, to whom, as the seat of life, it belonged. In the ritual of the Day of Atonement<sup>(28)</sup> the priest on this one occasion was permitted and enjoined to enter the Holy of Holies. By this procedure the blood of the sin-offering and the sin-offering itself were brought into special direct contact with the place of Divine Presence, and were thus consecrated in a unique fashion. When the locus classicus of Leviticus 17<sup>11</sup> is remembered<sup>(29)</sup> the reason for this use of blood and belief

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(26) Exodus 24<sup>8</sup>

(27) Leviticus 4

(28) Leviticus 16. cf. W. R. Smith "Religion of the Semites" p.417, n.5

(29) "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life."

in its potency<sup>(30)</sup> can be seen. With the coming into prominence of atoning sacrifices in later times this special role of blood became particularly important.

It can be argued, therefore, both on statistical and analytical grounds, that in sacrificial contexts blood is equated with life and that whenever it is mentioned it signifies "life" or "life released" or "soul" or "power". This echoes the conclusions reached in the analysis of primitive beliefs about blood and clear parallels can be seen between them and Hebrew concepts. It is now necessary to examine non-sacrificial contexts to determine whether a similar conclusion can be drawn.

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(30) Indeed so potent was blood thought to be that clothing accidentally sprinkled with blood from a sacrifice had to be ritually washed out in a holy place. Leviticus 6<sup>27</sup>. "The blood that calls for vengeance is blood that falls on the ground." Hence blood to which vengeance is refused is said to be trodden under foot, and forgotten blood is covered by the earth (Job 16<sup>18</sup>). And so often we find the idea that a death in which no blood is shed or none falls upon the ground, does not call for vengeance; while on the other hand a simple blow calls for blood-revenge, if it happened to draw blood through the accident of its falling on a sore. Infanticide in Arabia was effected by burying the child alive; captive kings were slain by bleeding them into a cup, if one drop touched the ground, it was thought that their death would be revenged. Application of this principle to sacrifice of sacrosanct and kindred animals are frequent; they are strangled or killed with a blunt instrument or at least no drop of their blood must fall on the ground.

## OLD TESTAMENT II - NON-SACRIFICIAL CONTEXTS:

The term  $\text{D}$  and its cognates are found some 233 times in non-sacrificial contexts and they occur relatively frequently in each of the twenty-eight books of the Old Testament in which they are used. In the analysis in the appendices it will be seen that they have been sub-divided into thirteen categories, some having parallels with the "sacrificial contexts" sub-divisions. As in these "sacrificial contexts" there are some instances (22 in all) which do not fit any of the categories listed nor do they materially affect the conclusions reached regarding the significance of the term.<sup>(1)</sup> These have accordingly been designated "neutral". We are left then with 211 instances which have been analysed into their appropriate categories.

There are 54 occurrences which involve "violence" in some form, e.g. bloodguilt (16 times) and shedding blood (38 times). In addition the phrase "innocent blood" occurs some twenty times and we read "Lie in wait for blood" once. Further, there are 26 instances when the term is used in direct relation to death (e.g. Genesis 37<sup>26</sup> "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood")<sup>(2)</sup> There are then 104 cases where 'blood' could be said to indicate death, and often violent death.

There are, however, fourteen instances where blood is said to be the life, as in sacrificial usage. Thus in Genesis 9<sup>5</sup> we read, "For your life blood I will surely require a reckoning".<sup>(3)</sup> Again, blood is thought to be

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(1) of. Genesis 49<sup>11</sup> ". . . he washes his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes."

(2) cf. 2 Kings 3<sup>23</sup> "And they said, 'This is blood, the kings have surely fought together and slain one another.'"  
cf. Psalm 30<sup>10</sup> "What profit is there in my death (Hebrew) if I go down into the pit?"

(3) of. Psalm 94<sup>21</sup> "They band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death" (Hebrew "innocent blood") where the parallelism requires it to indicate life.

alive in the sense of "crying out" (three instances) while there are nineteen instances where there are prohibitions on eating and drinking blood. The potency of blood is clearly seen in its ability to pollute or make unclean when wrongly shed or used, and such examples occur some 26 times. Blood thought of as active or alive then occurs 62 times. In addition there are 48 instances of blood needing revenge, i.e. "Blood is upon them" or "avenger of blood", which could indicate the potency or 'live' nature of the substance. If this be so then although there are 101 occasions where death could be said to be the underlying concept, there are certainly 62 where life is the meaning and a further 48 which might be similarly interpreted. It can be seen then that statistically there is a fairly even balance between the two ideas in non-sacrificial contexts and it is necessary now to examine the evidence in more detail.

The creation narrative of Genesis 2 indicates a belief that life comes from God and is therefore His prerogative. He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being".<sup>(4)</sup> Life therefore belonged to God and no-one but God could dispose of it. It was observable that when blood seeped from wounds in man or animal, in any significant quantity, death ensued and consequently the connection between life and blood was made. In the battle between the Moabites and the three Kings of Israel, Judah and Edom, the Moabites saw the sun shining on the water "as red as blood" and they said, "Surely this is blood; the kings have surely fought together and slain one another".<sup>(5)</sup> What they imagined was a great quantity of blood made the Moabites think that there had been a battle with consequent loss of life.

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(4) Genesis 2<sup>7</sup> cf. Jeremiah 38<sup>16</sup> "As the Lord lives who made our souls" of. in N.E.B. "By the life of the Lord who gave us our lives".

(5) 2 Kings 3<sup>23</sup>

Although the Moabites in this instance were misled by sun shining on water with a red glow, the account still indicates that the appearance of blood shed involved the idea of loss of life. Even if it is argued that the Moabites knew it was simply the sun, but took it as an omen, the general point is still valid. Blood shed in any significant quantity involves loss of life.

This being so, it was prohibited for blood to be used as food under any circumstances. So important was this interdiction on consuming blood that it was referred back to the time when order was restored after the Flood and the Covenant with Noah was instituted, even though Israelite Law in general is assigned to the Wilderness period. Blood had become a thing apart and the law concerning it came before all other laws. The newly constituted divine order in the Noachian Covenant allowed man to eat meat, but it forbade him to consume the blood. "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood".<sup>(6)</sup> Later this was accepted in the Mosaic code.<sup>(7)</sup> So important was this prohibition that later still it was imposed upon Gentile converts to Christianity.<sup>(8)</sup> The prohibition is mentioned several times in the Old Testament and the strictness with which it became to be observed can perhaps be gauged by the instances which describe it metaphorically. For example, in Balaam's discourse about Israel he says, ". . . and as a lion it lifts itself; it does not lie down till it devours the prey and drinks the blood of the slain,"<sup>(9)</sup> while the full horror and implication is apparent in the prophecy of the death of Ahab. "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your blood."<sup>(10)</sup>

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(6) Genesis 9<sup>4</sup>

(7) Leviticus 17<sup>10-14</sup>; Deuteronomy 12<sup>23</sup>

(8) Acts 15<sup>29</sup>

(9) Numbers 23<sup>24</sup>

(10) I Kings 21<sup>19</sup>

Clearly eating blood came to be regarded as abhorrent and contrary to the will of God. Care thus had to be taken when killing animals for food so that the blood was disposed of in the correct manner. Where animals were killed basically as sacrifices this followed naturally in the ritual, but when animals were slain simply for food with no sacrificial intention, strict regulations had to be observed. The occasion on which the Israelites "sinned against the Lord by eating with the blood," described in I Samuel 14 has been discussed above. This is a further example of how carefully regulations for slaughtering had to be observed. This became of particular importance after the destruction of local shrines and the establishment of the Central Sanctuary in Jerusalem, where alone sacrifice could subsequently be offered. This is clear from the instructions in Deuteronomy, "However, you may slaughter and eat flesh within any of your towns, as much as you desire, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which he has given you".<sup>(11)</sup> Later in the same chapter these instructions are reinforced. "When the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as he has promised you and you say, 'I will eat flesh' because you crave flesh, you may eat as much flesh as you desire. If the place which the Lord your God will choose to put his name there is too far from you, then you may kill any of your herd or your flock . . . and you may eat within your towns as much as you desire . . . only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life and you shall not eat it; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water. You shall not eat it; that all may go well with you . . . when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord."<sup>(12)</sup> In this prohibition on eating flesh with the blood there is an exact parallel with the sacrificial instructions regarding disposal of blood, and an emphasis on blood as life.

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(11) Deuteronomy 12<sup>15</sup>

(12) Deuteronomy 12<sup>20,21,23,24,25</sup>

The strictness with which regulations regarding the shedding of blood in the slaughtering of animals were observed is an indication of how seriously homicide, whether intentional or accidental, was treated. If life in animals was precious, life in man, as the direct gift of God, was even more precious. No human being might take life, which belonged solely to God. If blood were shed in this way, then it could be said to pollute the land. When Cain murdered Abel it is said, "And now you are cursed from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand".<sup>(13)</sup> Because Cain had caused the soil to drink blood, as it were, it would be cursed from him for evermore and would provide no home for him.

The same thought lies behind the prophecy of Isaiah: "Their land shall be soaked with blood, and their soil made rich with fat,"<sup>(14)</sup> while in Psalm 106<sup>38</sup> we read, "They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood". The pollution caused by blood wrongly shed could also apply to people or nations. Thus in Ezekiel prophecies of destruction and condemnation are couched in terms of pollution by blood,<sup>(15)</sup> while prophecies of restoration are described as a cleansing.<sup>(16)</sup> In Isaiah, the ineffectiveness of worship is due to the pollution of blood and only when it has been cleansed will the worship be acceptable to God.<sup>(17)</sup> It was said that David was not

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(13) Genesis 4<sup>11</sup>

(14) Isaiah 34<sup>7</sup>

(15) Ezekiel 9<sup>9</sup> ". . . the guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of blood and the city full of injustice".  
cf. 7<sup>2</sup>, 22<sup>2</sup>

(16) Ezekiel 16<sup>9</sup> "Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you . . ."

(17) Isaiah 1<sup>12-17</sup>

permitted to build the Temple because he was a warrior and had shed much blood.<sup>(18)</sup> In his charge to Solomon he described Joab's activities as "putting innocent blood upon the girdle about my loins and upon the sandals on my feet."<sup>(19)</sup> This could be interpreted as impairing his strength, or even could symbolize that his progeny would inherit blood-guiltiness. The blood on his sandals could indicate that he and his issue would be dogged with blood until it was avenged. Blood thus had power even after it was shed; indeed it had power to "cry out for vengeance". When Cain slew Abel we read, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground";<sup>(20)</sup> Job's lament and appeal for justice was couched in similar terms:- "O earth, cover not my blood, and let my cry find no resting place",<sup>(21)</sup> while it is possible that the Psalmist's words, "For he who avenged blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted"<sup>(22)</sup> is echoing the same idea. Blood is "alive" after it has been shed. When Joab was to be slain, David commanded, "Strike him down and bury him".<sup>(23)</sup> Perhaps there is here the thought that it was necessary to cover the blood in order to prevent it crying out for vengeance. If so, it brings to mind the account in Judges where Ahimelech sowed the field with salt to cover the blood of kinsmen and to allay baneful influences.<sup>(24)</sup> We are also reminded that "Cain was forced into exile not because God has cursed him but because the earth has done so. It had swallowed his brother's blood and therefore refuses to yield him

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(18) I Chronicles 28<sup>3</sup> "But God said to me, 'You may not build a house for my name for you are a warrior and have shed much blood'."

(19) I Kings 2<sup>5</sup>

(20) Genesis 4<sup>10</sup>

(21) Job 16<sup>18</sup>

(22) Psalm 9<sup>12</sup> (verse 13 Hebrew)

(23) I Kings 2<sup>31</sup>

(24) Judges 9<sup>45</sup>

produce. The murderer poisons the source of life and therefore jeopardizes the supply of food - for others as well as for himself. He thus becomes a public menace and is surrounded by a contagion which all men shun, and therefore has to exclude himself from the community. His very touch may blight the earth."<sup>(25)</sup>

In a similar way, in the rites for expiating an unknown murderer's crimes, a heifer was killed by breaking its neck in a valley which was unploughed and unsown. It is possible that such an area was chosen because it was unploughable, so that poured out blood should not be uncovered by cultivation later on. There is here concern to free survivors from any guilt which might occur. Even so, blood wrongly shed, which was not properly expiated, even if covered, retained a potency and by this reason might pollute the ground until due expiation was made. Indeed Isaiah 26<sup>21</sup> " . . . and the earth will disclose the blood shed upon her and will no more cover her slain" might indicate that ultimately such pollution would be revealed even if covered.

In all these examples the emphasis is on the potency of blood even when it is shed.<sup>(26)</sup> It cries out for vengeance and expiation must be made. This is particularly important with regard to the laws regarding homicide. A distinction of intention was drawn between manslaughter and murder, which involved the laws of sanctuary.<sup>(27)</sup> If a man was guilty of manslaughter, having killed another accidentally, then he could be allowed to live in a city of refuge; the avenger could not demand his life. If, however, a man was guilty of murder, then his life was forfeit in accordance with the law.<sup>(28)</sup> No

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(25) T. H. Gaster, "Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament". 1969 p.69

(26) Ezekiel 35<sup>6</sup> " . . . and blood shall pursue you" showing that blood was thought of as active even when shed.

(27) cf. II Chronicles 19<sup>10</sup> בֵּין דָּם לְדָם literally "between blood and blood" but meaning to distinguish between manslaughter and murder.

(28) Numbers 35<sup>30</sup> "If anyone kills a person, the murderers shall be put to death" cf. verse 33 "You shall not thus pollute the land; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of him who shed it."

substitution was allowed, the penalty had to be exacted in full.<sup>(29)</sup> The responsibility in all this lay with the "avenger of blood".

The phrase "avenger of blood" (Hebrew  $\square \eta \eta \quad \zeta \lambda \lambda$ ) occurs seventeen times in the Old Testament. The primary meaning of the root is uncertain but most commonly it is taken to mean "to discharge the duties resting on one as next of kin". These duties are in fact various, but in particular "In the event of the depletion of the life by the loss of blood - the loss of a life - the go'el had a responsibility of securing to the family an equivalent of that loss, by other blood, or by an agreed payment for its value. His mission was not vengeance, but equity. He was not an avenger, but a redeemer, a restorer, a balancer".<sup>(30)</sup> Blood which is shed retains a psychological power and calls for retaliation or payment, and it thus becomes the responsibility of the go'el. Although the law in Numbers 35 modified ancient custom and in the community the law of asylum thus introduced served to limit blood revenge, yet it clearly did not wish to abolish it, since in Israel it was still forbidden to pay a ransom instead of the forfeit life.<sup>(31)</sup> However, only the murderer himself might be killed and not, as in Arab practice, another member of the clan. The go'el had the duty of securing equity, simply because he was a kinsman and shared the family blood flowing in his veins. A. R. Johnson described his function in the following terms:- "Thus . . . the expression  $\square \eta \eta \quad \zeta \lambda \lambda$  refers to the 'protector' of the blood of the kin-group rather than the 'avenger' of the shed blood".<sup>(32)</sup> It can be argued that the go'el has these duties because of the potency of blood, the "crying out" of shed blood, and the fear of pollution, and therefore this

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(29) Numbers 35<sup>31</sup> "You shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death"

(30) Clay Trumbull "The Blood Covenant" p.260

(31) Numbers 35<sup>31</sup>

(32) A. R. Johnson "The Vitality of the Individual in the thought of Ancient Israel" p.71, note 4.

category supports those who see blood even when shed as indicating life.<sup>(33)</sup>

The matter is, however, rather different when we come to consider further uses of the term. Some 31 times we discover the phrase "blood is upon them" and often this can be seen as an apportioning of guilt for shedding of blood. The basic idea is that blood from the victim stains the garments of the murderer and acts as a witness against him. It could be argued that again in this instance the blood is thus "alive" in acting as a witness, but perhaps the more likely interpretation is that blood appearing in this way is a symbol of death, and even violent death. Thus in Judges we read, "That the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, who slew them . . ."<sup>(34)</sup> Later on the formula was transferred to evidence for crimes other than capital crimes and finally acquired the meaning "he is convicted of an offence worthy of death". At times it is used almost metaphorically in apportioning guilt and making responsibility for actions plain. Thus Shimei in cursing David cried out, "The Lord had avenged upon you all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you have reigned",<sup>(35)</sup> and also, "Begone, you man of blood".<sup>(36)</sup> In the regulations in Leviticus forbidding necromancy it is commanded that the medium be put to death, but the community shall not be guilty of bloodshed because "their blood is upon them".<sup>(37)</sup> Furthermore, in the prophecies of Ezekiel a similar idea occurs in the "watchman" passages. If the watchman

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(33) This is corroborated by J. H. Chamberlayne. "Blood unrevenged was deemed to bring disaster on the community, so more stringent laws were needed to be laid down to prevent unhindered bloodshed by conflicting groups." Kinship Relationships among the early Hebrews. Numen 1963

(34) Judges 9<sup>24</sup> cf. I Kings 2<sup>33</sup> "So shall this blood come back upon the head of Joab . . ."

(35) II Samuel 16<sup>8</sup>

(36) II Samuel 16<sup>7</sup>

(37) Leviticus 20<sup>27</sup>

warned of approaching danger and was ignored, then he himself would be  
guiltless.<sup>(38)</sup> If, however, the watchman failed to give due warning he was  
responsible for any death which might occur, and "his blood will I require  
at the watchman's hand."<sup>(39)</sup> Keil in his commentary on Joshua claims that  
יָשׁוּעַ יָדָאֵם is a technical term used to denote punishment of death when  
brought justly on oneself. "Let the guilt of his death fall back upon him-  
self." The phrase יָשׁוּעַ יָדָאֵם has an analagous meaning - "let the guilt of  
the crime committed against him fall on us; we will lay down our life in  
consequence".<sup>(40)</sup> Clearly this phrase as it is so often used implies death.

A similar interpretation must be made of the term "bloodguilt" on the  
sixteen occasions when it is used. Responsibility for the death of another  
is often described in this way and it must imply the idea of death. When  
David was restrained by Abigail from slaying her husband Nabal, he said to  
her, "Blessed be you who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from  
avenging myself with my own hand".<sup>(41)</sup> When David commanded Benaiah to  
slay Joab his justification was that it would "take away from me and my  
father's house the guilt for the blood which Joab shed without cause".<sup>(42)</sup>  
In the regulations regarding the go'el in Numbers 35, it is said that if the  
go'el slew the murderer outside the city of asylum then "he shall not be  
guilty of blood",<sup>(43)</sup> and a similar exemption was made for anyone killing  
a thief.<sup>(44)</sup>

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(38) Ezekiel 33<sup>4</sup> "Then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does  
not take warning . . . his blood shall be upon his own head."

(39) Ezekiel 33<sup>6</sup>

(40) Karl Friedrich Keil "Joshua" translated by J. Martin: 1857 p.92

(41) I Samuel 25<sup>33</sup>

(42) I Kings 2<sup>31</sup>

(43) Numbers 35<sup>27</sup>

(44) Exodus 22<sup>1</sup> (22<sup>2</sup> English version) "If a thief is found breaking in and is  
struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him."

Often bloodguiltiness was the result of shedding "innocent blood". This phrase occurs twenty times in the Old Testament and often in connection with "shedding blood" or "blood guilt". Strict injunctions against such murder is contained in Deuteronomy<sup>(45)</sup> which perhaps preserves an earlier apodeictic prohibition and which certainly shows the fear of incurring guilt for such bloodshed. As has been noted above, innocent blood which was shed was a stain upon the land until it was avenged, and only the blood of the murderer could remove the stain. Occasionally the phrase could be used metaphorically. In Isaiah, ". . . they make haste to shed innocent blood" refers perhaps to the faithful few who refused to accept the evil practices of the rest of the community.<sup>(46)</sup> A similar metaphorical use is found in Jeremiah when we read, "Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor".<sup>(47)</sup>

One can argue, therefore, that "innocent blood" is also an indication of the underlying idea of death, in the way the phrase is used. However, when discussing the passage in Deuteronomy 27<sup>25</sup>, S. R. Driver in a footnote writes, "'to smite a soul (even innocent blood):- יָדָהּ אֶת הַדָּם is in apposition with וְיָדָהּ in virtue of the principle וְיָדָהּ אֶת הַדָּם Deuteronomy 12<sup>23</sup>"<sup>(48)</sup> If this be so, then on one occasion at least the phrase is indicative of life in blood. In the main, however, the use of the phrase would tend to support an interpretation of blood shed as "death".

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(45) Deuteronomy 19<sup>10</sup> "lest innocent blood be shed . . . so the guilt of bloodshed be upon you"

(46) Isaiah 59<sup>7</sup>

(47) Jeremiah 2<sup>34</sup>

(48) S. R. Driver "Deuteronomy" I.C.C. p.302

This can indeed be taken a stage further when the use of the plural form דָּמִים is observed. Often this is used to symbolize violent or premature death, and even guilt arising from such bloodshed even though in a number of passages it is a question whether דָּמִים means death as a result of the miscarriage of justice or illegitimate sacrifice.<sup>(49)</sup> When David sought the reason for three years of famine, he received the answer, "There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house because he put the Gibeonites to death".<sup>(50)</sup> In a similar way the Vision of Abominations in Jerusalem which is described by Ezekiel contains the phrase, "Damim" in the sense of bloody crime, clearly referring to murder.<sup>(51)</sup>

In the 26 contexts where blood clearly requires the interpretation "death", several times the plural form damim is used, and each time it indicates violent death. Indeed, the Revised Standard Version of Hosea 4<sup>2</sup> has damim translated by "murder"; in Deuteronomy 17<sup>8</sup> "dam" is translated by "homicide" and in Psalm 30<sup>10</sup> indeed by the very word "death". The significance of blood used in this way is indicated clearly in the Joseph Saga. When Joseph's brothers wished to make their father think that Joseph was dead, they killed a goat and dipped his coat in the blood.<sup>(52)</sup> The sight

(49) "To shed blood is synonymous with 'to kill', 'to murder' and guilt for a person's death is expressed by damim, the plural of dam. of. Joshua 2<sup>19</sup> 'Whoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head ( דָּמָיו יִשָּׂא )" Jewish Encyclopaedia: article by H. L. Strack "Blood"

(50) II Samuel 21<sup>1</sup> דָּמִים יִשָּׂא - שָׂא דָּמִים - שָׂא

(51) Ezekiel 7<sup>23</sup> ". . . because the land is full of bloody crimes:" of. Isaiah 59<sup>3</sup> "Your hands are defiled with blood". D. R. Jones in his article on "The cessation of sacrifice after the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC" J.T.S. vol. XIV, part 1, 1963, writes, "The prophet's concern is with moral and social offences and the expression refers, most probably to the unjust use of the death penalty". p.21, note 1.

(52) Genesis 27

of blood on the garment convinced Jacob that his son had been killed by a wild animal. When the Moabites, as discussed above, saw the sun shining on water and imagined it was blood, they assumed a great slaughter had taken place<sup>(53)</sup> even though one can say that basically the idea is of death taking place because of life flowing away with the blood.<sup>(54)</sup> Habbakuk's condemnation is uttered in similar terms:- "Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity",<sup>(55)</sup> when perhaps it is forced labour, resulting in death that is being described.<sup>(56)</sup> Despite the fact that several times when requiring the interpretation "death", "blood" is used on more than one occasion in the same context, it remains certain that this evidence is important in any analysis of the meaning of the term.

Yet despite this evidence there are several instances where the word must be directly translated "life", and others where this must be the underlying idea. In Deuteronomy 12<sup>23</sup> this is clearly spelt out". . . for the blood is the life . . ." and twice the parallelism of the poetry requires this interpretation. In Psalm 94<sup>21</sup> we read, "They band together against the

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(53) II Kings 3<sup>23</sup>

(54) cf. II Samuel 20<sup>12</sup> "Amasa lay wallowing in his blood on the highway". This is similar to the idea in Ezekiel 16<sup>6</sup> "And when I passed by you and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood 'live, and grow up like a plant!'. The interpretation might well be "although in the likelihood of death, live". There is an interesting footnote by J. Jeremias in his "Eucharistic Words of Jesus" when he quotes Rabbi Matteya Bhen Heres (about 125 A.D.) who said, "God gave them two commandments, the blood of the paschal lamb and the blood of the circumcision, in that they might observe them so that they should be saved, as it is written: "I passed by thee and saw thee flutter in thy two kinds of blood, is (  $\int \cdot \int$  treated as a dual by the Midrash) the blood of the Passover and of the Circumcision".

(55) Habbakuk 2<sup>12</sup>

(56) There are hints elsewhere of foundation sacrifice (I Kings 16<sup>34</sup>) but Habbakuk here is more likely to be referring to forced labour.

life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death" (literally "condemn innocent blood") and in Proverbs 1<sup>18</sup> there occurs the saying "but these men lie in wait for their own blood, they set an ambush for their lives". Again, in Leviticus 19<sup>16</sup> the phrase  $\square \bar{\eta} \text{ } \bar{\eta} \bar{\eta}$  is translated "against the life" of your neighbour and a similar parallel translation is found in Psalm 72<sup>14</sup>, (57) which must require the meaning of life.

An interesting example illustrating this basic belief occurs in the story of David and the three men of violence. (58) After the three men had risked their lives to obtain water for David to drink, he "poured it out to the Lord and said, 'Shall I drink the lifeblood of these men? For at the risk of their lives they brought it.'" Symbolically the water represented the lifeblood of the men and it was not for David to consume it. He is described as dealing with it in accordance with the legislation of Deuteronomy. (59) Blood then in these contexts clearly equalled life and when the command in Deuteronomy 12<sup>23</sup> (60) is remembered, it is impossible to ignore this interpretation.

This is emphasized when the studies of Morris Jastrow on the importance of the liver as the seat of the soul are considered. He claims that while the "heart" ( $\eta \bar{\eta}$ ) is synonymous for the "soul" ( $\eta \bar{\eta} \bar{\eta}$ ) there are two passages where liver ( $\eta \bar{\eta} \bar{\eta}$ ) occurs instead. The first is in Lamentations 2<sup>11</sup>: "Poured out on the earth is my liver over the destruction of my people", where

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(57) "Precious is their blood in my sight" which can hardly be interpreted "death".

(58) I Chronicles 11<sup>15-19</sup>

(59) Deuteronomy 12<sup>16</sup> ". . . you shall pour it upon the earth like water".

(60) "Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life and you shall not eat the life with the flesh".

the expression of the liver being poured out is synonymous with the more common one of blood or the soul being poured out. The second one is in Proverbs 7<sup>23</sup>: "Until the arrow pierces his liver . . . not knowing that it means his life", where there is a direct juxtaposition of liver and life. Again he seeks to emend Psalm 7<sup>6</sup>: "Let him tread down my life to the earth, and drag my liver to the dust" reading  $\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}$  (Kittel prefers  $\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}$ ) and Psalm 30<sup>13</sup>: "That my liver may sing praise unto thee and not be silent". The text has  $\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}$  but the footnote gives the variant readings  $\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}$  or  $\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}$ . This would be synonymous with the frequent phrase "Let my heart be glad" or "let my soul rejoice". There are also some passages where both views appear.<sup>(61)</sup> When it is remembered that basically the liver is a mass of blood and was used for divination certainly in Babylon even though it was prohibited in Israel, then if Jastrow is correct, this certainly supports those who see life as the basic meaning in blood.

There remain the six instances where blood was thought to render a person unclean. These occur in the Levitical legislation regarding purification after menstruation and childbirth.<sup>(62)</sup> The idea of the potency of blood is the obvious cause of separation of the woman in these circumstances and there is here surely an echo of similar fears and taboos among primitive tribes, touched upon earlier. In this case it is arguable that the underlying idea at least is one of potency.

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- (61) Psalm 16<sup>9</sup> "Therefore my heart is glad and my liver exulteth". Oesterley here notes, "Read, with Gunkel  $\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}$  literally "my liver for  $\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}7\text{׳}$  "my glory" ('Psalms') Psalm 108<sup>2</sup> "My heart is steadfast O God! I will chant and I will sing, aye my liver (shall sing)! 'Here the phrase "my liver" is the equivalent of "my soul" (Jastrow)
- (62) Leviticus 12, cf. verse 4 "Then she shall continue for 33 days in the blood of her purifying." This refers to the birth of a male child. In the case of a daughter the period was 66 days. Leviticus 15<sup>9</sup> "When a woman has a discharge of blood . . . she shall be in her impurity for 7 days". This refers to the normal regulations regarding purification after menstruation. It is worth noting that the verse continues, "and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening" showing a conviction that blood had the power to make unclean. This is paralleled, as we have seen, earlier, in the practices of many primitive peoples.

One finds then that the analysis of the various categories seems to support the conclusions drawn from the statistics. Both concepts of life and death are significantly present when the term is used in non-sacrificial contexts and it is impossible to ignore either idea, nor to explain one in terms of the other. One is forced then to disagree with those who claim that blood significantly means death, often violent death and only death, and with those who claim that it means only life or life liberated in death. The result must be some form of synthesis, and this possibility must now be examined.

## A POSSIBLE SYNTHESIS?

Despite conflicting opinion regarding the significance of blood, all scholars would accept that it is a mysterious fluid capable of arousing fear or awe. Even today with advanced medical knowledge blood retains its mystery and although substitutes for it can be manufactured, blood itself cannot yet be made in the laboratory. In common experience the sight of blood can still cause dismay and even fainting, even though contemporary society is being hardened by brutality on screen or television. No wonder then that blood was regarded with awe in Biblical and pre-Biblical times, and among many primitive peoples.

There is a general consensus among primitive peoples, evident from the survey in the Introduction, that blood had a potency and that it retained this potency even when separated from a body. Through observation it was realized that loss of blood caused loss of life, and the vital nature of the fluid was recognized. Because of a natural fear of death and a desire to prolong life the use of blood in trying to create immortality became important. Because it was seen to be the means of life it was thus thought of as being a special means of communicating with the spirit world. Indeed in totemism it was believed that by imbibing the blood of the animal the tribe was in communion with the god. In terms of religious use, then, blood was of supreme importance for primitive man, and at times the slaughter of the animal was seen simply as a necessary prelude in releasing the blood in which the life inhered.

Thus far the sacrificial usage and beliefs in the Old Testament would agree. Clearly from the evidence in this section blood was seen as a vital power and was thus used in the sacrificial system. Its use in atoning sacrifices became of prime importance as these attained to greater significance in the religious life of the nation, and it must always be borne in mind that the reasons given for using blood are always "by reason of the life" and

because "I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls".<sup>(1)</sup> It was thought that blood continued to live after it had been taken from the body and this was the justification for its use in sacrifice and the secret of its power and efficacy.<sup>(2)</sup> Indeed Gayford can claim, ". . . the Hebrews regarded the life-blood almost as a living thing in the body which it quickens; and not only was it the vitalizing life while it pulsed in the body, but it had an independent life of its own, even when taken from the body."<sup>(3)</sup> Life was the creation and prerogative of God and blood which was the "life of the flesh"<sup>(4)</sup> was of prime importance. The slaughtering of the animal in sacrifice may have been just an essential preliminary in offering up that blood to release the life.<sup>(5)</sup>

In the analysis of the occasions in which the term was used in non-sacrificial contexts it became obvious that frequently it was thought to represent life, or to be synonymous with it. Even in these contexts it was treated with awe and had to be dealt with according to specially prepared formulae. When animals were slain for food, care had to be taken over the disposal of the blood, while in the case of homicide strict regulations were laid down to ensure that due expiation was made. In a significant number of

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(1) Leviticus 17<sup>11</sup>

(2) S. C. Gayford "Sacrifice and Priesthood" p.68 "To us moderns blood, and particularly blood that has been shed, brings up the association of death; to the Hebrews it meant life that has passed indeed through the experience of death, but has not itself been killed in that experience; it still lives".

(3) S. C. Gayford op. cit., p.68

(4) Leviticus 17<sup>11</sup> cf. Genesis 9<sup>4</sup>

(5) Blood in the body represented life unsundered. If some blood was drawn from the body that typified a surrender of part of that life. The entire surrender of the life was essential and so nothing less than the death of the victim was required; even though just a little of the blood was necessary to apply to the horns of the altar. cf. article by L. Dewar in J.T.S. 1953 p.204 ff.

examples the potency or activity of blood is revealed. The weight of the evidence thus demands that life, or "life surrendered in death" as an interpretation of the meaning and use of blood, must have some place. Primitive experience, sacrificial usage and the evidence of non-sacrificial contexts all point to this conclusion.

Yet this interpretation cannot be exhaustive. Even though this would seem to be the correct reading of the evidence to hand, yet there is ample material which points to the opposite conclusion. It was certain that blood leaving a body resulted in death and naturally enough blood was regarded as the life in the body. Yet the sight of blood shed in any significant quantity must have caused the idea of death to occur to the beholder. Furthermore, when the metaphorical use of blood is examined and the meaning, which it attained in common speech, is perceived, then one is aware that death must be involved. The use of phrases such as "blood is upon them" or "bloodguilt" is an indication that this must be so. It can even be argued that violent death rather than natural death is more often the interpretation demanded by certain contexts.<sup>(6)</sup>

Quite clearly then the evidence would assure us that both ideas of life and death are present in varying degrees in the Old Testament use of the term. It can, of course, be argued that in sacrificial contexts it is the life only which is important; the death of the victim is simply a necessary prelude in releasing the blood in which is the life. Death as such would then have no important place in sacrifice in general and in particular sacrifice in particular.<sup>(7)</sup>

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- (6) In the preceding section the significance of damim has been discussed and the conclusion reached that often violent death is signified by this phrase. cf. Footnote 49.
- (7) cf. S. C. Gayford op. cit., p.116 "But, when the death is accomplished, the atonement is not yet made. It is not effected by the death of the sinner, necessary though that death may be, as a prior condition. It is through a death unto sin and by a life unto God that atonement is made. (Gayford's emphasis)

It is the blood which atones and only the blood; the death has no significance. The way in which the blood is manipulated and the person who manipulates it are of supreme importance, while the victim ceases to have real significance.<sup>(8)</sup> Thus it is life released in death which is being emphasized. This does, however, include both aspects of life and death, and those scholars who subscribe to this general position would argue indeed that while blood equals life or life offered up in death, clearly overtones of death must be involved. Bishop Westcott who in the words of A. M. Stibbs is "chiefly responsible for the widespread prevalence of this idea" (i.e. that blood signifies life)<sup>(9)</sup> wrote, "By the outpouring of the Blood the life which was in it was not destroyed, though it was separated from the organism which it had before quickened . . . . Thus two distinct ideas were included in the sacrifice of a victim, the death of the victim by the shedding of its blood, and the liberation, so to speak, of the principle of life by which it had been animated, so that this life became available for another end."<sup>(10)</sup> It must be carefully underlined that he speaks of "two distinct ideas" - death and life. In his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews he wrote, "The idea of death gives validity to the compact it seals and communication of the blood of the victim to those with whom God makes a covenant unites them to Him with a power of life".<sup>(11)</sup> Again, he stresses both aspects. Nor is he alone. Gayford can also write, "But while it is true to say that we regard the presenting of the blood . . . as the culmination of the Sin Offering,

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(8) Numbers 8<sup>19</sup> "I have given the Levites . . . to do the service for the people of Israel . . . and to make atonement for the people of Israel . . ." cf. the earlier discussion in the sacrificial section supra.

(9) A. M. Stibbs "The Meaning of the word 'blood' in Scripture" p.6

(10) Bishop B. F. Westcott "The Epistles of St. John (1883)" pp.34-7 additional note on I John 1

(12) S. C. Gayford op. cit., p.117

(11) B. F. Westcott "Epistle to the Hebrews" p.263

and the victim's death as a preliminary condition, we must again emphasize the fact that the latter is an indispensable condition (Gayford's emphasis) . . . while the poena vicaria theory may be compared to a circle having for its centre the death, our view likens the Sin Offering to an ellipse having for its two foci the death and the presenting of the blood".<sup>(12)</sup> We must also notice that Sanday and Headlam who are quoted in the same context with Westcott and for similar reasons wrote, "The significance of the Sacrificial Bloodshedding was twofold. The blood was regarded by the Hebrew as essentially the seat of life (Gen. ix 4; Lev. xvii 11; Deut. xii 23). Hence the death of the victim was not only a death but a setting free of life; the application of the blood was an application of life; and the offering of the blood to God was an offering of life. In this lay more especially the virtue of the sacrifice."<sup>(13)</sup> The fact that these scholars among many and Westcott in particular speak about both aspects of death and life signified by blood is most important. Although Stibbs, as we have noticed, quotes both Westcott and Sanday and Headlam, each mentioning explicitly both interpretations, yet he appears to have made the error of assuming that they subscribe to a position which excluded any significance for the word in terms of death whatsoever. He writes, "It is no light task to set oneself against all this weight of scholarship. Yet it is the contention of the present writer that this view, thus eminently supported, is nevertheless open to question" and proceeds to argue persuasively against the idea that blood required only the interpretation life, as though this were the conclusions supported by the "weight of scholarship". Manifestly this is not so in the writings of Westcott, Gayford, Sanday and Headlam, nor Milligan, all of whom are mentioned or quoted. All these scholars, and many who have written more recently, would all seem to

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(12) S. C. Gayford op. cit., p.117

(13) W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, I.C.C. Epistle to the Romans (1895); Fifth Edition (1902) p.89

support a belief that both aspects of life and death are involved in any discussion on the significance of blood.

On the other hand, it would seem that some scholars who hold that blood signifies death and often violent death, will not accept that there can be any interpretation which supports the idea of life. Morris, for example, can argue, "Only seven passages connect blood and life (seventeen refer to eating meat with blood). From this it is clear that death is the association most likely to be conjured up by the use of the term", and later, "But Scriptural passages can just as well be interpreted of life yielded up in death, as of life set free".<sup>(14)</sup> He then goes on to argue that atonement is secured by the death of the victim rather than by its life, thus rejecting the evidence of Leviticus 17<sup>11</sup>.

A similar position is maintained by Stibbs who writes, "Blood shed stands, therefore, not for release of life from the burden of the flesh, but for the bringing to an end of life in the flesh. It is a witness to physical death, not an evidence of spiritual survival".<sup>(15)</sup> He rejects entirely any interpretation which might indicate life and is critical of those who would support such an interpretation. It is possible that his underlying motive is to secure a background for a substitutionary view of the Atonement. Yet Professor D. R. Jones has pointed out (in private correspondence) the difficulty that even if one could show that blood equals death, the Hebrews did not develop their sacrificial system on this basis. Thus it would have been a short step to the idea that the beast, over whom confession had been made, was put to death instead of oneself. But the sin-offering remains holy, i.e. separated unto the Lord, and the only beast who was thought to carry sin was

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(14) New Bible Dictionary 1962, article on Blood by Leon Morris. cf. also his articles in J.T.S. 1952 and 1955

(15) A. M. Stibbs op. cit., p.11. In passing it is just worth quoting this sentence by Stibbs:- "Therefore not only has no man any independent right of freedom to shed blood and take life . . ." (my emphasis) which shows how in common parlance the idea of blood and life are associated.

the scape-goat on the Day of Atonement; banished outside the boundaries of the Holy Land and pushed over a precipice to Azazel. It is worth noting, therefore, Stibbs' discussion on blood "crying out". He quotes the generally-held idea of blood which has been shed having power to "shout to Heaven", and then goes on to write, "It is here in this realm of thought in which the right of shed blood to demand recompense is recognized, that Bishop Westcott in his influential 'Additional Note' begins to go wrong. For he misunderstands the vivid metaphorical phraseology and suggests that statements that blood already shed can cry to God are witness that the blood is still alive after death".<sup>(16)</sup>

Surely the point is not whether Westcott misunderstands the metaphorical phraseology, but how it was understood by the ancient people concerned. Did they think that blood had the independent ability to demand recompense or not? From the evidence examined one is forced to conclude that they did and therefore they dealt with the substance accordingly. Neither we today (nor Westcott nearly one hundred years ago) would believe in this independent power, but it is the Old Testament beliefs we are examining, not those of a sophisticated contemporary society. We must, therefore, reject the conclusion reached by Stibbs:- "To sum up thus far, the general witness of the Old Testament is therefore that "blood" stands not for life released, but first for the fact, and then for the significance, of life laid down or taken in death".<sup>(17)</sup> Neither can we agree with Morris that it is in order to eschew the historical approach, nor that there was a 'Hebrew' mind on the subject if that demands a rejection of life having any significance in blood. The evidence does not support this conclusion. Even when Morris<sup>(18)</sup> tries to

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(16) A. M. Stibbs op. cit., p.12

(17) A. M. Stibbs, op. cit., p.15 ff.

(18) L. Morris, article in J.T.S. 1955 p.77 ff. quoting Dillman p.293

justify his claim by quoting Dillmann on Genesis, "Although the soul or life is not indeed the blood itself yet it is inseparable from it. The blood is a sensible and palpable manifestation of the soul", surely this too must indicate that any interpretation of the term must involve life as well as death. Indeed it is arguable from the material so far discussed that if there were a 'Hebrew' mind on the subject, then it had a two-fold idea regarding blood. In sacrificial terms it is thought of in terms of life and power, with particularly the inherent ability of securing atonement; while in non-sacrificial terms it embraces both ideas of life and death to a greater or less degree.

The contention of the present writer therefore is that the evidence both statistically and analytically requires that both ideas of life and death are involved in the significance of the term blood in the Old Testament. In the language of religion it was most frequently thought to equal life, or life released through death. In general terms, however, although the idea of life is often present, yet the idea of death and even violent death must predominate if only marginally. There must, therefore, be a compromise or synthesis. The 'Hebrew' mind in Morris' phrase cannot be said to favour one to the exclusion of the other, but both must be present to a certain degree whenever the term is used. A. R. Johnson has pointed out that "the Israelite did not always think in terms of a clear-cut distinction between "life" and "death" <sup>(19)</sup> and "just as death in the strict sense of the term is for the Israelite the weakest form of life, so any weakness in life is a form of death". <sup>(20)</sup> It is not surprising therefore that both ideas can be contained in one word. Indeed it is significant that a similar polarization occurs in the meaning of the closely-linked term  $\text{חַיָּוִת}$ . It was used to denote

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(19) "The Vitality of the Individual" p.9

(20) A. R. Johnson op. cit., p.95

"throat" or "neck"; then the breath which emanated from the throat. Subsequently it came to mean "life" and "soul", having close association with the blood.<sup>(21)</sup> The step can then be taken towards the idea of נֶפֶשׁ אִדְּוֹ

(i.e. the אִדְּוֹ of one that is dead) until "it is sufficient to speak quite simply of a אִדְּוֹ when one wishes to refer to a "corpse".<sup>(22)</sup>

Thus the same term can mean the animating principle and also the corpse from which it has departed. In the case of 'blood' a similar situation arises. Basically blood means simply blood, but when it is poured out it has significance for death and life and both interpretations must be present. This being so, it will naturally influence our understanding of the meaning and significance of the term in New Testament usage and to this we now proceed.

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(21) "Indeed it is this thought of a common life vouchsafed by Yahweh and identifiable with the blood (for the blood is said to be or to contain the אִדְּוֹ ) which requires that all blood shall be sacred to Yahweh and taboo for man . . ." A. R. Johnson op. cit., p.8f.

(22) A. R. Johnson op. cit., p.22

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

When one comes to consider the evidence one finds that much of what was decided regarding Old Testament use of the term blood is equally valid for the New Testament. There are some ninety-one occurrences of the term in the New Testament and an analysis of them appears in the appendices. As would be expected, there are several instances where the term is used in a purely 'neutral' sense, as in the case of the woman with the haemorrhage for 12 years.<sup>(1)</sup> On certain occasions the phrase "flesh and blood" occurs and most probably means just humanity; though sometimes it is used to contrast with the deity.<sup>(2)</sup> After the Feeding miracle in St. John's Gospel, "Drinking my blood" is used in connection with "eating my flesh" in what most scholars take to be a direct reference to the Eucharist. In this case the mutual indwelling of the believer with the Lord through partaking of the elements in Holy Communion is being signified.

Twice the term is used in the sense of guilt for bloodshed ("blood is upon them" as it were) and five times it refers to prohibition on eating blood or horror at such a practice. In the Acts of the Apostles, in admitting Gentile Christians to fellowship with Jewish Christians, certain regulations are laid upon them which include "abstaining from blood".<sup>(3)</sup> This has direct reference to the Levitical legislation in the Mosaic code, and F. F. Bruce comments, "Eating flesh with the blood in it (which is inevitable when an animal has died by strangulation) was expressly forbidden in Jewish Law because the life or soul resided in the blood."<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) St. Luke 8<sup>43</sup>; St. Mark 5<sup>25</sup>; St. Matthew 9<sup>20</sup>

(2) St. John 1<sup>13</sup> where the two words appear closely in the same context:- "who were born not of blood, not of the will of the flesh . . . but of God". (C. K. Barrett in his commentary on this verse remarks that an ancient belief attributed procreation to blood - p.137.) cf. the more usual "For flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father who is in Heaven". (St. Matthew 16<sup>17</sup>)

(3) Acts 15<sup>20</sup>; Acts 15<sup>25</sup>; Acts 21<sup>25</sup>; cf. Leviticus 17<sup>11</sup>

(4) "The Acts of the Apostles" 1970. p.300 on *δὲ μὲν*

On twenty-six occasions the term definitely requires the interpretation "death", either by direct translation or by metaphorical usages. For example, in the Epistle to the Hebrews the comment is made, "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood",<sup>(5)</sup> and in the Book of Revelation several times it is used to denote murder.<sup>(6)</sup>

These categories account for some forty-nine occurrences of the term, or just over half in all. We are left with nine occasions when the term refers to the Eucharist and a further thirty-three which have obvious sacrificial significance. Thus several examples occur in the Epistle to the Hebrews when comparing the sacrifice of Christ with Jewish atonement and Covenant sacrifices,<sup>(7)</sup> and other examples can be found in the First Epistle to the Romans.<sup>(9)</sup> It would seem reasonable to include the references to the Eucharist in a sacrificial analysis and we thus discover that just under half the occurrences are in sacrificial contexts. We must now try to discover whether our findings in the Old Testament have parallels in the New Testament.

In the contexts which have little or no sacrificial connection the overwhelming emphasis is on death as the meaning of the term. More than half the non-sacrificial instances must bear this interpretation. This being the case, it would appear that the New Testament evidence gives rather stronger support to those who see blood only in terms of death. Indeed, despite the fact that several instances are direct parallels or repetitions within the same context,<sup>(10)</sup> there are hardly any grounds for argument or disagreement.

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(5) Hebrews 12<sup>4</sup>

(6) Revelation 16<sup>6</sup> "For men have shed the blood of saints . . ." cf. 18<sup>24</sup>

(7) cf. particularly Chapter 9

(8) cf. I John 1<sup>7</sup> "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin"

(9) cf. 3<sup>25</sup> "Whom God put forward as an expiation in his blood . . ."

(10) cf. St. Matthew 23<sup>30-35</sup> paralleled by St. Luke 11<sup>49-51</sup> which account for six uses of the term with reference to death.

Even the references to the "blood of Abel" which in the Old Testament can be interpreted as "crying out" and therefore "alive", cannot bear this interpretation here. It refers simply to murder, and directly to the guilt for the murder of all of God's righteous servants through the ages from Abel onward. Indeed, quite often responsibility for death is involved in the use of the term.<sup>(11)</sup> For example, when Paul was rejected by the Jews of Corinth he proclaimed, "Your blood be upon your heads. I am innocent",<sup>(12)</sup> and in his farewell address to the Ephesians he claimed not to have watered down the Gospel, in the words, "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you".<sup>(13)</sup>

It would seem then that the "Hebrew" mind in the New Testament at least in non-sacrificial contexts, has hardened its concept of the meaning of the term in terms of death, whereas in the Old Testament in similar contexts it could vary between life and death as possible interpretations. This is perhaps to be expected, because, in time the association of blood with death becomes stronger, at least in non-sacrificial thinking. When we examine sacrificial contexts, however, the matter is rather different, and since it is the meaning of blood with special reference to the sayings and actions of Our Lord with which we must obviously be concerned, it is sacrificial contexts and those referring to the Eucharist which we must examine in detail. And here the Old Testament background thought must be of importance for the New Testament writers and thus for our understanding of what they intended.

As we have seen, the term occurs some forty-two times in Eucharistic or sacrificial contexts and sixteen of these occur in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which thus has considerably more instances than any other single book.

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(11) cf. Acts 5<sup>28</sup> ". . . and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us".  
cf. St. Matthew 27<sup>25</sup>

(12) Acts 18<sup>6</sup>

(13) Acts 20<sup>26</sup>

This is perhaps natural enough because the author of the Epistle discusses at length the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ and its importance for the Christian, and one would, therefore, expect frequent use of the term. It is, however, to be recognized that the Epistle to the Hebrews must be an important factor in determining thoughts regarding blood in the New Testament.

The main block of evidence occurs in Chapter 9 of the Epistle when the author is making a contrast between the ritual of the Day of Atonement and the sacrifice of Christ, as well as introducing the further thought of the inauguration of a new covenant. In the ritual of the Day of Atonement the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies on two occasions. The author describes the entrance of the High Priest as "but once a year",<sup>(14)</sup> whereas in fact there were two entrances. It is perhaps because these were obviously interconnected (both took place within the same ceremony and on only one day in the year) that he so describes them. The High Priest first entered bearing the blood of a bull to atone for himself and all priests; secondly he entered with the blood of a goat, with which to sprinkle the mercy-seat seven times to make atonement for the errors of the people. Significantly each entrance into the Divine Presence had to be accompanied by blood.<sup>(15)</sup> Contrasted with this is Christ's entrance into the Holy Place "taking not the blood of goats and calves but His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption".<sup>(16)</sup> The action of the High Priest needed to be repeated annually so that atonement could be made for the sins of the people and so that the covenant relationship could be re-established. Christ needed to enter once only to secure an eternal redemption because of the perfection of His offering. The ancient offering had been with the blood of animals; Christ entered with His own

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(14) Hebrews 9<sup>7</sup>

(15) Hebrews 9<sup>7</sup> ". . . and not without taking blood . . ."

(16) Hebrews 9<sup>12</sup>

blood.<sup>(17)</sup> The author assumes the purificatory aspect of blood. There is no discussion regarding its use in atonement, probably because of the age-long tradition concerning it in Israel. As W. Manson comments, "It is a thing inseparable from the age-long history of grace in Israel, and the writer of this Epistle, who . . . had found his own approach to God so prescribed . . . does not feel it incumbent upon him to argue its sufficiency."<sup>(18)</sup> In a similar vein T. H. Robinson remarks, "We have here no discussion as to the reason why this (i.e. the blood) should be indispensable for the writer simple assumes it as one of the basic facts of religion".<sup>(19)</sup> In atonement it was blood which effected the purification, the death was of subsidiary importance. So it is with the sacrifice of Christ as it is discussed in this Epistle. In the words of Westcott:- "It will be observed that it is not the death of the victim as suffering, but the use of the blood (that is the life) which is presented here as the source of purification".<sup>(20)</sup> He is echoed by Robinson when he writes, "Blood is a mysterious fluid and it is intimately associated with the yet more mysterious essence which we call life. To the primitive mind it has always had a peculiar significance and a unique efficacy apart from any conscious theory of the way in which it produced results".<sup>(21)</sup> The Covenant was inaugurated by blood;<sup>(22)</sup> it was blood therefore which was used to re-establish the covenantal relationship after it had been marred by sin.

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(17) NB. ~~is~~ is said to be "marking the means not defining the mode" by B. F. Westcott in his commentary on this verse.

(18) W. Manson "The Epistle to the Hebrews" p.134, cf. T. H. Robinson "In another respect the old dispensation was a foreshadowing of the new and that is in the necessity of blood as a medium for atonement" "Epistle to the Hebrews" p.126

(19) T. H. Robinson "Epistle to the Hebrews" p.126

(20) B. F. Westcott "Epistle to the Hebrews" p.261

(21) T. H. Robinson "Epistle to the Hebrews" p.12

(22) Exodus 24<sup>3-8</sup> cf. Genesis 15<sup>7-18</sup>

The efficacy of the Blood of Christ is compared with that of animal sacrifice. In Jewish ritual the defilement needing to be cleansed was of an external nature and the purification was achieved by the blood of an animal. The author here is comparing this with the action of Christ in removing not external but spiritual defilement. A further dimension is involved. The argument thus runs that if the blood of animals was efficacious in their situation, then the blood of Christ must be even more efficacious in the situation described. The action of Christ's blood was not to make any outward change, but to communicate a vital force. As Westcott says:- "It removes the defilement and defiling power of "dead works", works which are done apart from Him who is the Life . . . . Here the effects of a death within him are taken away".<sup>(23)</sup> Christ has achieved the purpose for which He came into the world, He has won for man a cleansing of conscience from dead work. As the High Priest passed into the Holy of Holies in the Temple, so Christ passed into the true presence of God and therefore the Atonement is not subject to time or space or matter. The efficacy of Christ's blood is established on four grounds. The offering He made was voluntary; it was rational and not animal; it was spontaneous rather than being the result of a direct command; and it was an offering of self thus conveying a moral efficacy.

The comparison with the ancient ritual in removing external defilement is continued by contrasting the work of Christ with the Red Heifer ritual.<sup>(24)</sup> Here the explicit motive is the removal of contagion occasioned by contact with a dead body. In contrast with this, Christ purifies the worshippers from contact with death and provides access to God and life in His Church.

In all this it must be noted that blood is the effecting principle. In the old ritual it was the blood of animals, in discussing the efficacy of

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(23) B. F. Westcott op. cit., p.262

(24) Hebrews 9<sup>13</sup>

Christ's atoning work it is His blood. Bearing in mind the background of Jewish atonement thought and practice, it is at least arguable that the author is thinking of Christ's blood in terms of life released after death for a specific act of eternal purification.<sup>(25)</sup>

The author takes the argument a stage further and develops his thought from a comparison with the Day of Atonement ritual to one with the inauguration of a covenant. This is a natural progression when it is remembered that the Atonement ritual was prescribed to re-establish the Covenant bond. It is in this section that the emphasis on life rather than death is even more marked. In inaugurating a Covenant blood was used. The author writes, "Even the first covenant was not ratified without blood",<sup>(26)</sup> which perhaps conveys the dual idea of quickening and atonement by imparting new life. The blood had to be obtained through the death of a victim which although of secondary importance in this aspect had yet an importance in establishing a covenant. Death was important in a covenant in marking the immutability of the term laid down,<sup>(27)</sup> but it was the blood which was the effecting agent in its inauguration. As a result of the work of Christ a new covenant relation has been established between God and man and it was the blood (i.e. the life) of Christ which was the seal of that new covenant. It is remarked therefore that the author is stressing the dual activity of the blood of Christ. He

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(25) In discussing these verses J. Ferguson writes, "Christ offers his own blood, that is his life, to convict our consciences and draw us back to God. That life is in the first place without blemish, because, as we have learnt, he was made perfect through sufferings. In the second place, the very offering can be made only through suffering. Life can be offered only through death. At two different levels Christ's self-offering involves suffering." ("The Place of Suffering" 1972)

(26) Hebrews 9<sup>18</sup>

(27) cf. B. F. Westcott, "Epistle to the Hebrews" p.265 "The unchangeableness of a covenant is seen in the fact that he who has made it has deprived himself of all further power of movement in this respect: while the ratification by death is still incomplete, while the victim, the representative of him who makes it, still lives, that is while he who makes it still possesses the full power of action and freedom to change, the covenant is not of force."

interprets it as a means of atonement and also as the ratification of the covenant which followed upon that atonement.

It must be noticed in passing that in establishing a covenant the victim was not offered to the Deity. In the Abrahamic Covenant, for example, the animal was halved and both parties passed between the parts, God being represented by the fire.<sup>(28)</sup> In the Mosaic Covenant blood was thrown against the altar (representing God) and over the people.<sup>(29)</sup> The victim's part in the Covenant was thus not to be offered but to mediate. In these terms Christ was not the price to be paid, but rather the mediator, in whose lifeblood both parties to the covenant, God and man, can be absorbed. The importance of this in our understanding of the Eucharist cannot fail to be noticed and to this we will return later.

In this chapter, therefore, the emphasis is continually upon the vital nature of Christ's blood, not only as life but as life-giving; not only as "alive" but as active. It is said, "Under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins".<sup>(30)</sup> Blood is the life and power which purifies and in Jewish rites it was the characteristic means of cleansing. It was because of its life and activity released through death that it was effective. One must, therefore, reject the interpretation by Stibbs in his discussion of this verse that Christ entered "by way of his own death". He claims that "this taking of blood into the holy place was a token of blood already shed and of a life laid down in expiation for sin".<sup>(31)</sup> This seems to run counter to general interpretation of these activities. As it is summed up by Westcott, "Blood

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(28) Genesis 15<sup>17</sup>

(29) Exodus 24<sup>8</sup>

(30) Hebrews 9<sup>22</sup>

(31) A. M. Stibbs, op. cit., p.23

becomes . . . the enveloping medium and not simply the means or instrument through or by which the purification is effected.<sup>(32)</sup> It is not a token of life laid down in expiation for sin. The death of the animal was never the atoning principle, and so, when applied to Christ, it cannot be said that it was by "way of his own death" that He entered. The stress must be in the opposite direction, namely that it is through the life released, represented by the blood that atonement is wrought and therefore the Christian has boldness to enter the holy place in the same vital power.<sup>(33)</sup> The present writer therefore is reluctant to accept the contention that the phrase "By the blood of Jesus" means "through the death of Jesus and its realized significance".<sup>(34)</sup>

The death was a necessity since it was the means whereby the life of Christ could be made available for mankind. As Westcott writes, so persuasively, "The blood was the energy of Christ's true human life under the circumstances of earth whereby alone man's life received the pledge and power of a divine glory."<sup>(35)</sup> Even though death itself was not without significance (and even Westcott, despite being castigated, wrongly, for stressing the life aspect of blood at the expense of that of death, can, on one occasion, at least, speak of the Death of Christ achieving atonement,<sup>(36)</sup> yet it is the life which is primarily seen as the atoning principle. The emphasis therefore must lie with the life even though both aspects must be present. Westcott indeed stresses this very point when he writes, "Thus the two - blood and death - correspond generally with the two sides of Christ's work, the fulfilment of the destiny of man as created, and the fulfilment of this destiny though man has fallen. It is necessary therefore in order to gain a complete

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(32) B. F. Westcott, op. cit., commenting on Hebrews 9<sup>22</sup>

(33) of. Hebrews 10<sup>19-20</sup> ". . . since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened . . ."

(34) A. M. Stibbs, op. cit., p.24

(35) B. F. Westcott, op. cit., p.298

(36) B. F. Westcott, op. cit., p.264 "The Death of Christ fulfilled two distinct purposes. It provided an atonement for past sins . . ."

view of the sacrifice of Christ to combine with the crowning act upon the Cross His fulfilment of the Will of God from first to last, the sacrifice of life with the sacrifice of death."<sup>(37)</sup>

The thoughts of this chapter are continued in the closing chapter of the book. The author returns to the subject because of alien doctrines which seemed to turn on "foods".<sup>(38)</sup> He claims that there is no analogy between Jewish sacrifice involving the taking away of food for use of the ministrants at the shrine and the oblation of Christ. He then contrasts once more the atonement rituals and the sacrifice of Christ. In the Jewish practice the blood was needed to enable the High Priest to enter the Holy of Holies and the victim was burned outside the camp. In Christ's atoning work He, as the eternal High Priest, entered Heaven through His own blood, and His body was, as it were, consumed by divine fire which transfigured it. Once again it is the efficacy of the blood of Christ in making atonement and enabling the entrance into the eternal Holy of Holies to be made, which is being stressed. The blood is regarded as vital, live and life-giving.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews then the blood of Christ is interpreted in terms of, and contrasted with, atonement and covenant sacrifices under the old order. The age-long traditions regarding the efficacy of blood as the life-giving principle in these sacrifices must have been influential for the author, and there have been clear indications that this is so in the stress laid on the atoning power of Christ's blood and its effectiveness in inaugurating the new covenant.

When we pass to consider the passages which refer to the Institution of the Eucharist, we discover that ideas of covenant firstly, and atonement secondly, are demonstrably present. The very recorded words of institution,

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(37) B. F. Westcott, op. cit., p.298

(38) Hebrews 13<sup>9</sup>

"This is my blood of the New Covenant"<sup>(39)</sup> must immediately have caused the disciples to think back to the early days of the history of Israel when God and man had first come into communion with one another by means of the Covenant. This new statement by Christ indicated the establishment of a new relationship between God and man. It would be on the basis of His sacrificial death and would be inaugurated by means of His sacrificial blood. As in the original Covenant the death of the victim was involved and served to emphasize the immutability of the terms agreed, so Christ's death accomplished this aspect in the new covenant. Moreover, as in the Mosaic Covenant blood was used to sprinkle the altar as a symbol of the people's obedience and then as blood dedicated to Yahweh, to sprinkle the people symbolising that the people shared in the blessings which it conveyed, so now in the blood of Christ both man and God can be united and made one.

Since blood was regarded as the life of the victim, taken for the use of both parties to the Covenant, so in the sacrifice of Christ it is through the life in the blood that man approached the Deity. One must also bear in mind the point made earlier that in a covenant the victim acts as a mediator between the parties, it is not offered to God. One may argue then that by these words of institution Christ is pointing to Himself as the victim certainly, but also the mediator in the covenant between God and man, the two parties concerned. He does this by means of the life offered and received. As Vincent Taylor remarks, "The saying of Jesus strongly suggests the thought that, as of old dedicated blood was applied in blessing to the people, so now His life, surrendered to God and accepted by Him is offered to and made available for men. Of this life wine is a symbol . . . it is a vehicle of the life released for many in the shedding of blood".<sup>(40)</sup>

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(39) St. Mark 14<sup>24</sup>; St. Matthew 26<sup>28</sup>. In this phrase our Lord was using language which would be unforgettable for the disciples. Jeremias describes it as a "sinister animistic horror for the born Jew" (The Eucharistic Words of Jesus) p.143

(40) V. Taylor "Jesus and His Sacrifice" p.138 cf. B. F. Westcott, op. cit., "The offered blood . . . is the blood of an eternal covenant"

The fact that the covenant then was explicitly involved in the words of institution gives a direct link in the thinking of the Epistle to the Hebrews already discussed and the intention of Our Lord. The words, "poured out for many" seem to be based on the Servant passage of Isaiah 53<sup>(41)</sup> and give a clear indication that Jesus thought of His death as a vicarious sacrifice. The phrase is peculiar to Matthew and Mark but seems to be in harmony with the thought of I Corinthians 11<sup>24</sup> ("for you") and of Luke 22<sup>19</sup> ("given for you", added by some ancient authorities). The connection with forgiveness may not have attached to the original covenant but is certainly distinctive in the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31. Since blood as life was demonstrably the means of atonement under the old dispensation and Christ here explicitly refers to atonement in His blood one may say that the interpretation of blood as active and alive in winning salvation is involved in these words.

A further significance in the Eucharistic institution is now discussed. Jeremias has remarked that the words "This is my blood of the Covenant" which have reference to Exodus 24<sup>8</sup> have also a relation with the thought of the blood of the Passover Lamb. He argues that the words are a comparison between Jesus and the Paschal Lamb rather than an identification,<sup>(42)</sup> but even so, this argues a relation in thought between the two. The paschal lamb of recent times may not have been regarded as working expiation, but certainly the lambs killed at the Exodus had a redemptive effect. Jesus therefore also describes his sacrifice as redemptive by a comparison with the paschal lamb whose blood was used to smear the lintels of the tent to prevent the slaughter of the firstborn.<sup>(43)</sup>

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(41) "The many" is a Semiticism, meaning "all, in contrast with one" and is therefore all-inclusive rather than exclusive.

(42) J. Jeremias op. cit., p.143

(43) Exodus 12<sup>23</sup> cf. Zechariah 9<sup>11</sup> which Talmudic literature interprets with reference to the deliverance from Egypt.

The significance of the Eucharistic words is further explained by an examination of the discourse in St. John's Gospel regarding "eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man."<sup>(44)</sup> It would seem that there is a direct reference to the Eucharist and it has been argued that "blood" is introduced in order to suggest it more forcibly.<sup>(45)</sup> C. K. Barrett remarks on this passage that "Some commentators would suppose that blood emphasizes the necessity of death and symbolizes the life which is given to the believer"<sup>(46)</sup> If this were so, then blood and life are juxtaposed once again in this context. We have seen earlier that the term "flesh and blood" is used to denote humanity. It is possible that in this context (and therefore in the institution wording) they are the means of providing eternal life. As a result of the worshipper's receiving the elements of bread and wine symbolizing the Body and Blood of Christ, there is a mutual indwelling. The effects of Christ's sacrifice are received by the worshippers through atonement and covenant and communion, and one is forced to discern a reference to the sacramental life of the Christian in the Church. The life of Christ was made available through His death and the Christian partakes of that life in obedience to the command, "Do this". He partakes of the wine (signifying the blood) and, in accordance with the promise of Christ, has eternal life.<sup>(47)</sup>

Corroboration may be provided by the words which occur later in this Gospel after the Death on the Cross. When the soldier pierced Christ's side, the writer records, "There came forth blood and water".<sup>(48)</sup> Physiologically this is a possibility and St. John may be describing the actual event.

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(44) St. John 6<sup>53</sup>

(45) cf. C. K. Barrett "The Gospel according to St. John" p.247

(46) C. K. Barrett op. cit., p.247

(47) St. John 6<sup>54</sup> cf. verse 56 "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him"

(48) St. John 19<sup>34</sup>

It is equally possible that he was intending to communicate a theological truth. If so it may be that in this phrase he is referring obliquely to the two sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Man has to be born from Water and the Spirit (3<sup>5</sup>) and blood is the true drink which men must receive (6<sup>53</sup>) and through which the life of Christ is received. As C. K. Barrett remarks, "It is highly probable then that in the effusion of blood and water from the pierced side of Christ, John saw a symbol of the fact that from the Crucified there proceed those living streams by which men are quickened and the Church lives".<sup>(49)</sup>

An echo of this occurs perhaps in the first Johannine Epistle where in Chapter 5<sup>6</sup> we read, "This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ . . ." It is possible that this verse was inserted to refute Gnostic teaching that Jesus was mere man until His baptism when the divine Christ descended upon Him, remaining with Him until just before the Crucifixion, but leaving Him then because the divine cannot suffer. It could be (argues C. H. Dodd) that it was a Gnostic saying that "Christ came by water (of baptism) and not by the blood (of the Cross)". If this be so, then this verse is a clear refutation of such teaching, stressing "not by water only but by water and blood". Whether this be the case or not, this verse can certainly be interpreted with reference to the two Dominical Sacraments, both of which are counterparts in the ministry of Our Lord. Baptism is a counterpart to the baptism of Christ while the Eucharist is a counterpart to His sacrificial death. Both sacraments convey to their recipients the Life of Christ, through water and blood in the power of the Spirit.

The Eucharistic references and Johannine literature so far discussed emphasize that blood signifies the life of Christ, released for man. There is a further passage in John's first Epistle which we must consider and this

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(49) C. K. Barrett op. cit., p.463

has distinct parallels with Pauline material which will be discussed below. In Chapter 1 St. John writes, "The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin," and it is obvious that he is thinking not only in sacrificial terms but in atonement terms in particular. The efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is made available for all. It is continuous and all-sufficient, and it is the blood which effects the cleansing. It is at this point that we must again refer to the article by A. M. Stibbs. Discussing this verse he writes, "Here too, in 1 John it is significant that John who is so often occupied in thought with the believer's participation in Christ's life, attributes to the blood of Jesus, not the power to quicken, but the power to cleanse. For the quickening or regenerating work which gives men new life is done by the Spirit, not by the blood".<sup>(50)</sup> Certainly St. John is here referring to the cleansing power of Christ's blood, but it must be admitted that it has a reference to atonement. Since it has been established earlier that atonement is effected by the life in the blood and that this was the generally-held conception of the Jew, St. John must have in mind the life of Christ released for this purpose through death. This is required by the atonement reference. Even more, it is surely invalid to argue on the basis of one verse regarding the "Quickening power of Christ's blood" in Johannine thought. In his Eucharistic discourse already mentioned the interpretation of "he who drinks my blood has eternal life" must be that the Blood of Christ gives eternal life. His blood as shed must be interpreted as the life of Christ given on behalf of man; His blood as offered must be that life now given to men as their way of receiving eternal life. Once again we must dissent from the conclusions reach by A. M. Stibbs.

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(50) A. M. Stibbs, op. cit., p.26

This verse of St. John has its counterpart in Pauline writings. In Romans we find the phrase "whom God put forward as an expiation in his blood".<sup>(51)</sup> It is possible that *προέθετο* may be interpreted "set forth openly" meaning that God set forth Christ as a sacrifice. If so, this can make explicit the meaning implied by reference to "expiated in his blood". This is God's way of dealing with sin and it is possible that the Suffering Servant of Isaiah is in Paul's mind at this point. It is also possible that a further Old Testament symbol is included here. The word *ἰλαστήριον* is used to denote the "Mercy-seat", the life of the Ark of the Covenant. This was sprinkled with blood by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, as we have seen already. Perhaps, then, Paul is intending us to understand Christ as the true mercy-seat - the place and means of atonement. However, as C. K. Barrett writes, "We can go with certainty no further than the translation "God set forth Christ as the means of dealing with sin". Other allusions may be no more than overtones".<sup>(52)</sup> This being so, the verse may not bear the weight of interpretation placed upon it by Stibbs when he writes, ". . . but that he himself is the true eternal mercy-seat of the divine purpose 'by his blood', that is, because of his death as Man for men".<sup>(53)</sup>

In a later Chapter Paul refers to being "now justified by his blood".<sup>(54)</sup> This is taken by Stibbs to mean a direct reference to the death of Christ as the means of justification. Yet the next verse continues, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life". Surely this verse demands the interpretation that salvation is through the life of Christ offered

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(51) Romans 3<sup>25</sup>

(52) C. K. Barrett "The Epistle to the Romans" p.78

(53) A. M. Stibbs op. cit., p.19

(54) Romans 5<sup>9</sup>

for men. Stibbs quotes Sanday and Headlam, "He . . . clearly connects the act of justification with the blood shedding of Christ"<sup>(55)</sup> as support for his contention, but fails to point out that in their thinking about bloodshedding they follow Westcott. They write, ". . . for Dr. Westcott seems to have sufficiently shown that the centre of the symbolism of sacrifice lies not in the death of the victim but in the offering of its life" (p.93), a passage which is referred to following the quotation given by Stibbs!

Similar conclusions regarding the significance of blood may be drawn from passages in Ephesians and 1 Peter. In Chapter 1<sup>7</sup> the author of Ephesians writes, "In him we have redemption through his blood". We have seen earlier that the *lex talionis* was observed very carefully, particularly with regard to murder (i.e. blood for blood). In this case the 'ransom', by which redemption was achieved, was the blood of Christ, given for the sinner's life which was forfeit. The Christian is incorporated in Christ ("in whom") and received the benefit of that life of Christ, which is redemption from our trespasses. As Westcott writes, "The blood of Christ is as shed, the life of Christ given for man; and as offered, the life of Christ now given to man, the life which is their spring of life"<sup>(56)</sup>. The thought of Christ's blood (as shed) includes all that is involved in His death and more, for it "always includes the thought of the life preserved and active in death". A similar interpretation of the blood of Christ as the ransom may be made of parallel passages in Revelation, particularly with reference to the verse" . . . Thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God"<sup>(57)</sup> which brings out so clearly the release of atoning blood through death.

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(55) W. Sanday & A. C. Headlam "The Epistle to the Romans" p.128

(56) B. F. Westcott "The Epistles of John" p.34

(57) Revelation 5<sup>9</sup>

In the first Epistle of St. Peter the phrase ". . . sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his Blood"<sup>(58)</sup> has allusions to the Exodus perhaps, when the tents were sprinkled with the blood of the Passover lamb, but also must have reference to sprinkling the mercy-seat in the ritual of the Day of Atonement. If this be so, then the thought of the Jew regarding these two events must determine the meaning intended by the author. In both cases it was the efficacy of the blood as potent and alive and (in the latter case) atoning, that is being described. One may conclude therefore that it is the life of Christ which is being symbolised by the blood, and not the death as Stibbs would seek to show.<sup>(59)</sup>

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(58) 1 Peter 1<sup>2</sup>

(59) A. M. Stibbs op. cit., p.25 "So the phrase and the idea continue to be a metaphorical way of referring to the application of and participation in, the saving benefits of the death of Jesus"

## CONCLUSION

In the preceding sections it was found that if there is a "Hebrew" mind on the significance of blood then it had to include both interpretations of life and death. In the New Testament this has been further borne out by the evidence discussed. In New Testament non-sacrificial contexts the overwhelming evidence may well indicate that death is signified by the use of the term. In sacrificial contexts, however, the opposite is more likely to be the case. When the sacrifice of Christ is considered then the phrase "blood of Christ" in its several contexts is seen to mean the life of Christ released by death, offered to God and received back by man. The interpretation of the sacrifice of Christ as atonement or covenant or Passover requires such a significance, not only from the evidence discussed in this section, but also because of the age-long tradition which fashioned the minds of the New Testament writers and which was accepted and used by Our Lord Himself in His own description of His sacrifice. Death and life are present and inextricably connected, but the emphasis must be on life surrendered and made available for man's redemption.

SACRIFICIAL CONTEXTS

Book	Life	Death	Not eat	Covenant	Atonement	Cleanse	Sanctify	Protect	Neutral	Total
Genesis:	1		cf life							1
Exodus				4	1		6	6	2	19
Leviticus	4		9		45	5	5		4 <sup>a</sup>	72
Numbers:							2		2	4
Deuteronomy			1						2	3
I Samuel			1							1
II Kings									2	2
Psalms		1 <sup>b</sup>							2	3
Isaiah									2	2
Ezekiel	1		3				3		2	9
Zechariah				1						1
II Chronicles					4				1	5
	6	1	14	5	50	5	16	6	19	122

a 1 occasion = bloodguilt

b could possibly = life by interpretation

NON-SACRIFICIAL CONTEXTS

Book	Blood Polluting	Life	Death	Not Eat	Blood 'Crying out'	Blood Guilt	Shedding Blood	Blood 'upon them'	Avenger of Blood	Making Unclean	'Lie in wait for'	Innocent Blood	Neutral	Total
Genesis	1	2	2		1		3						1 <sup>l</sup>	10
Exodus		1		1 <sup>a</sup>		2	1	6	5 <sup>h</sup>	6			8 <sup>l</sup>	10
Leviticus				1					3					15
Numbers	3	1	2	3		2 <sup>f</sup>	1 <sup>f</sup>	2	3			5 <sup>f</sup>	1	11
Deuteronomy						3		1						19
Joshua														5
Judges		1				2	1	1						1
I Samuel			1	2 <sup>e</sup>		2		6	1			1		7
II Samuel			3	1 <sup>a</sup>		2		3						12
I Kings			2	3		1			2 <sup>i</sup>			3	2	12
II Kings		1		of life			3	1						9
I Chronicles					1		1							4
II Chronicles					1				3 <sup>i</sup>					2
Job		2	1	1		1	6	1					2	2
Psalms	1	3	3 <sup>d</sup>	3 <sup>a</sup>			2	1					1	18
Proverbs	3	1		1			2						1	8
Isaiah				3 <sup>a</sup>			1	1						13
Jeremiah				1			1	1						9
Lamentations	1		7 <sup>c</sup>	2		1 <sup>g</sup>	1	9						2
Ezekiel	10	2 <sup>b</sup>	2			2 <sup>g</sup>	14	1					1	46
Hosea														5
Joel													2	4
Jonah														1
Micah			1								1			2
Nahum														1
Habbakuk	1		1											2
Zephaniah			1				2							1
Zechariah			1	1										1
	20	14	26	19	3	16	38	31	17	6	1	20	22	233

NON - SACRIFICIAL CONTEXTS

- a. Metaphorical use
- b. Blood as active - "pursues"
- c. Four occur in same verse or context
- d. One is metaphorical
- e. People 'sinned' by "eating with the blood"
- f. In Deuteronomy these are inter-mixed
- g. cf. "polluting"
- h. All in one context
- i. Blood as active "avenge"
- j. cf. "life"
- k. cf. "shedding blood"
- l. Two refer to circumcision

NEW TESTAMENT

Book	Neutral	Flesh & Blood	Eucharist	Death	Innocent of Blood	Eating Blood	Sacrifice	Total
St. Matthew	1	1	1	9				12
St. Mark	1		1					2
St. Luke	2		1	4				7
St. John	1	1	3			a		5
Acts	1			3	2	3 <sup>b</sup>	1	10
Romans							2	2
I Corinthians		1	3					4
Galatians		1						1
Ephesians		1					2	3
Colossians							1	1
Hebrews		1	2				16	19
I Peter							2	2
I John							5	5
Revelation	4			8		2	4	18
	10	6	9	26	2	5	33	91

a. cf. 'Eucharist'

b. Prohibition against eating blood

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