

The contribution of Rene Girard to Anthropology and Theology.

The Background

The background to my interest in Rene Girard and his writing goes back to an early quest of mine about the origins of sacrifice.

I was introduced to the work of Rene Girard in a Corrymeela context. One of our members was a Dutch theologian and psychotherapist, Roel Kaptein, who had a deep understanding of human relationships and culture. A group formed around him and over a long period developed insights into conflict and peace, culture and the Gospel. He mediated the work of Girard through these sessions and many of us began to read Girard for ourselves.¹ As well as Roel Kaptein, the Dutch Dominican scholar, Andre Lascaris, contributed greatly to the use of the Bible in its application to conflict, and Northern Ireland in particular, using a Girardian reading of the text.²

On reading Girard's most important book, "Things hidden since the foundation of the world", I realised that at last I found answers to questions about the origin and function of sacrifice and much more besides. Another reason for my continued interest is because Girard provides most helpful tools for the interpretation of the Scriptures and the Gospels and supremely the Passion of Christ. He does this through his particular anthropology. It has been said that Girard is the champion of "revealed anthropology" in a similar way that Karl Barth was the champion of "revealed theology".

Girard's contribution

The first element in any picture of Girard's contribution to our understanding of human life and conflict is his observation of the way desire functions in relationships - individual and communal. To look at this we must wrestle with a feature of life called *mimesis*.

At the root of Girard's thinking about the human condition is the importance of mimesis or hidden imitation in the functioning of desire. He prefers the word 'mimesis' to 'imitation'. This is because 'imitation' suggests something deliberate, something we choose to do. For him *mimesis* is about an unconscious activity by which we learn everything. This is not something new. *Mimesis* was recognised by Aristotle who said: "Man differs from other animals in his greater aptitude for imitation". The additional aspect in Girard's understanding is that mimesis also functions in the process of desire. Problems arise when we desire to have what someone else has or is.

We desire mimetically, that is, through the desire of someone else. We desire what the other, our model, desires or has. We desire through the other. It might be a toy, or a car, even a position or fame. It might be that we desire their very being. This is sometimes called *acquisitive desire*. Conflict and the potential for violence arises in the struggle to obtain what it is that our model desires or possesses.

This develops into an escalating conflict to the point that the object of our desire gets lost or forgotten as we mimic each other in the reciprocal struggle. Our model becomes our obstacle. This is the turning point. The model, the one whose desire we unconsciously imitate, gets in the way. They have no intention of giving us whatever it is we find desirable e.g. their spouse, position, house or estate. So, rivalry escalates to fever pitch and all that we see is our model/obstacle and the desired objective fades away. It becomes about winning rather than having the object of desire. This, it could be said, is the engine of conflict.

There isn't space to describe the way this operates over a wide range of life issues. Rivals become like a mirror image of each other. Watching a boxing match, as it progresses, the opponents are often only distinguishable by their trunks. The UVF/UDA and the IRA became mirror images of each other.

For the moment, I hope it is enough to say, that the escalation of communal chaos and personal hostility develops through the mimetic process.

Mimesis

Girard's first book "Deceit, Desire, and the Novel" identifies this truth in the work of some important writers. Cervantes, Stendal, Flaubert, Dostoyevsky and Proust. There we find a variety of examples of mimetic desire described through the relationships between the characters. Essentially what we see is that human desire functions through the other. It is a triangle. The French title of this book directly translated is "Romantic lie and Romanesque truth". The romantic lie says that our desires are autonomous. The Romanesque truth is that we desire through the other's desire. In these writers desire is clearly triangular.

Mimesis as a feature of life is neither good nor bad. As with many essential aspects of life it is the use to which we put them that is positive or negative.

One aspect of *mimesis* and *mimetic desire* is that it is hidden from us. We are not consciously doing it. In fact we do not know what we are doing - just like those who put Jesus on the Cross. The words of Jesus on the Cross: "Father, forgive, *they know not what they do*" reveal the depth of human unconscious behaviour and the extent of God's forgiveness. This relates to one of the most revealing and useful insights of Girard. He claims

that Jesus gives us the original understanding of the unconscious. This is summed up in his descriptive use of the term 'hypocrisy'. All those described as 'Hypocrites' are shown as people who do not know what they are doing. In fact they are doing the opposite of what they profess or want to do. From a Girardian perspective Jesus uses this term as a diagnosis not as an insult. It clearly applies to the 'good' people, those who believe they know exactly what God's will is and consider that they qualify as guardians of righteousness. This means that he is speaking to 'Christians' and all well-meaning people.

Modern hypocrites are really no different. We complain about people's hypocrisy, not allowing them to be unaware of what they are doing. No one intentionally acts deceitfully while at the same time seeking to work in the best interests of the other. The very one who makes the accusation of hypocrisy is guilty of an act of a similar hypocrisy. In this case, it is all about winning in the fight for supremacy and not so much about the truth.

In St. Matthew 23 and St. Luke 11 the diagnosis and description of hypocrisy is clearly set out. 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You build up the tombs of the prophets and embellish the monuments of the saints, and you say, "If we had been living in the time of our forefathers, we should never have taken part with them in the murder of the prophets." So you acknowledge that you are sons of those who killed the prophets.' (REB)

Clearly they are caught in the trap of their own hypocrisy and are totally unconscious of what they are doing. Girard says that this is not an example of anti-Semitism. He points to the universal application of this human trait further on in the same sequence. The reference to the scope of this analysis makes it clear that all humanity is intended. In Luke 11: 49-51 we read: 'This is why the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and messengers; and some of these they will persecute and kill"; so that this generation will have to answer for the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world; from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who met his death between the altar and the sanctuary.' (REB)

This makes it clear that the scope of this diagnosis refers back to the beginning of civilisation before Abraham or any Jewish identity, and so, we read it as referring to all peoples who made the innocent suffer at times of social crisis and the threat of violence and bloodshed since the foundation of the world. Because *mimesis* is a hidden function, and is the process through which we know what to desire, our struggle to win in the goodness stakes is equally hidden or hypocritical. The community in crisis, or indeed the individual, in identifying whom to blame is convinced that they have found the culprit. The mimetic power is such that no one questions the corporate choice.

Violence and the Sacred

Everything has labels and it is no different in this case. The processes of victimisation have been variously called: *The scapegoat, or victimage, mechanism* or *the collective expulsive mechanism* or to use Girard's preferred descriptions: *The collective transfer to a random victim* or *The single victim mechanism*.

How does all this relate to conflict and violence, sacrifice and the sacred? In this section we are mainly dealing with the primitive roots of the Sacred, the Devil and Mythology and with the formation of human culture. In other words we are dealing with the things that spoil our humanity. In speaking about the Sacred, Girard is referring to the system of primitive religion born out of violence through the collective expulsive mechanism. It refers to the religion created by the devil/god who has to be placated. Holiness is something different in my view. If we look at Leviticus chapter 19 we find that holiness is tied up with care for the elderly, provision for the poor and honesty in court etc. This last point is about protecting the innocent from unjust accusations and victimisation. Thus Girard challenges our understanding of the sacred and ultimately seeks to revise what this means in the light of the Father as revealed by Jesus in the Gospels.

The question is: How does a threatened society deal with a crisis? Faced with the threat of violence or plague, dissolution into chaos and doom Girard suggests that primitive humanity looked to find someone to blame. They picked a random person who was then deemed to be the cause of disorder. The key point is that it became unanimous. The only condition in choosing this random victim was that there would be little or no likelihood of reprisal. So slaves, children, strangers, handicapped or deformed people were the most likely victims. This list is not exclusive but the general pattern. The victim needed to be the least likely to produce a backlash of violence. Some point to Oedipus as if he was outside this kind of company. But his very name is a give-away. It means "club foot", so he was a ready made victim and the butt of jokes. The choice of victim is a hidden process. When reaching a mimetic consensus all questions about the rights and wrongs of the 'decision' are overpowered. So strong is this mimetic influence that all agree. Who would dare to raise a hand in defence of the culprit. Treason is a fearful thing. Even Pilate was overcome by the crowd even though he had declared Jesus innocent, three times.

The mechanism is that of the lynch mob. It is an all-against-one activity. The whole community becomes united in driving out and killing the victim. This produces an amazing and wonderful peace. The threat is gone and peace reigns. The flip side of this is that on reflection the victim is viewed as the bringer of peace. This remarkable experience means that the victim, who all agreed was a devil, is now seen as a god. This is sometimes referred to as a *double transference*. In brief, according to Girard, this mechanism created the sacred.

Out of this came the rites or rituals to remind the people of the great good brought to all by this devil god. The Sacred and all sacrificial religion were born in this cauldron.

Mimesis played a huge role in this whole process. Once the victim was pointed out, or as we say 'fingered', by one influential group, or person, the escalation of agreement grew through the process of *hidden imitation* or *mimesis*. In fact the choice of a victim is shrouded in a cloud of mimetic contagion like a plague or epidemic. One person cannot stand out against such power. Peter at the High Priest's house is a prime example. We often have castigated Peter for not living up to his great declaration of loyalty. The question, for us, is rather: Are we able to stand against the hostile mob? The choices facing people in such a situation are to agree, flee or go mad. The mob is the real powerhouse not the rulers be they ever so powerful.

This mechanism also works between individuals and small groups as long as people are unaware of their potential for such violence. The velvet glove can hide a mailed fist or an insidious pressure. The perpetrator is convinced that he wears a velvet glove or hides behind the veil of "it was only a joke".

Satan and scandal

Two of the most ignored aspects of the Gospels in modern times are the *scandalon* (stumbling block) and Satan. For Girard they remind us about the process of accusation that creates victims and the obstacle(s), which trip people up time and time again. These stumbling blocks, traps or snares, are like things hidden in the long grass. Scandal is closely related to the modern concern with role models. Role models are people or fashions that create desires in others. This aspect brings us to the warnings to those who create stumbling blocks for the young (Matt. 18: 8-9). As I write concerns are being raised, in the Republic of Ireland, about the legal minimum age for consensual sexual intercourse. The suggestion by an Oireachtas committee is that this be lowered from 17 years to 16 years. Whatever happens about this, or should happen, the real issue is the complex of attitudes and adult behaviour that encourages expectations and inappropriate responses in children. If adults send out a message that everyone has a right to do what they want, regardless of consequences for other people, then how can we be surprised if very young children and teenagers do the same. This is exactly what Girard is talking about in relation to scandals and the creation of desires. It seems to me that those who drive the consumer society, advertising agents and entertainment media, know far more about these things than the biblical scholars and the theological community.

For Girard scandals are just one aspect of the work of Satan or the Devil. The creation of desires that destroy lives and involves victimising innocent parties is central to the work of the accuser and deceiver. For him the devil is a "parasite on God's creatures. He is totally mimetic, which amounts to saying *nonexistent as an individual self*. THE DEVIL, OR SATAN, signifies rivalistic contagion, up to and including the single victim mechanism. He may be located either in the entire process or in one of its stages. When the trouble caused by Satan becomes too great, Satan himself becomes his own antidote of sorts: he stirs up the mimetic snowballing and then the unanimous violence that makes everything peaceful once again."³ Satan does indeed cast out Satan. In the parable of the murderous vine growers (Matt. 21: 33-41) we can see the whole process played out.

The Bible and mythology

Where does all this understanding originate? In Girard's work it comes from his reading of the ancient myths and later literature with the Bible being the chief interpretative tool.⁴ Girard's earlier major work "Violence and the Sacred" examined anthropological and non-Christian mythical texts with some reference to Biblical material. When he looks at the Bible systematically he is convinced that the whole thrust of the biblical revelation is in the opposite direction to myth, as he sees it, even though there is mythical material in the Bible. The Bible story is written from the perspective of the victims or vulnerable people and mythology outside the Bible tells the tale through the eyes of the persecutors and the powerful. The Bible is a critique of sacrificial scapegoating not an example of it.

Rene Girard expresses the difference between the Bible and Mythology very well in *Oedipus Unbound*: "A graphic way to illustrate the theory ... would be to take a myth and rewrite it in such a way as to rectify in the myth, and those points only, that are distorted by the blind hostility of a community against its scapegoats. It would not be an entirely new story. It would resemble a myth, therefore..... This new story would not pretend that a scapegoating never happened; it would present it as unjust, as prompted by individual and collective envy against a too-successful stranger. This story already exists, of course. It is the Joseph story."⁵

The uniqueness of the Bible and of the Gospels

Girard's position is that myth in the Bible exposes what myth outside the Bible covers up. He deals with this in a series of books: "*Things hidden since the foundation of the world*"; "*The Scapegoat*"; "*Job: the victim of his people*" and "*I see Satan fall like lightning*". See the brief outline of his career and main output at the end of this article. In the last of these works he makes a very good case for the uniqueness of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures.⁶

In relation to the Old Testament he makes a compelling comparison between the Oedipus myth and the Joseph story. While there are comparable situations in both stories, there is a complete dissimilarity between the way Oedipus is viewed compared to Joseph. In the first case, the hero is guilty as accused but in the second, Joseph is the innocent victim in each incidents in which he is unjustly treated. And finally he is not only vindicated but he exercises a profound forgiveness rather than exacting the expected vengeance. Girard considers the psalms to be the earliest texts in “human history to allow those who would simply become silent victims in the world of myth to voice their complaint as hysterical crowds besiege them. The situations that these psalms present are just as mythic as the story of Joseph. But they make us think of someone who has the intriguing idea of wearing a magnificent fur inside out; rather than radiating luxury, composure, and sensuality, this one’s appearance is just the reverse: we see evidence of an animal skinned alive. This metaphor forces us to understand the difference between a myth and a biblical psalm.”⁷ For Girard the Book of Job is an immense psalm. “Its uniqueness lies in its confrontation with two conceptions of God. The pagan conception is that of the crowd who long venerated Job but who all at once, by an inexplicable whim, turned against him. Job as ‘super-psalm’ shows in an admirable way that the sacred and the crowd are the same thing in mythic cults. This is why the primordial expression of the mythic cult is the sacrificial lynching, Dionysian dismemberment of the victim. What is most important in the Book of Job is, not the murderous conformity of the multitude, but the final audacity of the hero himself. In doing this, Job not only resists totalitarian contagion but wrests the deity out of the process of persecution to envision him as the God of victims, not of persecutors. This is what Job means when he affirms, ‘As for me, I know that my Defender lives’ (19:25).”⁸

Girard’s points in respect of the uniqueness of the Old Testament show that “[b]efore the Bible there were only myths. No one and no one tradition before the Bible was capable of calling into question the guilt of victims whom their communities unanimously condemned. The reversal of the relation of innocence and guilt between victims and executioners is the keystone of biblical inspiration.”⁹ Another aspect of the difference between myth and the Bible relates to the process of creating the sacred through the victimage mechanism. “Mythic heroes typically have something rigid and stylised about them. They are first demonised, then deified. Joseph is humanised. For the first time in human history the divine and collective violence are separated from one another.”¹⁰

In respect to the Gospels there is an additional dimension that relates to the divinity of the collective victim. Because of the similarities with the process by which the mythical gods were created some think that the Gospels revert back to the old ways. Girard claims that his anthropological perspective allows for the verification of the essential victory that the Bible achieves “for the relation between victims and persecutors in the Gospels bears no resemblance at all to that of the myths just like the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels defend the victims wrongly accused and expose their persecutors. There is no prior demonisation behind the divinity of Christ, Christians don’t ascribe any guilt to Jesus. The structure of the Christian revelation is unique”.¹¹

Another aspect of Girard’s position, which supports the Bible’s uniqueness, is his clarification about the difference between the Logos in the Prologue to St. John’s Gospel and the Logos of Heraclitus. In *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* he presents the case for the distinctiveness of the *Logos* in the Prologue by pointing out the nature of the *logos* in its original use by Heraclitus and the description given by Martin Heidegger. He refers to Heidegger who states that “the Logos brings together entities that are *opposites*, and it does not do so without violence.”¹² This is in marked contrast to the *Logos* of the Prologue in whom is no violence. One speaks of the God who is love who comes and endures rejection without reciprocating like for like. Indeed the outcome is a creative forgiveness from the one who is full of grace and truth.¹³

The Gospel of love

Myth draws a veil over the victim’s innocence and his murder while the Bible exposes the deception time and time again. The central text is of course the Passion of Christ. As a preparation for the passion the Parable of the Vineyard tells the story perfectly. It sums up the whole story as it developed in the Old Testament and climaxes in the Passion. The nearest Old Testament text is the Suffering Servant in 2nd Isaiah, particularly chapter 52:13 - 53:12. The weakness of the Servant Songs is that God is still seen as partly responsible for the violence against the servant even though the text plainly describes the concerted violence of the crowd.

The Passion clearly describes the all against one mechanism. The story is told from the point of view of the innocent victim and exposes all efforts to declare the innocent guilty. The leaders do everything for the best of motives. Caiaphas declares that “it is better that one man die than for all the people to perish”. Pilate declares Jesus innocent three times. The mob ensures the death of the innocent victim by exercising its great mimetic power. In all this the role of Satan, the accuser and father of lies, is a clear indication of the ancient sacred at work. The difference is that it reveals the true God of love and unmasks the source of violence and deceit. Due to the resurrection, which leads to the disciples breaking the unanimity, the victimage mechanism is robbed of its ability to preserve the power of the devil-god. Humanity can then be freed from its own destructive culture. Sacrifice is undone. It is transformed into self-giving love. Blood is spilt but it is the blood of a self-giving

victim whose innocence is beyond doubt. In this way the game is over. All that remains is for us to believe that God is love and offers forgiveness for all our unknowing violence and deceit.

Conclusions

The applications of all this to life are vast. We can begin with an appreciation of the need to take on board the fact of our own hypocrisy. When we think we are doing something for someone else's good we are most in danger of hypocrisy. When we feel that our advice or well-intentioned intervention was not well received or was misunderstood we need to think about what we are doing or saying.

The mimetic crisis says a lot about communal conflict and the way everything escalates. We need to recognise the role of *mimesis* and the acquisitive drives that are fuelled by our mimetic ability which feeds rivalry and in turn leads on to creating victims and in the end making peace and love impossible. One particularly appalling example is the incident in which a group of young men, after a party in an upmarket Dublin Hotel picked on one young man and beat him to death. The mimetic power was so great and the rivalry so intense that it produced an all-against-one attack in miniature. The confusion was so great that it was very difficult to decide who actually gave the fatal blow. All of them were caught up in a frenzy that was totally out of control. It was a perfect example of how neutral *mimesis* can become an evil tool. When rivalry escalates to the ultimate fatal climax it is most likely that the old mechanism is at work.

The same thing is played out in school playgrounds everywhere. The bully, backed by his or her gang, makes life a living hell for some timid and innocent fellow pupil. Today even teachers complain about being bullied to the point of giving up teaching.

The aspects of life today that illustrate the reality of Girard's 'revealed anthropology' can be found by looking at areas of conflict, the justice system, sport, politics and above all at the victims in our society. Every day we hear about our victims. These include those young people in crisis who are left without an adequate response to their needs whether it be psychological support or appropriate medical and educational facilities. The neglect is such that some of them commit murder or suicide. The lack of care for those young people whose family life is in chaos, that have nowhere safe to live, and who are at maximum risk in a drug infested sub-culture shows that they are our victims. In a modern democracy it is impossible to escape responsibility for what is done or indeed not done for those who have special needs. The spirit of Psalm 10: 17-18 seems particularly apt: "*Lord, you have heard the lament of the humble; you strengthen their hearts, you give heed to them, bringing redress to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that no one on earth may ever again inspire terror*" (REB).

Are we afraid to stand beside our victims and plead for their welfare? Are we happy with a party political system in which only the successful scapegoaters succeed in getting their hands on the reins of power? It seems plain to me that more and more people are disenchanted with the political system because deep down they are no longer happy to vote for those who can only say what is wrong with their opponents and only faintly talk about actual practical alternative policies. A scapegoating political method is wearing out fast.

The political future of Ireland, North and South, will only be healthy, peaceful and just when all concerned stop demonizing those in other parties and communities. Satan is clearly working overtime as the accuser and is given the necessary power by those vying with each other. In other words when people learn what is truly demonic or satanic in their own attitudes then real peace will be possible. Democracy in itself is questionable because it seems to suggest that the majority must be right. A healthy democracy needs a balanced approach that values the contribution of all elected representatives and all minorities. Only in this way can we begin to avoid the danger of creating scapegoats through the abuse of power.

Rivalry that is exacerbated by the heightened competition in sports, entertainment and education is not healthy. The hype surrounding celebrities creates distorted role models for the young and the not so young. A healthy society is one that provides role models for the young that do not create destructive desires that cannot be fulfilled. Maybe the young themselves will find a better way and lead us all to a better life.

The biggest challenges facing the world are to do with nationalism and racism. Both of these depend on exclusion and are often the pretext for victimization. This is true on a grand scale in the tortured relations between the Muslim world and the Christian West. The great powers have played fast and loose with those who are culturally and politically different, for short-term gain. The history of the Kurds in Iraq and the Arabs and Jews in Palestine are but some examples. We in Ireland know only too well how the forces of rivalry have spawned so many horror stories in recent decades as well as in earlier conflicts.

There is a great deal more to the contribution that Rene Girard makes to our understanding and to the challenge of presenting the faith as relevant and practical. He ranks as one of the great apologists for the Christian faith, as great as any since the Apologists of the Early Church. His account of revealed anthropology is preparing the way for a renewed theology.¹⁴

Footnotes:

1) *On the way of freedom* by Roel Kaptein, 1993. Columba Press, Dublin.

2) Andre Lascaris, *To do the Unexpected, Reading Scripture in Northern Ireland* The Corrymeela Press 1993

- 3) Rene Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* English trans. 2001 Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, p. 42, 43.
- 4) Among the myths Girard focuses on *Oedipus* and *Dionysos* but finds common threads throughout the myths of the world. In more recent literature he refers to Cervantes *Don Quixote*, Dostoevsky *The Underground Man*, *The Idiot* etc., and Proust.
- 5) Rene Girard, *Oedipus Unbound, Selected Writings on Rivalry and Desire* English translation 2004, p.111. "At every turn, the biblical story ridicules the nonsensical evidence against the scapegoat which we have in mythology and replaces it with arguments favourable to the victim. The repudiated mythology is repudiated as a lie. Each time Joseph becomes a victim, either of his brothers or of the Egyptians, the accusations against him are shown to be delusions arising from envy and hatred. So we have both the account given by the brothers to the father and the expose of that account. After getting rid of their brother, they tell their father that he was killed by a wild beast. In many myths the scapegoat process is described in terms of destruction by a group of animals that hunt together or by a single animal. The brothers' story is, I believe, such a myth."
- 6) *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, chaps. 9 & 10.
- 7) *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- 8) *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- 9) *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- 10) *Ibid.*, p. 119
- 11) *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3
- 12) Rene Girard, *Things hidden since the Foundation of the World* English trans. 1987 The Athlone Press, p. 265 referring to Martin Heidegger *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 123-135; 'Logos', *Essais et conferences*, pp. 249-278.
- 13) *Ibid.*, pp. 263-280
- 14) The following works are part of the contribution to theology: Robert Hammerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence, Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross* 1992 Fortress Press; James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong, Original Sin through Easter Eyes* 1998 Crossroad NY, *on being liked* 2003 DLT, *undergoing god: dispatches from the scene of a break-in* 2006 DLT; S. Mark Heim, *SAVED FROM SACRIFICE: A Theology of the Cross* 2006 William B. Eerdmans; and the late Raymund Schwager, S.J., *Must There Be Scapegoats, Violence and Redemption in the Bible* 2000 Gracewing & Crossroad, *Jesus and the Drama of Salvation* 1992 Crossroad NY.

Outline of Rene Girard life and career.

He was born in **1923** in Avignon on Christmas Day. His father, the city archivist, had little sympathy for Christianity, though his mother was a devout Catholic. From the age of 10 until his conversion at 36 he had little to do with the Church. He once described himself as "a baptised atheist from Avignon".

He received his Baccalaureate in Philosophy in **1941** at the Lycee of Avignon. He attended the Ecole des Chartres in Paris from **1943-1947**. He graduated as a specialist in medieval studies. His primary academic interest at that stage of his life was history and cultural patterns. His thesis was "Private life in Avignon in the second half of the 15th century".

The year **1947** brought an opportunity to spend a year in the USA. He is still there. His second doctorate was awarded at Indiana University in 1950. It was a PhD in History. This led to a lectureship in French at Indiana. Though his doctorate was in history he was asked to offer courses in literature, which he had never read. He started to become more and more fascinated with the literature that he was assigned to teach. The result was that he became identified as a literary critic.

1953 - 1957

He moved to Duke University as an instructor and assistant professor at Bryn Mawr College.

1958 - 1971

This period was spent at John Hopkins University, Baltimore where he became a full professor in 1961. He chaired the Department of Romance Languages from 1965-1968. Early in this period (1959) he underwent a momentous spiritual change embracing Christian faith. This was preceded by a kind of intellectual conversion while he was working on his first book (*Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*).

1971 - 1976

Distinguished Professor at State University New York. During this time his book "Violence and the Sacred" was published in French (1972). The English version appeared in 1977.

1976 - 1981

He returned to John Hopkins University as John M Beall Professor of the Humanities. In 1978 his most important book "Things hidden since the Foundation of the World" was published in French (Eng. 1987).

1981 - 1995

Andrew B. Hammond Professor of French Language, Literature and Civilization at Stanford University. During this period further books appeared: *The Scapegoat* 1982 (Eng. 1986); *Job, The victim of his people* 1985 (Eng. 1987); *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare* 1991.

He formed the Colloquium on Violence and Religion in 1990. The object is: To explore, criticize, and develop the mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture". This still continues to meet and publish. Girard retired in 1995.

1995 -

I See Satan Fall Like Lightning 1999 (Eng. 2001)

Oedipus Unbound - Selected writings on Rivalry and Desire 2004.
Evolution and Conversion – Dialogues on the Origins of Culture 2007.
Battling to the End –Conversations with Benoit Chantre 2010.