

Essay Title:

“... and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the Cross” (Col. 1:20). Why is the language of sacrifice such a powerful way to express Christian thinking on reconciliation and what theological problems might this raise?

or

How is true reconciliation brought about?

Author: David S. G. Godfrey

Course:
Theology of Reconciliation

Course Co-ordinator:
Dr. David Tombs

CONTENTS

I. Introduction

1. General Topic
2. Title
3. Brief review of evidence used

II. Context

III. Girard's Anthropological Background to Sacrifice

IV. Sacrifice: Biblical Perspectives

V. Sacrifice: Theological Perspectives

VI. Sacrifice, Atonement and Temple Liturgy

VII. Conclusion

References

Bibliography

I. Introduction

1. General Topic

To discuss the place of sacrifice and scapegoating mainly through the work of René Girard and others whose theology has been influenced by his insights. Along with these studies to look at biblical perspectives on the Day of Atonement rituals in the first Temple through the scholarship of Margaret Barker. This discussion hopes to show how *sacrifice* functions in a powerful way in understandings of the Atonement. I believe that these perspectives throw some light on the process we call Reconciliation – and how can we promote true peace.

2. Title

“... and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the Cross” (Col. 1:20). Why is the language of sacrifice such a powerful way to express Christian thinking on reconciliation and what theological problems might this raise?

3. Brief review of evidence used

In this essay I will use a number of books by René Girard along with books by James Alison, Mark Heim, Robert Hammerton-Kelly, Michael Kirwan, André Lascaris and Margaret Barker.

VIII. Context

The setting for this study is a world that has always struggled to deal with violence, revenge, scapegoating and domination. The word reconciliation is now commonly used in places of political and racial strife including the long conflict between communities in Ireland. How is society to find long term satisfying peace? What place has faith in God? Indeed, what role has God in all this? These big questions are not going to be fully answered in this essay but the hope is that the communal and faith dimensions examined will say something about the human predicament and its resolution with the need to sacrifice others.

IX. Girard's Anthropological Background to Sacrifice

The origins of sacrifice and religion have been explored in the work of René Girard who first published his views on this subject in “Violence and the Sacred”ⁱ This work looked at the ancient myths in such a way that enabled Girard to suggest that a communal crisis, of all against all, lay behind a process which became known by the shorthand phrase 'the scapegoat mechanism'. In his understanding this process reaches back into the early mists of time in the formation of human community. This mechanism is distinct from the ritual of the scapegoat in the Book of Leviticus in the Hebrew Scriptures. In a commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Robert Hammerton-Kellyⁱⁱ describes this mechanism as “the *generative mimetic scapegoat mechanism*”.ⁱⁱⁱ Violence lies at the root of the human predicament. The biggest threat is when a community is facing a real or perceived danger. Uncontrollable violence can break out. An 'all against all' chaos is a situation that calls for some remedy before blood is flowing everywhere. Girard suggests that this was the kind of setting in which the scapegoat mechanism came into play. Essential to understanding the forces at work, both, in the development of the crisis and in the unconscious collective choice of the surrogate victim, is the human capacity of *mimesis* (unconscious imitation). In short, this is the human propensity for imitation. This natural ability is a problem when applied (unconsciously) in acquisitive contexts – this may be rivalry over goods or power or prestige. An important feature of Girard's understanding is the triangular nature of desire. He claims that we desire unconsciously through a significant other or others. The unconscious function is at play in lighting on a surrogate victim around which the whole community unites and so finds a resolution to the crisis in the immolation of the victim. This solution to a communal crisis moves from the unconscious mimetic choice of an arbitrary victim to the unanimous expulsion or killing of the victim through to the reconciliatory peace that restores communal harmony. Girard puts it like this in *Evolution and Conversion*^{iv}:

In the frenzy of the mimetic violence of the mob, a focal point suddenly appears, in the shape of the 'culprit' who is thought to be the cause of the disorder and the one who brought the crisis into the community. He is singled out and unanimously killed by the community. He isn't any guiltier than any other, but the whole community strongly believes he is. The killing of the scapegoat ends the crisis, since the transference against it is unanimous. That is the importance of the scapegoat mechanism: it channels the collective violence against one arbitrarily chosen member of the community, and this victim becomes the common enemy of the entire community, which is reconciled as a result.

The mimetic nature of this process is particularly obvious in rituals, where all these stages of development are re-enacted. Why does the ritual so often begin with concocted disorder, with a deliberate simulated cultural crisis, and end with a victim who is expelled or killed? The purpose is simply to re-enact the mimetic crisis which leads to the scapegoat mechanism. The hope is that the re-enactment of this mechanism will reactivate its power of reconciliation.^v

This long quote spells out the background to sacrifice and sacrificial practices and the origins of the sacred in Girard's work. For him the sacred is a cultural phenomenon which originates in a founding murder out of which culture itself was created. Archaic religion was formed in this cauldron. He also suggests that the development of religious rituals arose from the same mechanism. This is described in response to one of his questioners in *Evolution and Conversion*:

The question, then, is how does culture develop? The answer is through ritual ... [I]n an effort to prevent frequent and unpredictable episodes of mimetic violence acts of planned ... ritualized surrogate violence were put in place. Ritual in this way becomes like a school because it repeats the same scapegoat mechanism over and over again on substitute victims. And since ritual is the resolution of a crisis, it always intervenes at points of crisis; ... [R]itual will turn into the institution that regulates any sort of crisis.^{vi}

For Girard this describes the origin of religion. He finds the collective-expulsive-mechanism illustrated in the early myths, specially in the Oedipus story, and he compares these with the similar stories in the Hebrew Scriptures. His comments on the difference between mythology and the Bible are informative about the distinctive contribution of the latter. The following quotation from

Oedipus Unbound^{vii} makes this distinction plain:

A graphic way to illustrate [this] ... would be to take a myth and rewrite it in such a way as to rectify those points 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.

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.^{viii}

I hope to show this contrast when looking at biblical examples of sacrifice. Girard's use of the term 'scapegoat' is almost interchangeable with 'sacrifice'. His view of the origins of culture and religion treats one as interlocking with the other. He might even go so far as to say that religion originates in the birth of the sacred through the “double transference”^{ix} from a devil (the one seen as responsible for the crisis) to a god (who brought peace and unity). The result is the devil/god. Dualism comes out of this matrix. It is time now to look at these factors in the biblical material.

X. Sacrifice: Biblical perspectives

The Hebrew Scriptures are not without incidents of human sacrifice. Many people are disturbed by the story of the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. The Jewish tradition refers to this as 'the Binding of Isaac'. It is considered by some as a watershed between the practice of human sacrifice and the ending of it. Girard refers to this aspect in *Evolution and Conversion* in relation to the ending of sacrifice.

Before announcing the end of sacrifice, with Christ, the Bible shows [it is] gradually moving away from it in the story of Isaac. When Isaac asks his father: 'The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham's answer is extraordinary, and one of the most significant points in the whole of the Bible: 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering' (Genesis 22.1-8). This sentence announces the finding of the ram that will replace Isaac, but Christians have always seen a prophetic allusion to Christ as well. God, in this sense, will give the one who will sacrifice himself in order to do away with all sacrificial violence. ... The great scene of Abraham's sacrifice is the renunciation of the sacrifice of infants (which is latent in the biblical beginning) and its replacement with animal sacrifice.^x

It is clear from other references that the practice of child sacrifice did not disappear overnight.

There are references which back this up in 2 Kings and Jeremiah. 2 Kings 23: 10 says: “[Josiah] defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Benhinnom, so that no one would make a son or daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech.” This indicates that some held on to the old practice of child sacrifice. Even more direct references are found in Jeremiah. In 7: 30-31 he says: “For the people of Judah have done evil in my sight, says the Lord; ... they go on building the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire – which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.” and in chapter 19 there is the telling

phrase: “they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent.” (verse 4). Two other stories indicate that sacrificial instincts involving human victims ought to be noted.

One of these is the story of Jephthah in Judges 11. This is an interesting story for the way that it echoes part of the Joseph story particularly the way that he was cast out by his brothers. So the hero/villain of this story is, both a victim of scapegoating, and also, someone who believes that the Lord demands that a promise to sacrifice one of his household be kept. In Judges 11:30-40 there is a very religious story about Jephthah making a vow to the Lord that if the Ammonites were delivered into his hand he would offer the first person from his house that came out to meet him as a burnt offering. After the successful battle Jephthah returns and it is his only child, a daughter, who comes out to meet him. The vow is considered binding and was honoured in the death of his beloved daughter. The other story is about the high priest, Phinehas, who killed a couple with a spear who had offended against the covenant. The result was that the plague was stopped among the people of Israel. (Numbers 25: 6-12).

Both of these stories would seem to run counter to claims that human sacrifice was not found in Israel. The second one concerning the high priest is a particularly blatant incidence of human sacrifice for religious reasons. This seems very close to the world of mythology. According to Girard's reading of mythology, plagues and other communal disasters were occasions for the scapegoat mechanism/sacrifice to come into play. From a different viewpoint^{xi} the Phinehas incident is seen as indicating the role of the high priest in defending the covenant and so protecting the people Israel. In a discussion about the 'eternal covenant' or the 'covenant of peace' which is linked to the role of the high priesthood Margaret Barker seems to affirm the action of Phinehas in killing the offending couple when she writes: “Because of his action to protect the covenant, the Lord gave to Phinehas and his descendants 'my covenant of *šalom* ... the covenant of the priesthood of eternity (or, the covenant of the eternal priesthood) because he ... made atonement for the people of Israel' (Num. 25.12-13, my translation)”^{xii} This seeming acceptance of human sacrifice modifies the

generally accepted view that the Hebrew tradition exhibits a rejection of human sacrifice. Maybe it all depends on the seriousness of the crisis and the state of development of the religion of Israel. In any case it seems to be an exceptional *sacrificial* incident. There are plenty of punitive admonitions in Leviticus and elsewhere for the breaking of purity codes.

Taking the two strands together, the definite rejection of child sacrifice in Jeremiah and 2 Kings and the Jephthah and Phinehas incidents, it is possible to conclude that there was a process over time of moving away from human sacrifice of any sort. Girard points to the great strides taken towards a rejection of sacrifice in the prophetic writings. Referring to the Abraham and Isaac incident he develops the point.

However, in the prophetic texts, we are a step further: it is the moment in which animal sacrifices will not work anymore, as expressed, for instance, in Psalm 40: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.' In other words, the Bible provides not merely a replacement of the object to be sacrificed, but the end of the sacrificial order in its entirety, thanks to the consenting victim who is Jesus Christ.^{xiii}

The question of sacrifice and violence go together. So the Bible does a great service by exposing the injustice of violence against arbitrary victims. As was shown above, scapegoating or sacrifice was a way of avoiding even greater violence. So the human problem has always been about how to deal with violence. André Lascaris^{xiv} sums up the situation in a chapter entitled 'Violence in Scripture':

[I]n most great religious texts violence is always to the fore. There is no reason to be surprised. Violence is a very important theme in human life, but it often remains hidden in the back of our minds and is not discussed publicly in many countries through fear that it will erupt. The reason why Scripture is full of stories and deeds of violence is that the authors of both Old and New Testaments want to be confronted explicitly with the challenge of violence. They describe what they see, and what they fear, and try to find solutions. Originally the solution was sought in violence itself – trying to drive out violence with violence. Slowly a development takes place in which people try to overcome violence by other means. So, the sometimes overwhelming presence of violence testifies to the realistic way Scripture looks at our world.^{xv}

It is becoming clear why the language of 'sacrifice' has such power. In the different ways and the different times it has been used, both literally and metaphorically, its purpose is to move people away from violence and towards more constructive responses in challenging situations. The theological aspects of sacrifice, and its place in understanding reconciliation or atonement, have

been hotly contested down the years.

XI. Sacrifice: Theological perspectives

The climax of the biblical witness about human sacrifice is in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The question is about how we understand what this is said to achieve and how. Various models have been used in describing atonement/reconciliation. These two words reflect the history of translation and also convey different nuances in speaking about the sacrifice of Christ. In the Greek New Testament the words used for reconciliation are variants of *katallage*. These words are about relating to 'the other', pointing to the need to live with others in a harmonious way. The Latin 'Vulgate' translation used the verb *reconciliare*, and its derivatives, so giving us the English word 'reconciliation'. The word *atonement* has a history of its own. It began with the phrase 'at one' which is clearly relational. It expresses a state of being 'at one' with another person or indeed a group. This led to the noun 'Onement' and so later to 'Atonement' (At-one-ment). This word was used in Wm. Tyndale's translation (1526) instead of 'reconciliation'. The Authorised Version reverted to using 'reconciliation' in the New Testament but in the Old Testament kept the word 'atonement' to translate the Hebrew word *kipper*. This word can have the sense of expiation/covering/ransom/removal and related concepts.

The history of atonement theories or models is littered with attempts to find a universally accepted solution. Agreement on this topic has evaded the theologians since the days of the early Church. At the centre of the debate is the question of God's part in the violence that is visited on Jesus. Recent discussions about the Atonement seriously question what James Alison^{xvi} calls "the default Western understanding of salvation"^{xvii}. This is the Anselmian Satisfaction theory which fed into the Penal Substitutionary theory of the Atonement in the hands of Luther and Calvin. Alison's project is to find a less damaging 'tune' to play which will accompany our Christian lives with a more lively and life-giving spirituality. He says that he is not interested in going over the academic ground to find out what the authors meant. "What I am interested in is ... the much more

contemporary task of bringing the old default background music to the foreground [and ask] ... why should we now almost instinctively be able to detect that something is terribly wrong with this tune?"^{xviii}

The work of René Girard is never far away in this essay and also the work of James Alison and other theologians referred to who are influenced by his insights about humanity and God. In Girard's major treatise *Things hidden since the foundation of the world*^{xix} he posits a non-sacrificial reading of the Gospel. He was so struck by the contrast between archaic religion, with its partners in ancient mythology and the scapegoating he found there, and what he saw as the Bible's preference for the victims of scapegoating and of all injustice. This contrast caused him to want to eliminate sacrificial terminology when talking about what happened to Jesus. In the meantime he has altered his position and now admits that even the Letter to the Hebrews subverts 'sacrifice'. Michael Kirwan^{xx} points this out.

In an interview in *Religion and Literature* (Adams, 1993) Girard admits to 'scapegoating' the Letter to the Hebrews and the word 'sacrifice', assuming it should have a constant meaning; in fact the changes in its meaning constitute the religious history of mankind. He declares here that there is no serious problem over the issue of sacrifice, though at the time of writing [*Things hidden*] he was unduly influenced by his reading of primitive religion and by the psychoanalytic phobia concerning the notion of self-sacrifice ... Girard's 'non-sacrificial' approach has been explicitly modified in his subsequent work.^{xxi}

In highlighting the contrast with archaic religion, that the Bible represents, Girard points to a process in which God is seen, less and less, as implicated in violence. Humanity is more and more seen as responsible for violence. The Servant Songs in Isaiah, particularly chapter 53, show the community around the servant as the main culprits with only a minimal reference to the agency of God. So the fate of Christ can be seen as a chain of human activity. The self-giving or self-sacrifice of Christ is of course an ingredient to be taken into account.

The problems are well laid out by Mark Heim^{xxii} in an extensive treatment of the whole topic. One problem is about our ability to see what is at issue because the story of the cross is too familiar. He presents this problem as follows:

Jesus' death saves the world, and it ought not happen. It's God's plan and an evil act. It is a good bad thing.

If the story is so familiar that we don't see this problem, we have lost the key. Until we have this problem, nothing else is going to make sense. The paradox is not there by mistake. The strange shape of the Christian gospel has a family resemblance to the other good bad thing we have discussed: sacrifice. This is the clue we need. It is at the heart of an understanding of the cross.^{xxiii}

Heim looks at the possibility of leaving the cross out of the story of Jesus. He offers a story of the passion that uses the shape of the life of Jesus to present a mystical and miraculous account of the life and death of Jesus without any blood or violence. Commenting on this story he says: "This is a rich symbolic story, full of allegorical possibilities. . . . the meaning of this story is not tied down to messy questions about what actually happened."^{xxiv} It is a story about what the story of Jesus would look like if it was a myth in Girardian terms. If someone is alert to the tell-tale signs, of hidden victimisation and persecution and the resolution which produces a unified, ecstatic and peaceful, crowd, they will see hints that the true violent story has been hidden.

On the other hand as a contrast to such an approach to telling a story of a hidden truth

Heim goes on to say:

The cross belongs at the central location it has held in Christian faith. A crossless Christianity would be a shell emptied of its unique power to confront the very evils critics deplore. But the stakes are high, for this power to confront and heal is also a power to harm, and so much hangs on *which* theology of the cross we adopt. We have described a practice of scapegoating sacrifice, "a phenomenon that unbeknownst to us generates all human cultures and still warps our human vision in favor of all sorts of exclusions."^{xxv} The event of the cross is itself the main reason we are able to give that description, to take for granted this insight into what was hidden.^{xxvi}

It could be said that the unmasking of the hidden truth about sacrifice is what the biblical tradition and the passion narratives represent. Heim says that "a community that does not explicitly represent violent sacrifice and its victims may be the most captive to that practice, while to describe it directly is the beginning of possible resistance".^{xxvii} One of the dangers for Christian theology that Heim points to is due to the obvious references to sacrificial victims. Interpreters can be led in the wrong sacrificial direction. This then sets up a situation in which they support, as a divinely approved process, the very thing that was laid bare with the intention of resistance. "Some theologies of the

cross have patterned themselves too much on the mechanism that is revealed to have killed Jesus rather than on the divine act to overcome it. The influential later doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement is an example.^{xxxviii} This problem is based on a misrecognition of the fact that this reading is the same as the one heard in the words of Jesus' opponents and accusers. In the words of Heim: "It makes Jesus our supreme scapegoat rather than our savior from sacrifice".^{xxix}

In reference to the Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement Heim points to problems that arise from the legal framework that Anselm adopts and the unfortunate conclusion that God uses the human unjust sacrificial process through which Christ suffers to assuage the wrath of God. He sums up the problem in the following way:

Anselm's mistake is to make primary what is derivative. God did not become human only to die. And Christ did not die as he did to cancel an infinity of deserved punishment for humanity with the infinitely undeserved suffering of innocent divinity. The legal apparatus around the crucifixion is not there because God has a satisfaction case to prosecute and a punishment to enforce on humanity, but because the machinery of false accusation and political and religious legitimacy are part of the way sacred violence works. The death of Jesus follows the script of human persecution because that is the ongoing evil into whose path Jesus steps, to rescue us from sacrifice, to open the way to new community. ... [Anselm] has made the cross a celebration of the sacrifice it meant to overcome.^{xxx}

In this brief review of some of the theological aspects of sacrifice and the part it plays in atonement theory it is clear that we are always on a knife edge between being caught up in the ways of sacrifice and a moving away from or a renunciation of sacrificial solutions for our crises. From those aspects we now turn to another source of insight and hopefully other ways to understand what God was doing in the event that is Jesus, including his death and resurrection.

XII. Sacrifice, Atonement and Temple Liturgy

This section will look at alternative ways of talking about sacrifice and atonement. James Alison in *Undergoing God*^{xxxii} explores another avenue in searching for ways to explicate the atonement. He is influenced by the scholarship of Margaret Barker^{xxxii}, J. Duncan Derrett^{xxxiii} and René Girard. He proposes moving away from thinking of the Atonement in terms of a theory, and instead, at how it is expressed and understood through liturgical practice, specially in relation to the

first Temple in Jerusalem. Alison presents his position as follows: “My thesis is that Christianity is a priestly religion which understands that it is God's overcoming of our violence by substituting himself for the victim of our typical sacrifices that opens up our being able to enjoy the fullness of creation as if death were not.”^{xxxiv} He outlines the Penal Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement and expresses an awareness that there is something seriously wrong with what it says about God. Then he introduces the perspectives that he has gained from Margaret Barker's work on the theology of Temple rituals. Before going further into Alison's position some perspectives from Barker's own work is appropriate.

In *On Earth as it is in Heaven*^{xxxv} Barker sets out the significance of the Temple Atonement rituals. This is based on detailed analysis of evidence in her other publications referred to above.

First, the blood in atonement rituals was said to be life not death and it was the life which atoned. ... Second, the atonement ritual purified and hallowed the temple places from the uncleannesses of the people even though these were places where the people themselves were not allowed to go. ... It seems as though we have to read this text [Leviticus 16: 15-19] in the light of what the temple buildings represented, 'were'. They were the heaven and earth: the place of God's throne, the Garden and the rest of creation outside the Garden. Blood/life was daubed and sprinkled in the places which were the presence of God and the created world, to remove the effects of sin. Atonement, in other words, restored the creation from the effects of human action by means of blood/life. It was the renewal of creation. Third, the movement of the ritual was outwards from the holy of holies into the world. ... It was a God centred ritual. Blood/life was brought from the presence of God to remove the effects of human sin from the world.^{xxxvi}

Barker points to distinctions between God the Father and the God of Israel. She finds evidence for an almost Trinitarian godhead in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is not appropriate to go into that in detail in this essay. It is important to pick a sense of the distinctions she is making between the LORD and God the Father. “The Old Testament God of Israel was not God the Father but God the Son, and the earliest Christian understanding of the Old Testament made this quite clear. The Old Testament theophanies were preincarnation appearances of the Son.”^{xxxvii} This distinction is important when dealing with the role of the LORD (YHWH) and the Son of God in the Day of Atonement ritual in the Temple liturgy as suggested by Barker. It is also important when considering the provenance of atonement/reconciliation.

James Alison, basing his understanding on Barker's reading of the Old Testament atonement ritual, speaks about the rite of atonement and compares its perspective with that of other sacrificial religions.

The rite of atonement was about the Lord himself, the Creator, emerging from the Holy of Holies so as to set the people free from their impurities and sins and transgression. In other words, the whole rite was exactly the reverse of what we typically imagine a priestly rite to be about. We tend to have an 'Aztec imagination' as regarding the sacrificial system. The hallmark of the sacrificial system is that its priest sacrifices something so as to placate some deity.

The Jewish priestly rite was already an enormous advance beyond that world. They understood perfectly well that it was pagan rites that sacrificed victims in order to keep creation going. And one of the ways in which they had advanced beyond that ... was the understanding that it was actually *God* who was doing the work, it was *God* who was coming out wanting to restore creation, out of love for his people. And so it is YHWH who emerges from the Holy of Holies dressed in white in order to forgive the people their sins and, more importantly, in order to *allow creation to flow*.^{xxxviii}

This reading and the extensive explorations in the work of Margaret Barker can form the basis for a new appreciation of sacrifice using biblical understandings of, both, the part played by God and the relevance of Old Testament atonement theology, for a commitment to the creation. The emergence of the LORD from the Holy of Holies was for the purpose of healing/atonement of the creation which had been harmed by destructive human activity.

XIII. Conclusion

In examining the question, (Why is the language of sacrifice such a powerful way to express Christian thinking on reconciliation and what theological problems might this raise?) I have looked at sacrifice from the perspective of Girard's reading of the origins of sacrifice/scapegoating which he sees as part of the way humanity struggled to deal with violent community crises. Girard's influence continues on through the biblical and theological aspects of sacrifice in contributions by James Alison and Mark Heim. The significance of Temple theology brought out by Margaret Barker is that it opens up the question of atonement, and much else besides, bringing strong biblical support for those who are moving away from penal and satisfaction theories.

The powerful language of sacrifice carries with it the danger of distorting the way God is viewed. Does God demand sacrifice, and if so, does this not involve God in requiring an injustice to

be perpetrated on innocent victims? What Girard and those influenced by his insights are challenging is that very question. Margaret Barker's contribution is that in her reading of the Day of Atonement ritual it is God who heals the creation by giving his life/blood as an act of creation.

In each approach to understanding the power of sacrifice we have looked at the origins of scapegoating/sacrifice through the lens of Girard's examination of the solutions to communal violence. This enables us to see the human side of sacrifice as a powerful way to keep violence at bay. Allied to this Girard reads the Bible as a project to unmask the process which makes peace at the cost of innocent victims. Other contributions have helped us to see the theological problems in basing an atonement theory on inherently violent propositions. Mark Heim fittingly sums up the central issues in the closing words of *Saved from Sacrifice*:

The God who gave his life to save ours in one way, who laid down his life for his friends, even while they insisted on being his enemies, is a God who will redeem us in many. The God who paid the cost of the cross was not the one who charged it. We are saved from sacrifice because God suffered it. To be reconciled with God is to recognize victims when we see them, to convert from the crowd that gathers around them, and to be reconciled with each other without them.^{xxxix}

-
- i René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* translated by Patrick Gregory, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1977
 - ii Robert G. Hammerton-Kelly, *The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 1994
 - iii Hammerton-Kelly, *The Gospel and the Sacred*, 6 Hammerton-Kelly spells out the significance of this description as follows: “The GSM is ... *generative* because it generates the differences, it is mimetic because *mimetic* desire (not sexuality) drives it, it is *scapegoating* because it achieves its purpose by striking the surrogate victim; and it is a *mechanism* because it operates like a machine, systemically rather than deliberately”. 6-7
 - iv René Girard with Pierpaolo Antonello and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture*, Continuum International Publishing, London and New York 2007
 - v Girard, *Evolution and Conversion*, 64-65
 - vi Girard, *Evolution and Conversion*, 71-72
 - vii René Girard, *Oedipus Unbound: Selected Writings on Rivalry and Desire*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2004
 - viii Girard, *Oedipus Unbound*, 111
 - ix Robert G. Hammerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence: Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 1992, 26. He describes the function of the victim in terms of a 'double transference': “The victim is at most a catalyst ... rather than the cause of the violence and unanimity. The mob, however, makes the victim the cause, and by so doing obscures its own violence from itself by thus transferring it to the victim. The first illusion is therefore ... it makes the victim a god, placing the victim above the group as the transcendent source of order and repository of disorder. This is the critical moment of the *double transference*, of both the cause of violence and the cause of peace from the mob to the victim. The transference is double because the mob's violence has two parts: mimetic rivalry and

-
- surrogate victimage, corresponding to the moments of disorder and order, respectively.”
- x Girard, *Evolution and Conversion*, 203
- xi Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction*, SPCK London 2004
- xii Barker, *Temple Theology*, 35
- xiii Girard, *Evolution and Conversion*, 203
- xiv André Lascaris, *To do the Unexpected: Reading Scripture in Northern Ireland*, The Corrymeela Press, Belfast 1993.
- xv Lascaris, *To do the Unexpected*, 81
- xvi James Alison, *on being liked*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2003
- xvii Alison, *on being liked*, 18
- xviii Alison, *on being liked*, 18
- xix René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, The Athlone Press, London, 1987
- xx Michael Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, T&T Clark, London and New York, 2009
- xxi Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 76
- xxii S. Mark Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice: a theology of the cross*, Wm. B. Eerdmanns, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge UK, 2006
- xxiii Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 108
- xxiv Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 109
- xxv René Girard, *I see Satan Fall like Lightning*, Orbis, New York, 2001, 3
- xxvi Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 293
- xxvii Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 293
- xxviii Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 293-294
- xxix Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 294
- xxx Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice*, 301
- xxxi James Alison, *Undergoing God: dispatches from the scene of a break-in*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2006
- xxxii Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple roots of Christian Liturgy*, Continuum, London, 2004 and *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2000
- xxxiii J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1970
- xxxiv Alison, *Undergoing God*, 50-51
- xxxv Margaret Barker, *On Earth as it is in Heaven: Temple symbolism in the New Testament*, Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009
- xxxvi Barker, *On Earth as it is in Heaven*, 44-45
- xxxvii Barker, *Temple Theology*, 53-54
- xxxviii Alison, *Undergoing God*, 53
- xxxix Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice: a theology of the cross*, 329

May 2010

Bibliography

- Alison, James *on being liked*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2003
- Undergoing God: dispatches from the scene of a break-in*, Darton,
Longman and Todd, London, 2006
- Barker, Margaret *The Great High Priest: The Temple roots of Christian Liturgy*,
Continuum, London, 2004
- The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2000
- Temple Theology: An Introduction*, SPCK, London 2004
- On Earth as it is in Heaven: Temple symbolism in the New Testament*,
Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009
- Derrett, J. Duncan M *Law in the New Testament*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1970
- Girard, René *Violence and the Sacred* translated by Patrick Gregory, The John
Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1977
- Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, The Athlone Press,
London, 1987
- I see Satan Fall like Lightning*, Orbis, New York, 2001
- Oedipus Unbound: Selected Writings on Rivalry and Desire*, Stanford
University Press, Stanford, California 2004
- Girard, René with Pierpaolo Antonello and João Cezar de Castro Rocha,
Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture,
Continuum International Publishing, London and New York 2007
- Hammerton-Kelly, Robert G *The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark*, Fortress
Press, Minneapolis 1994
- Sacred Violence: Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross*, Fortress Press,
Minneapolis 1992
- Heim, S. Mark *Saved from Sacrifice: a theology of the cross*, Wm. B. Eerdmanns,
Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge UK, 2006
- Jersak, Brad
and Hardin, Michael *Stricken by God?: Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ*,
Wm. B. Eerdmanns, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge UK, 2007
- Kirwan, Michael *Girard and Theology*, T&T Clark, London and New York, 2009
- Lascaris, André *To do the Unexpected: Reading Scripture in Northern Ireland*, The
Corrymeela Press, Belfast 1993

Swartley, Willard M (Ed.) *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies and Peacemaking,*
Studies in Peace and Scripture, Vol. 4, Pandora Press U.S. Telford, Pennsylvania, 2000