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A LAND BETWEEN TWO RIVERS:

Space, Place, and Mimetic Theory



An Iowa Impression

COV&R 2013 Conference: University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, July 10-14, 2013

Humanity is more than ever the author of its own fall because it has become able to destroy its world.

-René Girard

Between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, a self-sustaining eco-system that now comprises the state of Iowa was created over thousands of years. In 1800, 240 million acres of tall grass prairie covered middle America. By 1900, this land had been transformed into farm fields, and the foundations for large-scale industrial agriculture had been laid. Today, this land has already lost half of its rich black topsoil—thousands of years in creation—and the soil continues to lose both depth and quality. Changes in the land and a warming climate have made us more vulnerable to both drought and flood. Pesticides, fertilizers, fecal bacteria and antibiotics regularly turn up in our lakes and streams, and sometimes in our drinking water. The nutrients escaping from our fields cause a “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico, killing marine life. As family farms consolidate into industrialized farming operations, towns empty and traditional ways of life in rural America disappear.

continued on p. 3

COV&R Object: “To explore, criticize, and develop the mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture. The Colloquium will be concerned with questions of both research and application. Scholars from various fields and diverse theoretical orientations will be encouraged to participate both in the conferences and the publications sponsored by the Colloquium, but the focus of activity will be the relevance of the mimetic model for the study of religion.”

The *Bulletin* is also available online:
<http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/bulletin/>

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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

To All the Members of the Colloquium:

A gathering of scholars in 1990 at Stanford University gave birth to the Colloquium on Violence & Religion (COV&R). Thus, 2015 will mark our 25th year of activities. We would like to begin remote preparations for this happy event by calling on all members to reflect on ways that they would like to see that important year celebrated. We also have a suggestion for one way we might prepare.

We ask that each member make an effort in the coming year to sign up one more member. We believe that many of us know someone who is interested in GIRARD's work and in mimetic theory, but has not yet joined COV&R. And joining has never had so many benefits as now. Thanks to Imitatio each member receives the books published in the Violence, Mimesis, and Culture Series from Michigan State University Press gratis. That alone makes membership an economical investment.

But more important is the long-term health of this organization that so many of us love. In order to be able to pass on what we have received, we are constantly going to need new members. This really is everyone's responsibility and in everyone's interest. As exemplified above, we have been very blessed with financial support from Imitatio. But it has been the prudent policy to avoid becoming dependent on Imitatio funding, both for our own independence but also in recognition that that funding could be cut off at any time. We believe that we can and should gratefully use the money in order to carry out activities that directly build up the organization for the future (graduate student travel grants, etc.), but not depend on it for our yearly operations. Thus, dues derived from members is the only real alternative.

So we would like to urge each of you to seek out someone and encourage them to join our Colloquium. They can easily do so by using the "Membership" page on the COV&R website. Let's aim to give COV&R the gift of having 500 members in each of our branches ("European" and "American") for its 25th birthday—1000 in all!

Gratefully yours,

Ann Astell and Jeremiah Alberg

Raymund Schwager, S.J., Memorial Essay Contest

To honor the memory of Raymund SCHWAGER, SJ (†2004), the Colloquium on Violence and Religion is offering an **award of \$ 1,500** shared by up to three persons, for the three best papers given by graduate students at the COV&R 2013 meeting at the University of Northern Iowa. To be eligible to compete, students must have registered for the conference and have had their papers accepted for presentation at the conference. Students presenting papers at the conference are invited to apply for the **Raymund Schwager Memorial Award** by sending a letter to that effect and the full text of their paper (in English, maximum length: 10 pages, double-spaced) in an e-mail attachment to Martha Reineke (martha.reineke@uni.edu), organizer of COV&R 2013 conference. **The due date for submission is June 1.** Winners will be announced in the conference program. Prize-winning essays should reflect an engagement with mimetic theory; they will be presented in a plenary session and be considered for publication in *Contagion*.

The Raven Foundation Informs

The roll-out of *The Forgiving Victim* video series with theologian James Alison begins with a series of four Facilitator Retreats in the US during the October, November and December of 2012. The retreats are for anyone who is already familiar with James Alison or mimetic theory and who'd like to be involved with the development and launch of the Forgiving Victim course. Dates of the retreats, additional information and application forms are available at <http://forgivingvictim.com/home/lead-the-course/retreat-calendar/>.

At this conference, we will reflect together on the significance of this change. The impact of industrial agriculture on the land captures in close frame key ecological issues of our time. Ecological questions call for robust engagement by mimetic theory. In dialogue with scientists and theologians who focus on ecology, we will highlight this important topic at our 2013 gathering. Questions for consideration may include:

- In what ways can mimetic theory illuminate environmental issues and priorities?
- How do we understand links between violence and religion in the context of environmental degradation?
- Can mimetic theory contribute to environmental ethics?
- How do interdisciplinary conversations among mimetic theorists (e.g., philosophy, ethics, theology, sociology, biology) illuminate ecological issues?
- How does mimetic theory shed light on intersections between religious beliefs and practices and ecological themes?
- How can mimetic theory contribute to our understanding of interconnections among organisms and varied forms of life?
- The vast expanse of land and sky in the Midwest, which visitors find so striking, may sharpen our awareness of humans' relationships to non-rural spaces and places. In what ways does mimetic theory illuminate such reflections?

Plenary Sessions on the conference theme include:

"Religion, Ecology, and the Planetary Other: Opening Spaces for Difference." Whitney BAUMAN, Department of Religious Studies, Florida International University.

"Restoring Ecological Health in an Agricultural Sacrifice Zone." Laura JACKSON, Department of Biology, University of Northern Iowa.

"Green Mimesis: Girard, Nature, and the Practice of More with Less." Mark WALLACE, Department of Religion, Swarthmore College.

Other conference highlights:

- The *Call for Papers* in early December will be broadly inclusive. In addition to proposals on the conference theme, we will welcome topics that span the breadth of mimetic theory.
- Our special emphasis on lynching will continue with a plenary session focused on new research presentations.
- We plan opportunities for members of the Colloquium who are practitioners in fields outside of the academy to talk together about the application of

mimetic theory in non-academic contexts. Proposals will be invited on this topic also.

- We especially welcome graduate students and young scholars. Housing options will include inexpensive dormitories.
- We will explore new conversational formats. Conference plenaries will feature breakout sessions for discussion. Seminars will feature papers pre-distributed to conference participants. Other new ways of presenting ideas and sharing them with others are most welcome.

Conference Logistics:

The conference website will be up by the end of October and will be accessible through the COV&R website. Preliminary information will be posted then. The Call for Papers will be on the website in early December.

The conference will begin at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 10, and conclude with a Saturday evening banquet, July 13.

The University of Northern Iowa is located in Cedar Falls, IA in northeast Iowa (5 hours west of Chicago). You will have two options when flying to the conference.

1) Closest option: The local airport (4 miles from the conference location) is in Waterloo, IA (ALO) and is served by American Airlines from Chicago. Local hotels provide shuttles to/from the airport.

2) Option one hour away: The Eastern Iowa Airport (CID) is in a different city, Cedar Rapids, which is one hour away from Cedar Falls/Waterloo. The Eastern Iowa Airport is served by American, Delta, and United. A fee-for-service shuttle to that airport will be reserved by our conference and will run at selected times on July 10 and 14. You will reserve this shuttle when registering for the conference.

Registration, housing/hotel, and travel information will be posted on the conference website by December 1. Due to the limited number of daily flights directly to Cedar Falls (Waterloo airport—ALO), we recommend the purchase of airline tickets to Waterloo no later than December. Pack the planes!

Note: In the past, persons visiting UNI have accidentally bought tickets to Waterloo, Ontario. Please use care when buying your tickets.

American Airlines Discounted Travel:

We have secured discounted travel with a group rate. Travel will be discounted between July 1-July 17, 2013 for trips that include either

the Waterloo Regional Airport (ALO) or the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids (CID).

The authorization codes are:

ALO-WATERLOO A5473BS

CID-CEDR RAPIDS A5473BS

Tickets can be purchased by calling American Airlines Meeting Services Desk at **1-800-433-1790**. The discount also can be booked online at www.aa.com/group. Use the Authorization Number noted above **without the preceding A** as the AA.com Promotion Code.

Martha Reineke

**COV&R AT
THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION**

**Program of the Annual Meeting
November 17-20, 2012,
Chicago, IL**

COV&R will offer a slate of three sessions at the November, 2012 AAR meeting in Chicago, IL at the McCormick Place Conference Center. Details on each session were in the May Bulletin (http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/bulletin/archive/bulletin_40.pdf) on pages 3-6. Please note that dates, times, and locations are listed here. The book session will offer an opportunity for attendees to engage two scholars in reflection on topics that intersect with mimetic theory and the theme of religion and violence. Note: there has been a time change from our usual Saturday morning schedule due to scheduling needs of the AAR office. The session on Girard's *Sacrifice* will be the first time that Girard's achievement in his latest publication has been explored in a national forum. Finally, in continuing a tradition of co-sponsoring sessions with AAR groups with which COV&R members have intellectual affinities, our session on Bonhoeffer and Girard features three insightful and compelling papers that also will generate widespread interest among those attending the session. Questions about COV&R sessions at the AAR may be directed to Martha Reineke, Coordinator of COV&R sessions at the AAR, martha.reineke@uni.edu.

Session I

**P 17-200: Saturday November 17, 2012,
1:00 AM-3:30 PM; McCormick Place West
182**

1:00-2:10 p.m.: Book Session: Kelly Denton-Borhaug's, *U.S. War-Culture, Sacrifice, and Salvation*

Panelist: Kelly Denton-Borhaug, Moravian College

Responding: S. Mark Heim, Andover Newton Theological School

2:10-2:20 p.m. Break

2:20-3:30 p.m. Book Session:

Richard Beck's *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Mortality*

Panelist: Richard Beck, Abilene Christian University

Responding: Martha Reineke, University of Northern Iowa

Session II

A 18-214 Sunday, November 18, 1:00-2:30 p.m. McCormick Place West 185A

Co-Sponsored session with the Bonhoeffer: Theology and Social Analysis Group

Theme: Bonhoeffer and Girard in Conversation: Revelation, Scandal, and the Theology of the Cross

Nikolaus Wandinger, University of Innsbruck, Presiding

Kevin Lenehan, MCD University of Divinity: *Standing Responsibly Between Silence and Speech: Doing Theology in the Light of Bonhoeffer and Girard*

Craig Slane, Simpson University:

Two Logics, One Scandal: Understanding Expulsion with Bonhoeffer with Girard

Nicholas Bott, Stanford University and Reggie Williams, Baylor University: *"Solidarity in Suffering": René Girard's Theological Pedagogy in Conversation with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Experience in the Harlem Renaissance*

Session III

P-19-101 Monday, November 19, 2012 9-11:30 a.m. McCormick Place South 106B

Theme: René Girard's *Sacrifice*

William Johnsen, Michigan State University, Presiding

Panelists: David Dawson, Universidad de Costa Rica; Brian Collins, North Carolina State University; Kathryn McClymond, Georgia State University; Francis X. Clooney, Harvard Divinity School.

Compiled by Martha Reineke

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Published in this issue of the Bulletin (see p. 7), Scott COWDELL's report about the 2012 COV&R Meeting in Tokyo gives everyone an opportunity to travel in time and space, in imagination or memory, to the beautiful campus of International Christian University, where approximately eighty of us from abroad were privileged to meet together with Japanese scholars. It was a historic meeting in many ways: the first COV&R conference in Asia, the first in Japan, the first meeting to be jointly sponsored by COV&R with the Japan Girard Society and the Generative Anthropology Society and Conference (GASC). As Andrew BARTLETT (GASC President) put it, the spirit (in particular, that between GASC and COV&R members) was that of a "family reunion." Organized with great care by Jeremiah ALBERG and his team, the conference was thematically coherent, intellectually stimulating, and deeply moving.

The philosopher Emmanuel LEVINAS has said that "thinking begins with trauma." Being at a place so strongly marked by the memory of warfare and of nuclear holocaust, and still shaken by the terrible 2011 tsunami, one could not help but be moved by the quiet strength of the Japanese people, their appreciation for beauty and order and reverence. Among the many very fine lectures I heard, those by Japanese scholars of GIRARD were especially memorable for me. For example, a young Japanese student, Mizuho KAWASAKI, used mimetic theory persuasively to connect the evidence of a historic land dispute between two villages, a death resulting from that dispute, a memorial gravesite, and an annual carnivalesque reenactment there of the human violence in a ritual form. Later in the meeting, another Japanese scholar, Eisel KURIMOTO, shared his first-hand experience of the lynching of rainmakers in the Sudan. Finally, the distinguished scholar of Japanese folklore, Norio AKASAKA, explained to us how GIRARD's *Violence and the Sacred* had given him the key to read many of the surviving Shinto legends as evidence of human sacrifice in ancient Japan. As we listened, spellbound, to tale after tale, myth after myth, and heard about the corroborating archeological evidence for such sacrifices, we had the overwhelming impression of the universal reach of the mimetic theory, and its application not only

to the past but also to present conditions of violence.

Once again, present at the COV&R meeting were scholars from around the world: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Botswana, Canada, India, Italy, France, Germany, Japan, Poland, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, the UK, and the USA. Old friends were joyfully reunited. New friendships were forged.

At the COV&R Business Meeting, we heard much to cheer us. William JOHNSEN spoke about *Contagion* and about the many titles forthcoming in Michigan State University's book series, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture. A truly impressive list! The articles, translations, scholarly monographs, and essay collections have done and are doing much to secure and enhance the academic standing of mimetic research and also to promote the tenure of young scholars who engage with mimetic theory. The editorial work both of Bill JOHNSEN and of Niki WANDINGER (on the *Bulletin*) was praised.

Thérèse ONDERDENWIJNGAARD shared the good news that once again a Summer School for young Girardians was about to begin in The Netherlands. We owe a debt of gratitude to Thérèse for conceiving and organizing these summer courses in mimetic theory, which have generated so much life and which have strengthened the bonds of friendship that secure the international Girard Network across generational and national lines (for a report see p. 10).

Martha REINEKE reported on the plans for COV&R sessions at the 2012 AAR Meeting, November 17-20, in Chicago (see p. 4). Martha also gave us a thematic and logistical introduction to the 2013 COV&R Meeting, to be held July 10-14, at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa (USA) (see p. 1ff.). Its theme promises to renew the Colloquium's consideration of some of the ecological and environmental issues that were raised at Ghost Ranch, but in the very different setting of the plains of the American Midwest. I know that many of us are looking forward to this meeting.

Looking ahead, we were very pleased at the Business Meeting to hear Fr. Richard SCHENK, O.P., invite the members of the Colloquium to hold their 2014 meeting at the Catholic University of Eichstätt/Ingolstadt in Bavaria, not far from Munich, Germany. The city of Eichstätt is

famous for its Baroque architecture. 2014 will mark the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I—an occasion appropriately remembered on European soil, in Germany. (Thank you, Fr. Schenk, for welcoming us!)

Finally, at the Business Meeting, Giuseppe FORNARI was proposed by the Board for a second term and Chris Allen CARTER was proposed as a new Board member, to fill the position left vacant by Stephen GARDNER at the conclusion of his second term. (Thank you, Stephen, for your service!) The nominations met with the approval of the members.

How privileged we are to belong to COV&R, the oldest, the largest, the most interdisciplinary of the Girardian organizations that have sprung up with so much vitality on every continent during the years since COV&R's founding in 1990. To COV&R, too, belongs the special legacy of René GIRARD and Raymund SCHWAGER, S.J.

As Jeremiah ALBERG and I suggest in our joint letter (see p. 2), it is time for us to renew our love and commitment to COV&R, as it approaches its 25th anniversary. Each one needs to ask: what can I do, what "birthday" gift can I bring?

The gift to COV&R of a new or renewed member is of tremendous value, because the opportunity to associate and to collaborate on scholarly projects with other COV&R members is arguably the greatest benefit of belonging to the Colloquium. We look forward to our annual gatherings at the AAR and to our yearly meetings in the United States and elsewhere. We bring ourselves, our writings, our experiences, thoughts, and questions.

The publications available to COV&R members are also a great benefit—not only *Contagion* and the *Bulletin*, but also the many books published by Michigan State University Press in the series edited by William JOHNSEN (not to mention the books, articles, and essay collections by COV&R members that have been and are published by other presses and journals!).

For young people, the opportunity to compete for the annual Raymund Schwager, S.J., Memorial Essay Prize is of great worth.

In short, to draw a friend, a student, a colleague into COV&R is to give that person and all of us a great gift.

Sincerely

Ann W. Astell

MUSINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

I know that there will be a report on the Tokyo meeting from someone else in this Bulletin (see p. 7) and I do not want to cover the same ground, but I cannot help reflecting on my own experience as organizer. My main feeling is one of gratitude. I received so much help and encouragement, first of all from my staff of Ms. Naoko WAKATAKE and Ms. Nozomi UEMATSU and the students who worked with them. I want to thank them publically again for making the Conference not just possible but real. There was also a lot of other support given by International Christian University and it was a pleasure to "show off" this University to members of COV&R. I am proud to be a member of this faculty.

There is one incident that occurred during the Conference that contains in nuce my experience and is something about which most people, even those in attendance, were unaware. As usual with COV&R conferences this one ran from Thursday afternoon until Sunday evening. Each of the days featured plenary speakers who brought a different aspect of the conference theme to our attention. The final speaker, scheduled for Sunday afternoon was to be Prof. Norio AKASAKA, a specialist in Japanese folklore. I had never met Prof. AKASAKA, but was familiar with his work. As organizer my intent in inviting him was to end the conference by having its participants, many who were in Japan for the first time, to hear how mimetic theory had helped this scholar make sense of Japanese culture. I thought it would provide a kind of testimony to mimetic theory's cross-cultural value.

Unfortunately, in the weeks leading up to the conference I had totally forgotten to communicate any of the particulars of his talk with Prof. AKASAKA. I had secured his commitment to participate almost eighteen months before the conference and I had checked with him occasionally to be sure that he could come. He had had a position in Tohoku up until immediately before the earthquake and tsunami and was immediately named to the Government Committee for Rebuilding Tohoku after the disaster, so I knew that he was very, very busy. As the conference grew closer, I was trying harder and harder to keep track of all the different elements that needed to be tended to. Contacting Prof.

AKASAKA about the schedule of the meeting and the time of his talk just completely slipped my mind.

So on Sunday afternoon he was to give his talk at 4:30. At around 2:00 it occurred to me that he did not know that. I could not believe how stupid I had been nor how it had not hit me until now that I had failed to give him such basic information. So, what to do? I wrote him a quick email apologizing for the lateness of the communication but saying that I hoped he could be on the campus by 4:30 to give the talk.

Then I went someplace quiet for a few minutes to try to quit beating myself up for being so stupid. I thought, it has been a wonderful conference with some really fine plenary sessions and a host of wonderful research presentations. Nothing is going to change that. I realized that almost no one at the conference knew Prof. AKASAKA or his work. They had not travelled here just to hear him. It was a great disappointment to me, because I so wanted people to see concretely the way mimetic theory could be used in Japan but it was my fault it would not happen. For the others, the loss would be more negative, they would not really know what they missed. I would simply announce that he was not coming because of my error, apologize and people would have an extra hour to get ready for the banquet. At the end of four pretty intense days, people might even be happy about it.

To my surprise, there was a quick response from Prof. AKASAKA saying that he was on his way. (He did end up getting lost on campus. A colleague of mine ran into him by pure coincidence and since the man looked lost asked him what he was looking for. My colleague guided him to the conference venue.)

So we finally met and I had to bow very, very low. At first he was clearly, and understandably, a little piqued with me. Later he said to another participant, "Well, you look at him and you just have to forgive him." The talk itself was precisely what I hoped it would be. Prof. AKASAKA described discovering René GIRARD's work in a Japanese translation of *Violence and the Sacred* and how it became his "bible" for understanding what he was researching in Japanese culture. But for me the person that was speaking was as important as what he was saying. Here was a real *Mensch*. His own humanity informed his research and

his research had helped form him as a person. I enjoyed listening to him and look forward to collaborating with him in the future.

It was undeserved and that sort sums up my feeling about the conference.

Jeremiah Alberg

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Apocalypse Revisited: Japan, Hiroshima, and the Place of Mimesis:

COV&R Conference at the International Christian University, Tokyo, July 5-8, 2012

International Christian University, where the chief Conference organizer Jeremiah ALBERG lives and teaches, provided a green oasis for around sixty COV&R members to meet amid the sprawl, bustle, and heavy summer mugginess of Tokyo. The first COV&R conference away from the trans-Atlantic axis, and the first in Asia, points to the increasingly global uptake of mimetic theory and the oeuvre of René GIRARD. The conference ran smoothly and on time thanks to Professor ALBERG, Nozomi UEMATSU (University of Sussex), and their team of willing helpers. The accommodations were comfortable, with Dialogue House also providing admirable facilities for plenary sessions, with simultaneous translation as necessary and delicious Japanese food in its hi-tech dining hall. ICU was clearly proud to be hosting our gathering, as reflected in the warm welcome we received from Professor Junko HIBIYA, the University President. Faculty historian William STEELE then explained the post-war origins of this bi-lingual, American-style, liberal arts college devoted to developing a new generation of peaceful Japanese global citizens—a mission that did not always deliver the support for United States foreign policy that ICU's American supporters might have hoped.

Perhaps the distances involved and attendant travel costs contributed to numbers being well down this year, though this was ameliorated somewhat by our meeting jointly with the Japan Girard Association and the Generative Anthropology Society and Conference (GASC). A visit to ICU's folk museum, another to a "typical dive" for some after-hours beer drinking, and a bilingual Protestant service in the great campus Church at which I had the honor to preach, ensured a full program. Daily mass was celebrated

by the Roman Catholics at 7 am, except on the Sunday when it claimed the same timeslot as ICUs aforementioned ecumenical event. A modest buffet-style banquet rounded out the proceedings, though sadly some of COV&R's big names had to leave during the meal to catch overnight flights.

There were of course concurrent sessions, at which a good field of established Girardians along with newcomers presented with clarity and conviction on a range of topics. There were some lovely, stimulating papers. However, other speakers presented their pearls of insight without remembering the thematic string on which such pearls need to be threaded for their beauty to be fully appreciated. Comment was also made at the COV&R Business Meeting about instances where a failure to trim overlong papers led to delivery speeds that would have made Gilbert and Sullivan wince. A most significant appearance in the concurrent sessions' program was the presentation of Raven Essay Contest winners by Jay ALBERG. This competition is aimed at graduate students and seeks to further the dissemination of Girardian mimetic theory via engagement with popular culture. Congratulations to Marcin KAZNOWSKI from the Pontifical University of John Paul II for a presentation entitled "Meanders of Evangelization in Asia" and Los Angeles free-lance writer Luke NELSON for "*Taxi Driver*, Mishima, and Suicidal Aesthetic."

Above all it was a conference centered on plenary sessions, and I will confine my remaining remarks to a brief overview of these. Space is not available to mention many thoughtful formal responses to these plenaries by major voices from the COV&R fraternity.

After dinner on the first night was veteran Girardian thinker Jean-Pierre DUPUY, who argued that the nuclear deterrent had helped to ensure a more hopeful historical outcome than GIRARD's *Battling to the End* might have anticipated. This is why the deregulated nuclear threat from rogue states is actually more serious than the détente between established nuclear powers.

Friday's opening plenary celebrated our 2012 winners of the Raymund Schwager Essay Competition. In first place was Australian Carly OSBORN, from the University of Adelaide, with a sharp Girardian reading of *The Virgin Sui-*

cides, drawing on her dissertation about recent dystopian fiction and the American dream. In second place was Samuel BUCHOUL from the University of Delhi, with a strong reflection on synergies between a mimetic account of desire and Buddhist anthropology. Mizuho KAWASAKI, from the Kunitachi College of Music, reflected on a regional example of Japanese folk art, the lion dance, in which a mediator is killed—a myth celebrated still in the village where an actual archaic murder is commemorated.



President Ann Astell and Executive Secretary and conference organizer Jeremiah Alberg framing the Schwager-Award Winners Mizuho Kawasaki, Samuel Buchoul and Carly Osborn (photo courtesy of S. Buchoul)

On Friday afternoon, GIRARD's Japanese translator, Shoichiro IWAKIRI (ICU), gave a plenary address in which he called for a more positive view of the Dionysian, reading the eleventh-century *Tale of Genji* in light of GIRARD on Oedipus, Stendhal, and Cervantes. After dinner, Eric GANS (UCLA) was in fine form with a plenary on World War II, the Shoa and Hiroshima as marking a watershed in our assessment of the victim—a Foucaultian *coupure épistémologique* ending the era of moral dualism, in favor of a more tragic sense of humanity's shared moral culpability before mass evils. His example was the "first postmodern film," *Hiroshima mon amour*. GANS prefaced his remarks by expressing his continuing intellectual indebtedness to René GIRARD, while Andrew BARTLETT in his welcome on behalf of the GASC conference described this Tokyo event as a "family reunion" of the two Girard-inspired organizations.

Prominent Australian Girard interpreter Chris FLEMING (University of Western Sydney) gave the first Saturday plenary, having been in-

vited by the Generative Anthropology Conference. He warned about the “reductio ad Hitlerum” of contemporary media and blogosphere hyperbole, such as American pundit Glen BECK comparing contemporary events (like Obamacare) with Nazi policy, and more generally how major post-war threats resonate variously in our imaginations, siding instead with LEVINAS on the proper non-representability of these evils. The place names remaining stubbornly associated with the greatest of these horrors remind us that Auschwitz and Hiroshima are irreducibly concrete events.

The 2012 Raymund Schwager Memorial Lecture was given by Dominican priest Richard SCHENK, who was recently-appointed as President of the Catholic University of Eichstätt/Ingolstadt. Fr SCHENK discussed the differing prospects for “completing HEIDEGGER” represented by GIRARD and his postmodern philosophical interlocutor, Gianni VATTIMO. Paying particular attention to the early HEIDEGGER, and noting synergies with the Japanese Kyoto school of philosophy, Fr SCHENK decides that GIRARD’s sense of human interdependence better reflects HEIDEGGER’s sense of Being’s “social emplacement”—of our belonging to place and belonging together. In a presentation at once erudite and spiritually attuned, Fr SCHENK made particular mention of Raymund SCHWAGER’s influence on GIRARD in terms of revaluing sacrifice. He concluded that any “lasting acknowledgement and reverence of the other requires a certain lasting self-restraint, something like a sacrifice, but—as Schwager suggested to Girard—a sacrifice that need not be ultimately destructive of itself or the other”, declaring this to represent “the best of what Vattimo means by *kenosis and pietas*.”

Late Saturday afternoon’s plenary featured a further installment in the “Lynching Forum” that Sandor GOODHART and Julia ROBINSON have been introducing at recent conferences. This theme, which has developed quite a scholarly literature of its own, is an obvious if strangely unacknowledged contender for serious Girardian engagement, and the hope is that a succession of major scholars working in the area will be drawn into conversation with mimetic theory at COV&R Conferences over the next few years. Sandor GOODHART (Purdue University) described lynching as “the elephant

in the living room both of American life and of mimetic theory,” supported by Julia ROBINSON (University of North Carolina) in her reflection in light of James CONE on the relationship between the cross and the lynching tree. Field anthropologist Eisei KURIMOTO (Osaka University) introduced the risky hereditary occupation of rainmaking of Southern Sudan, with unsuccessful practitioners facing the threat of death on a pattern recalling GIRARD on sacrificial kingship. Paul DUMOUCHEL concluded the forum with an extended reflection on the tragic outcome of a lynching in an American novel by Walter Van Tilburg CLARK, *The Ox-Bow Incident*.

Saturday night’s plenary was memorable and poignant. Cambodian activist Somaly MAM, representing the American Foundation that bears her name, came to Tokyo with Raven Foundation support. Her searing account of escape from a life of sex slavery through the persevering kindness of a friend, then of creating an organization that has since rescued over four thousand women and children from the same fate, took us to the heart of darkness. Sold like so many Cambodian children, many of whom from as young as five are programmatically sexually abused, Somaly testified from experience to the difficulty of accepting the possibility of freedom and a different life. Hence her organization provides not only investigation, intervention and rescue, with advocacy and activism, but also long-term accommodation for survivors, education and training, with help in finding employment. In a country where a shocking laxity regarding child welfare, along with widespread police and official corruption, helps to entrench the culture of abuse, it is through practical measures like supporting family businesses so that children do not have to be sold, and by dealing only with police of proven integrity, that improvements can painstakingly be made. With American cash, and political support from the likes of Hillary CLINTON, Somaly is becoming a force to be reckoned with. Her story is, remarkably, one based on the need and capacity to forgive, including an ability to understand the well of loneliness and hurt from which abusive behavior issues. This provided an object lesson in what Jesus meant by his teaching on the overcoming of evil by good,

along with the Girardian virtue of not being caught-up in the mirroring of hatred.

On the final afternoon the first of two plenaries featured a round table discussion on *Le sacrifice inutile* by Paul DUMOUCHEL (Ritsumeikan University), featuring also John MAHER (ICU) as moderator, Kenjiro TAMAGAMI (Meiji University), Sandor GOODHART (Purdue University), and Benoît CHANTRE (L'association recherches mimétiques). The book will appear in translation with the Michigan State University Press as *The Barren Sacrifice*, pointing to the increasing ineffectuality of scapegoating sacrifice in the modern, secularized world. An example used by DUMOUCHEL is the banality of evil (Hannah ARENDT) that was evident in the figure of Adolf EICHMANN, pointing to the way in which sacrifice no longer creates any monstrous sense of sacred aura, likewise the sheer bureaucratic indifference to the killing deemed necessary to effect military objectives (like the 1 in 74 casualty "success rate" of drone strikes for eliminating identified enemy targets). No longer ever really at peace, and always at risk of war, the modern state established with a mandate to protect its citizens now turns its monopoly of violence against them. Hence the modern territorial state becomes increasingly sacrificial, precarious, and potentially genocidal. No wonder the political is increasingly seen to be moribund. All this points to the likely fruitfulness of writing a mimetic history of the modern West, as GIRARD advocates in *Battling to the End*.

The final conference plenary, by Norio AKASAKA (Gakushuin University), presented a series of Girardian-inspired readings of human sacrifice in medieval Japanese folklore, referring in particular to the eleventh-century *Tales of Times Past*. Here, the sacrifice of a carefully groomed virgin from the village to the monkey God was eventually set aside. Other stories feature the reading of Buddhist sutras as effective in the turning back of sacred violence. The role of various *pharmakoi* was also explicated, including the much-indulged figure of the village loafer, or else a relative of the one who gives offence, in both cases effecting a deflection of violence onto safe targets. A story very like that of the biblical Joseph and his brothers was also set out, along with a link between the founding murder and the origins of Japanese Noh plays

and Kabuki, based on an examination of some root words associated with their staging. Participants were struck by the compatibility of this Japanese traditional material with various primal and classical Western examples of myth and ritual as studied by GIRARD.

This plenary presentation was a fitting end to a conference in which the fruitfulness of Japanese reflection on Girardian themes was clearly evident. As our COV&R President, Professor Ann W. ASTELL (University of Notre Dame), pointed out, there is a real intellectual strength in the Japanese Girard Association, with this conference providing an international showcase for its potential.

It is for Ann to report on the business of COV&R, including discussions at the Board Meeting before the Conference began and in the Business Meeting on its final day. For instance, there is significant news about conferences planned for 2013 and 2014. But I cannot resist mentioning my own admiration for all that William A. JOHNSEN is doing with his two book series at the Michigan State University Press. The Business Meeting was presented with a list of forthcoming titles for 2012-13, among which are two volumes of Girard *entretiens* that have long lain untranslated: *Quand ces choses commenceront* and *Celui par qui le scandale arrive*. The decision of Imitatio to supply all these books gratis to the financial members of COV&R, who they recognize to represent the core readership in Girardian studies, is not only farsighted and generous, but an entirely compelling reason for joining and remaining with COV&R in the years ahead.

Scott Cowdell

Charles Sturt University, Australia

Second Summer School Mimetic Theory – 15th-29th of July 2012

Leusden (the Netherlands); It is mid-July and the widest range of young people arrives at the Internationale School voor Wijsbegeerte (ISVW). They come from Australia, Austria, Finland, France, India, Italy, Slovenia, South Africa, the Netherlands and the United States. What connects them is the wish to understand and use Mimetic Theory. It is Thérèse ONDERDENWIJNGAARD who awaits and greets them all. It is the beginning of the Second Summer School on Mimetic Theory.

First of all I want to thank Thérèse. As the organizer of this study program you did an amazing job before and during the Summer School! The two weeks provided an excellent chance to understand and get a deeper insight into René GIRARD's works and his theory. And no lesser persons had been willing to teach us than Sandy GOODHART, Paul DUMOUCHEL, James ALISON and Mark ANSPACH. Thank you too, you also did a great job!

But let me explain what it was all about. The Summer School's program consisted of two-day courses with each of the teachers, always followed by an assignment for the third morning. These assignments helped the teachers to understand how much the students had learned during their classes. So on the one hand they were a feedback for the teachers, but on the other hand they were also a good initiation and exercise for the students to apply Mimetic Theory on their own and to get feedback on it. The assignments were due at noon. Afterwards the rest of the third day was free before yet another course started the next morning. The emphasis during the courses was on important texts by René GIRARD. All participants had read those texts in advance, which, combined with the fact that we all came from very different scientific backgrounds, made very interesting discussions possible in an interdisciplinary atmosphere.

As *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* was René GIRARD's first major work, Sandy GOODHART started the Summer School by lecturing about this significant book and the foundations of mimetic theory. He worked with us on each and every chapter to make sure we got more than just a basic idea of Mimetic Theory. After these first two intensive days of thinking and rethinking, the first assignment was due on Wednesday at noon. As I already mentioned, the following afternoon was free for everyone – except the teachers who had to read our assignments. The students used the time for additional work on their own projects, relaxing in and around the ISVW or a walk to Amersfoort, the medieval city close to Leusden.

The next day Paul DUMOUCHEL's class started. He tried to make us understand the relationships between violence in groups, sacrifice, rituals, scapegoating and revenge. Therefore we reread parts of *Violence and the Sacred*. As the next assignment was due on Saturday, the

weekend had already begun. Some students even spent their afternoon in Amsterdam. On Sunday the whole group made a trip to the Nationalpark De Hoge Veluwe where we had the pleasure to visit the Jachthuis Sint Hubertus and the Kröller-Müller Museums.

The second and final week started with James ALISON showing us the impacts mimetic theory can have on exegetical studies. We took a closer look at various passages from the Bible and again at a book by René GIRARD, this time *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*.



*Summer School Teachers and Students
(photo courtesy of S. Buchoul)*

After another assignment and a free afternoon, the last two-day course was held by Mark ANSPACH. First he showed us his current work on the book *Little Women* written by Louisa May ALCOTT. Then he showed and discussed with us different aspects of various advertisements. This made us understand how effective and up-to-date mimetic theory still is.

Now, after two very intensive weeks of work and yet another assignment, the Summer School was almost over.

But what are we going to do next? What comes after the Summer School?

These questions did not only concern us while we were in the Netherlands. Some of the participants are still in contact and are trying to launch a joint project. We hope we will be able to report on it in the future. Until then I can say that I felt the motivation of all involved to keep going in the field of mimetic theory. I think this will not be the last time one can read about the participants of the Second Summer School on Mimetic Theory.

Tina Hellensteiner, Innsbruck

Walter Wink, 1935-2012

This past spring Walter WINK passed away (May 21, 1935 – May 10, 2012) and Girardians the world over lost a faithful friend and interpreter. Walter's *Engaging the Powers* was seminal in disseminating GIRARD's mimetic theory under the rubric "the myth of redemptive violence." Walter is survived by his wife June KEENER-WINK and his children.

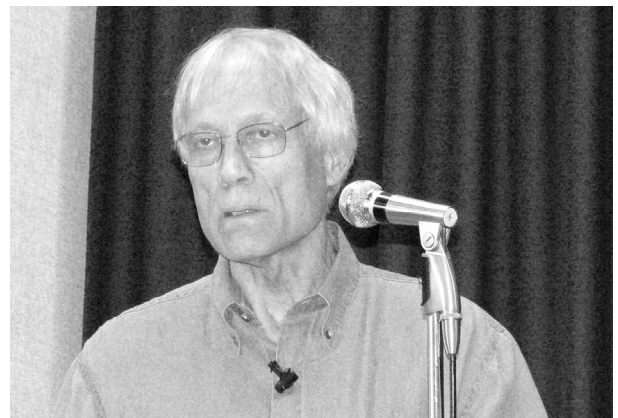
Walter began his teaching career at Union Theological Seminary after completing his dissertation on John the Baptist. He was denied tenure for his line in *The Bible in Human Transformation* (1973) that "the historical-critical method is bankrupt." He moved to Auburn Theological Seminary where he would teach until his retirement. He was a member of the Jesus Seminar, but like René, did not think that the goals of that research group were very beneficial to biblical studies. Walter's personal journey was heavily informed by the work of the Swiss psychologist Carl JUNG and his work with Elizabeth HOWE in California. With June, Walter traveled the world to give interactive seminars that included bible study, dance, art and meditation. His work on Jesus' 'third way' was a powerful stimulus in South Africa during the time of apartheid. When his book on this subject was banned by South African authorities, both he and copies of the book were smuggled into South Africa. Years later this trip, as well as his time of preaching and teaching the nonviolent way of Jesus in Chile, where he witnessed a militarist regime bent on exterminating dissent, were highlights Walter would often look back upon.

I came to know Walter well in his final years as Lorri and I would often travel to the Berkshires in Massachusetts to spend time with Walter and June in their lovely home at the foot of a mountain, bordered by a creek. If one was out at dawn or dusk there was often a black bear roaming the property. We would spend hours talking about GIRARD and mimetic theory and the impact that René's thought had on Walter.

As a mimetic theorist I have come to appreciate Walter's work for its capacity to illumine positive mimesis and peacemaking. From a theological point of view, Walter's anthropology in *The Human Being* gives an exegetical basis for positive mimesis. However, it was his *Engaging the Powers* that brought Girard into the

mainstream for tens of thousands who might have otherwise never heard of mimetic theory. In this book, not only were the principalities and powers uncovered, but a model of faithful discipleship oriented to peace and justice was set forth. While Walter was never a through and through Girardian, he nevertheless appreciated the finer points of the mimetic theory, particularly GIRARD's insights on desire through the other and the importance of imitation. Had dementia not stolen his active and fertile mind, I am certain he would have appreciated the recent work by Scott GARRELS and others on the interfacing of mimetic theory with neurophysiology and developmental psychology.

As a Quaker, he was a first-rate pacifist, but not of the doormat variety. His well-known interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount as an injunction to 'active non-resistance' is well known, particularly from his moving presentation at the COV&R meeting in Ottawa where he marched around the auditorium and in a humorous skit had Tom Michael strip down to his underwear to illustrate what giving one's undergarments away meant.



Walter Wink at the Ottawa conference in 2006

Walter had a fine sense of humor, an infectious laugh and a way of communicating that brought the abstract into the realm of the practical. His final book, edited by Girardian Steven E. BERRY, collects autobiographical stories and interweaves them with shorter publications; it is due out next year. Peace to Walter's memory.

Michael Hardin
Preaching Peace; Lancaster, PA USA

Bellinger, Charles K.: *The Joker is Satan, and so are We and other Essays on Violence and Christian Faith*.

Fort Worth, Tex.: Churchyard Books, 2011. 200 pp. U.S. \$ 15; ISBN-10: 1452826935

The American theologian and ethicist Charles K. BELLINGER has significantly contributed to the development of mimetic theory. I myself owe him a better understanding of the deeper roots of the “lack of being” that according to René GIRARD drives human beings easily into mimetic rivalries. GIRARD took the term, “lack of being” from Jean-Paul SARTRE without, however, buying completely into SARTRE’s philosophy. BELLINGER’s seminal book *The Genealogy of Violence* from 2001 helped me to understand the lack of being from a Christian perspective by interpreting it from the point of view of the Danish philosopher, theologian and poet Søren KIERKEGAARD. The lack of being is nothing but the creatureliness of human beings, our given openness towards becoming a self that God wants us to become. Creation is not something that happened in the past but is an ongoing dynamic process challenging every one of us to grow towards a deeper and fuller selfhood. Mimetic rivalries and violence result from our refusal to transcend our actual self towards a God-given human maturity. In 1996 BELLINGER published an essay in our journal *Contagion* (“The Crowd Is Untruth”), in which he compared KIERKEGAARD and GIRARD and in which he also gave a precise Kierkegardian explanation of the roots of violence: “The basic root of violence is the turn of the human soul away from God in an attempt to control the process of creation and lessen the pain of anxiety. Violence is a means of fortifying a particular immature formation of the ego against the possibility of the ego’s ‘death’ and ‘rebirth’ in a more mature formation.” (p. 76 in the book in hand).

BELLINGER’s new book *The Joker is Satan, and so are We* is not a monograph systematically exploring a clearly defined topic but a collection of essays that were written during a period of twenty years (1990–2010) and addressing different audiences. It comprises the *Contagion* essay of 1996 as well as contributions to different books and also some shorter talks. Despite

the heterogeneity of its different parts this book nevertheless focuses in general on a theological understanding of human violence. At the centre of it we find a profound unfolding of KIERKEGAARD’s psychological and theological understanding of human life often complemented by GIRARD’s mimetic theory. BELLINGER’s emphasis on KIERKEGAARD is enlightening and opens up a new understanding of the Danish writer. Usually, KIERKEGAARD is understood as a thinker with no relation to social life or politics. By showing how profound his understanding of social life really was, Bellinger convinces me that this is not true. The first chapter in this book is a translation of a marvellous small piece by KIERKEGAARD (“The Crowd Is Untruth”; “On the Dedication to ‘That Single Individual’” from 1846) that describes how mimetic contagion governs all crowds often leading to scapegoating and always also away from truth. At other places in the book BELLINGER uses KIERKEGAARD to understand political ideologies like Marxism or Nazism.

One essay that BELLINGER reprinted in this book was earlier published in a commentary on KIERKEGAARD’s *Either/Or*. In this essay BELLINGER compares KIERKEGAARD’s famous book with the parable of the prodigal son in the New Testament showing convincingly how strongly the work of the Danish writer is influenced by the Bible. According to BELLINGER, *Either/Or* is a “19th century echo of the parable of the Prodigal Son” (p. 59). This essay is also important due to its theoretical considerations. It includes a critical engagement with Alisdair MACINTYRE’s different writings and uses James BREECH’s book *Jesus and Postmodernism* constructively.

Many different topics are addressed in this book. An essay on violence brings the special insights of KIERKEGAARD, Eric VOEGELIN and René GIRARD together leading also to practical conclusions how schools and universities should enable us to come to a better understanding of this problematic topic. Other essays deal critically with the death penalty, with the opposing camps fighting over abortion or H. Richard NIEBUHR’s lack of understanding how much violence is part of human culture. In one essay BELLINGER turns to John Howard YODER and René GIRARD to make this weakness plausible and explicit. An interesting essay intro-

duces the reader to Kenneth BURKE's theory of scapegoating and how it relates to mimetic theory. The concluding essay provides a Girardian reading of the Batman-movie *The Dark Knight* giving the book also its title. Joker, the villain in this movie is understood as a chaotic Satan, and Batman is – against a superficial understanding – not completely different from him because also law and order are according to GIRARD an offspring of the satanic cycle: “While Joker is clearly a Satan figure, it is my argument that Batman is at best an ambiguous Christ figure, in that he willingly accepts the role of scapegoat at the end of the movie. His willingness to use violence within the movie works against the notion that he is a genuine Christ figure.” (p. 191) [For an alternative Girardian reading of *The Dark Knight* see Nicholas Bott's essay, forthcoming in Contagion – (*Bulletin Editor's remark*)].

What I also like about this book is its careful treatment of Islam. Against superficial accusations of this world religion BELLINGER clearly distinguishes between terrorists like Osama bin Laden, who turned this religion into a weapon, and many serious Islam scholars, who tell us that the true meaning of *jihad* means our inner fight against evil by walking on a pathway of spiritual growth. It is this understanding of *jihad* that coined the title of one of BELLINGER's best essays in this collection: “I am certainly not an expert on Islam, but I do find a certain resonance here with my understanding of the central message of the Bible. I think that we could speak of *the Bible's Jihad against violence*.” (p. 99)

There is one element in this collection of essays, however, that raises a question I would like to address in this review more broadly. Again and again, BELLINGER emphasizes the importance of theology in his essays. He criticizes, for instance, Ernest BECKER or Alisdair MACINTYRE for overlooking or underestimating the theological basis of KIERKEGAARD's thought. Another example is his claim that an “overall approach to method in Christian thinking goes like this: theology > anthropology > ethics” (p. 151). According to BELLINGER, theology has always to be first. It is for this reason that he clearly ranks KIERKEGAARD above GIRARD. Whereas GIRARD provides an “apologetic framework” arriving at the “doorstep of theology” pointing the reader to the way of the kingdom (p. 73), KIERKEGAARD is “theological from the ground up ... It is not an example of apologetics but of confessional theology.” On the one hand, BELLINGER definitely appreciates that GIRARD does not remain bound to a completely secular approach outlawing any religious or theological considerations (pp. 63, 70, 86, 107-108, 178, 180), on the other hand, however, he complains that GIRARD does not go far

enough by “standing outside the fence of theology” (p. 180; cf. 21, 107-108, 115, 178).

Well, I think first of all, GIRARD has often emphasized that he is not a theologian, but an anthropologist aiming at an apology of Christianity. We are living in a world of a disciplinary division of labour which we can no longer abolish. No one can today cover all the important fields. But accepting this necessary division of labour does not mean that we have to comply with a disciplinary fragmentation that does not allow us to deal with the real important questions challenging us today. In this sense René GIRARD has always emphasized the need of an interdisciplinary approach and understands his own work exactly in this way: “My interpretation is neither psychological nor sociological. Nor is it religious in the humanist tradition. The discovery of the scapegoat mechanism blurs the traditional divisions between disciplines.” (*Job: The Victim of His People*, p. 74). There is, however, another even more important reason why GIRARD humbly remains outside the theological realm. He understands very well that our modern world needs a new openness towards religious and theological questions that has to be regained carefully. Theologians often know too much or preach only to the converted and do not understand well enough the problem of the many people outside the fence. In a passage in which BELLINGER describes GIRARD as an anthropological thinker outside the fence of theology he defines theology as the “rhetoric of religion as it would be articulated by the preacher or the prophet who speaks from within the experience of faith, as opposed to the scholar who comments on it from without” (p. 180). Should GIRARD have turned into a preacher? Early on, GIRARD was most likely struggling with this question because after his conversion to Christianity during the conclusion of his first book he could actually have become a preacher in a direct sense of this word. But he decided against that because he understood that our time requires a different path. He did, however, not remain a scholar just commenting from the outside but tried to use all his skills to convince his readers of the importance of the Christian legacy: “Since the beginning of the ‘novelistic conversion’ in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, all of my books have been more or less explicit apologies of Christianity.” (*Battling to the End*, p. xv). His first book, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* is a masterpiece of Christian spirituality without, however, revealing this immediately and all too openly. It is due to that fact, for instance, that a Marxist like Lucien GOLDMAN became the first well-known thinker to celebrate this seminal book. In GIRARD's book on DOSTOEVSKY he clearly maintains that we are living in a time that no longer allows an immediate and directly positive approach

to the most challenging spiritual questions. Modern art had to choose a negative path: "The art of extreme negation is perhaps ... the only Christian art adapted to our time, the only art worthy of it. This art does not require listening to sermons, for our era cannot tolerate them. It lays aside traditional metaphysics, with which nobody, or almost nobody, can comply. Nor does it base itself on reassuring lies, but on consciousness of universal idolatry." (*Resurrection from the Underground*, 2012, p. 70). First we have to study the legend of the Grand Inquisitor in order to understand what is at stake in our lives. Is all this so completely different from KIERKEGAARD if we think of his complex play with pseudonyms not referring directly to himself as the author of several of his key books? Well, KIERKEGAARD – as BELLINGER justly emphasizes in his essays – wrote also theological treatises. But this part of his work also underlines a certain modesty and indirectness because he did not claim to write sermons but only "upbuilding discourses".

Being a theologian myself I think our discipline has to contribute important insights to a better understanding of human life but the older I get the more I want to do that work humbly and not noisily beating the disciplinary drum of theology. This critical remark is first of all not so much directed against BELLINGER's inspiring and thought provoking collection of essays but against my own temptations because too often I myself have given in to claims of a priority or superiority of theology. Whenever we are tempted to take this road we are already turning towards mimetic rivalries between disciplines igniting nothing but a fruitless contest of faculties.

Wolfgang Palaver

McLaren, Brian: *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road? Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World*. Jericho Books 2012, 288 pp.; € 24.99 ISBN-10: 1455513962

How should followers of Christ treat members of other religions? That question is the subject of Brian MCLAREN's new book, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?: Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World*. Because mimetic theory claims for Christianity a unique demystifying power, MCLAREN's question haunts our work. If "the only true religion is the one that demystifies archaic religions," as René GIRARD succinctly summarizes his Christian apologetics in *Battling to the End* (xv), and Christianity is the sufficient and necessary source of demystification, how indeed are we to treat other religions, both in our academic work and in our personal lives? MCLAREN is not writing for academic audiences here. His

tone is pastoral, his purpose to shift the thinking of people in the pews and the pastors and educators who have their ear. And yet his primary tool for engaging them is an explicit use of mimetic theory to answer the very questions that it has raised for Christians who engage with it.

Before referring to mimetic theory by name, MCLAREN frames the question of interfaith relations as a question of identity. Christians seem to be quite good, he says, at having strong identities that are hostile towards other religions, or weak identities that are kind and benevolent. Though left implicit, he is clearly referring to the ubiquitous use of scapegoating to create false differences (strong and hostile) or its inversion into political correctness (weak and kind). His book is an argument for a third alternative: Christian identity that is both strong and hospitable toward other beliefs. In other words, this third option calls for the development of a non-scapegoating Christian identity, one that does not rely on turning other religions into adversaries to know ourselves, and our faith, as good. He writes: "My pursuit, not just in this book but in my life, is a Christian identity that moves me toward people of other faiths in wholehearted love, not in spite of their non-Christian identity and not in spite of my own Christian identity, but *because* of my identity as a follower of God in the way of Jesus." (p. 11)

The timing of the release of his book, September 11, coincided with the flare-up of violence in Arab countries apparently triggered by the translation of an offensive video mocking the Prophet Mohammed into Arabic. The tension between East and West and their two great religions, Christianity and Islam, was thrust to the forefront, intruding even into the carefully scripted US Presidential campaigns. MCLAREN comes out of an Evangelical background and during his years as a pastor he experienced a crisis of faith which led him to reject, among other things, what he has called Evangelical Islamophobia. Coincidentally, mimetic theory's emphasis on judging the validity of a religion solely on its distance from the archaic, has led to, at best, an ambivalence toward Islam among some mimetic theory scholars. GIRARD himself can be selectively quoted as being admiring toward or suspicious of Islam. MCLAREN's position lacks ambivalence. To answer the question of his book title, he invites his readers to imagine how Jesus would behave if he met Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed on the road:

Would Jesus push Moses aside and demand to cross first, claiming that his ancestor's failed religion had been forever superseded by his own? Would he trade insults with Mohammed, claiming his crusaders could whip Mohammed's jihadists any day of the week, demanding that Mohammed cross behind, not beside him? Would Jesus demand the Buddha kneels at his feet and demonstrate submission before letting

him cross? Or would he walk with them and, once on the other side, welcome each to a table of fellowship, not demanding any special status or privileges, maybe even taking the role of a servant—hanging up their coats, getting them something to eat and drink, making sure each felt welcome, safe, and at home? (3)

MCLAREN argues that to imitate Jesus in this imaginary encounter as we live out our real encounters with members of other religions would make us more Christ-like, not less. In the early chapters his tone is almost pleading with his readers to consider his call for a more benevolent, welcoming Christian attitude because his sense of the present moment is no less apocalyptic than GIRARD's. MCLAREN says: "We are increasingly faced with a choice, I believe, not between kindness and hostility, but between kindness and nonexistence." (12)

Mimetic theory has made MCLAREN keenly aware that it is not differences that divide us, but our similarities. If we destroy ourselves, it will be in an orgy of loss of difference with no sufficiently fascinating scapegoat available to save us. "*The tensions between our conflicted religions arise not from our differences,*" he says in italics, "*but from one thing we all hold in common: an oppositional religious identity that derives strength from hostility.*" (57) Our hatred reduces us to identity with our adversary, a hatred we can justify all too easily with claims of Christian uniqueness.

MCLAREN goes on to call for a renewal of Christian identity in three broad areas: doctrine, liturgy and mission. In the section devoted to re-imaging Christian doctrine in light of a strong and kind identity, mimetic theory is most explicit in the chapters on original sin and Christology. He begins Chapter 13, "How the Doctrine of Original Sin Can Help Christians Be Less Sinful" with a quote from James ALISON: "The doctrine of original sin is a parting glance at the unnecessary nature of what we are ceasing to be." MCLAREN proceeds to explain that James ALISON draws "from the seminal theories of René Girard" and then provides his own summary of "this fresh approach in five key concepts." They are imitation, rivalry anxiety (caused by the threat of internal conflict), scapegoating and ritualization. He then asks, "How might a fresh understanding of original sin be articulated in these terms?" Following ALISON and including a reference to Paul NUECHTERLEIN's "monumental contribution" to a Girardian reading of scriptures found on girardianlectionary.net, he speaks of original sin as Adam and Eve's succumbing to rivalrous imitation of God by "imitating the serpent's desire for the forbidden fruit." Chapter 16, "How a Deeper Christology Can Save Christians from Hostility" begins with a quotation from *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* and develops GIRARD's

reading of Christ as taking on the role of sacrificial victim in order to reveal and subvert the sacrificial mechanism. MCLAREN argues that rather than the popular Christological formula "God=Jesus: Jesus=God", a proper Christology would "challenge preconceived understandings of God and revise them in light of Christ." In other words, our image of God as one who demands sacrifice is transformed by Jesus who reveals God's true nature to us by acceding to our demands for a sacrifice by occupying the role of victim for us.

MCLAREN reimagines Christian liturgy and Christian mission in the next sections, which make for inspiring reading for anyone trying to apply mimetic theory to the practical work of parish ministry. I will offer a few examples of his creative reimagining of day to day worship and Christian living. He offers his vision of a communion table that focuses on "God's sacred self-giving to us then invites us to imitation, to respond in kind through our own self-giving to God, to others, to the whole world." On the practice of reading and interpreting Scripture, MCLAREN encourages us to read the "passages that advocate hostility, vengeance, exclusion, elitism, and superiority to remind us of where we would be and who we would be if not for Christ." Scriptures that "advocate reconciliation, empathy, inclusion, solidarity, and equality" show us "who we are called to be in Christ."

MCLAREN's missional challenge is as simple as it is revolutionary for both hostile and weak Christian relationships with other religions: "My identity as a follower of Christ requires me first to move toward the other in friendship, and then to move *with* the other in service to those in need." This is a vision of a strong, secure Christian identity that does not threaten nor feel threatened by the power, truth and inspiration of other religions. In other words, it is a Christian identity that does not succumb to rivalry or resentment, particular traps of identity that mimetic theory illuminates with alarming clarity. But mimetic theory can view the ability for human beings to resist mimetic rivalries with skepticism. Brian MCLAREN, on the other hand, lives, works, writes and teaches in hope. "Over time, as others 'taste and see' how good this new identity is in practice, it will spread and become increasingly normative. The ultimate result won't simply be a change in Christian identity: it will be a new direction in human history." (72) So why did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road? For the same reason we should – to serve the other.

Suzanne Ross, the Raven Foundation

Snyder Belousek, Darrin W.: *Atonement, Justice, and Peace. : The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church.*

**Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 2012. 668 pp.
ISBN: 0802866425; \$ 55.**

This book is one magnum opus accomplishment. Each of SNYDER BELOUSEK's thirty-six chapters is engaging. These are grouped into four parts: I. "We Proclaim Christ Crucified," II. "Christ Died for Us," III. "Christ Is Our Peace," and IV. "Redeemed for Good Works." Each part has topical sub-headings, with chapters related to those sub-headings, such as "The Cross, Atonement, and Substitution," the first sub-heading in Part II and "Cruciform Peacemaking: Extinguishing Hostility, Transforming Conflict," the fourth sub-heading in Part III. The first chapter (26) in III.C is a beautiful story (Elias Chacour) that illustrates "The Things That Make for Peace." In Part IV, an outstanding chapter (#35) is titled "The Christian Commission to Holy Resistance." The page-bulk comes in Parts II and IV. His last chapter includes a helpful Venn diagram (p. 631) summing up major emphases of the last part of the book. This is followed by 36.1 (631-64), 36.2 (635-38), and 36.3 (638-42), each of which lists in outline form organizations and/or communities that demonstrate peacemaking priorities in their life and service. The book concludes with three helpful indices: Modern Authors, Subjects, and Scripture and other Ancient Writings. As the titles of the four Parts of the book illustrate, SNYDER BELOUSEK's treatment of topics is not OT/NT distinct, but often includes both Testaments in any given chapter. A brief review cannot do justice to this outstanding contribution.

Reared in a conservative Baptist church, SNYDER BELOUSEK's PhD is from Notre Dame, IN, with specialization in the history and philosophy of science, focusing on physics and particularly quantum mechanics. He has published widely in the scientific field. With courses later taken at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN, he took up the challenge of biblical studies, including Hebrew and Greek. He has taught at various institutions, including St. Mary's, Goshen College, and Lithuania Christian College. Currently he lectures in philosophy and religion at Ohio Northern University, where his wife pastors a nearby church.

As expected from someone with an exacting science background, SNYDER BELOUSEK's book on atonement, justice, and peace demonstrates precision in exegesis, competent grasp of historical theology (AUGUSTINE for his "just war" theory, ANSELM for "satisfaction," and CALVIN for "satisfaction penal"), clear logic, and theological acuity (see his Coda on ATHANASIUS' *Incarnation*, 362-66). His argumentation combined with clear organiza-

tion makes his contribution persuasive. The three main topics in the title plus the two key points in the sub-title alert the reader to an ambitious undertaking.

Underlying his analysis is the distinction between "exchange" and "retribution," which may or may not be violent (25-30). While ARISTOTLE and CICERO regard retribution as the measure of justice, Jesus and the Apostles make love the measure of justice (30-41). Unfortunately, AUGUSTINE and AQUINAS revert to ARISTOTLE and CICERO (41-58). This sets the paradigm for ANSELM and CALVIN. In discussing Isaiah 53, the issue resurfaces in the distinction between "exchange" that entails "inclusive place-taking" (229) whereas retributive substitution results in "exclusive" action of one standing over/against the others (230-31).

A major portion of the tome presents a coherent understanding of atonement with careful analysis of crucial OT and NT texts on sacrifice. To sample: while sacrifice atones for humanity's sin before a holy and just God, "that atoning sacrifice has nothing to do with either propitiating God or satisfying retribution" (173). SNYDER BELOUSEK does not begin with a *theory* of atonement (whether von RAD's, EICHRODT's, or GIRARD's), but with an inductive approach so that any theory that emerges is convincing "insofar as it is warranted by relevant scriptural evidence" (173). At the heart of sacrifice is *cleansing* and *separation*, which restores God's holiness among and within the people (178-79).

SNYDER BELOUSEK's exacting exegesis leaves the vindictive penal view of atonement without biblical foundation. He distinguishes between ANSELM's satisfaction view and the later Calvinist penal emphasis that makes satisfaction also penal. Thus he develops constructively a persuasive alternative that draws on a variety of OT texts. Both Leviticus with its sacrificial prescriptions and Isaiah's suffering servant emphases are crucial to his contribution. He examines numerous New Testament images for God's gift of salvation. Jesus' gospel is a gospel of peace.

One distinguishing feature of his method is to describe at some length the views of respected scholars that contend *penal* substitutionary is a necessary emphasis to faithful biblical exegesis (i.e. J. I. PACKER, John F. MACARTHUR, Roger NICOLE, and John STOTT). Then he takes up careful exegesis that renders penal satisfaction unnecessary and unhelpful, and that such interpretation misunderstands God's purposes in prescribing sacrifice. *Penal* substitution is never a necessary conclusion of what the texts say! "Representative" and "vicarious" (232-34) together with exchange and solidarity (339-61) are his choice descriptions of how Jesus' sacrificial death is the means of our salvation.

SNYDER BELOUSEK's treatment of sacrifice and atonement naturally segues into Scripture's pervasive call to do *justice*, rooted in covenant loyalty (410-14). What is often understood as retributive justice, he contends is better viewed as reparative (or restorative) justice as more consistently intrinsic to Scripture (238, in context of Isaiah's Servant songs). At that point I wondered how seriously he takes numerous Psalms that include imprecatory outcries for God not only to vanquish the psalmists' foes, but even to "dash their children's heads against the wall." But he faces this challenge head on, distinguishing between the human right to take vengeance and God's prerogative (211-12, 216-17, 402-9). But this too must be offset by the Psalms' dominant emphasis on God as compassionate and forgiving. At another point (p. 112) he polarizes divine conspiracy and human violence as causative of Jesus' crucifixion. Finally, on pp. 123-26 he resolves this polarity. "Paul's Story of the Cross" (128-40) is a gem (though "God's Love" emphasized in John's Gospel [3:16; 6:51; 15:9-13; 17:26] is a needed supplement).

He regards the cross's violence inherent to God's peacemaking through Jesus Christ. Atonement is not nonviolent (contra WEAVER; 68), for violence is the human sinful response to God's proffer of salvation through Jesus Christ. Peace and peacemaking are ever grounded in the reality of cross and resurrection, which culminates the OT motif of God's vindication of righteous sufferers.

Moreover, SNYDER BELOUSEK connects his theology of atonement, justice, and peace to Christian response to capital punishment and conflict transformation, key issues in western culture. He devotes a chapter to John 7:53-8:11, "The Woman Taken in Adultery." Jesus does not abrogate the law, but exposes the truth that none is without sin, and therefore no one is eligible to execute judgment. That insight theologically and anthropologically halts capital punishment. Jesus alone had the prerogative to cast a stone, but his response is, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." Uncharacteristic of his usual summation of argument, he acknowledges a "loophole" to his case against capital punishment—namely, a dispensational view (500-1; but then see n. 26).

With clear thought, careful distinctions, intensive exegesis, and coherent theology SNYDER BELOUSEK develops his arguments. His work is deeply and re-

spectfully scriptural and is related to current issues and the challenges of peacemaking in today's world. He is up-to-date on relevant literature (mostly English), and commendably utilizes it to illumine or corroborate his argument, rather than carry it. His foundational contribution is original exegesis and persuasive argument. He engages other authors carefully and persuasively to critique their positions and/or to bolster his own argument, judiciously placing choice quotes from others often in footnotes.

SNYDER BELOUSEK's analytic ability to draw on the western philosophical tradition marks his contribution. This enhances his work, as for example his treatment of different aspects of conflict (Ch. 32): inter-ethnic/inter-religious conflict, embracing the international, interpersonal, and domestic; revolutionary conflict, which may be rooted in "the ideal" or class conflict (Marxist). But class analysis is inadequate. Identity conflict must be considered also (e.g., within "the mass of white-clothed Muslim pilgrims on the annual Hajj to Mecca"); and/or, fourthly, "desire" and mimetic rivalry (GIRARD; 577, n. 9).

This book does what I earlier called for in a Foreword to *Stricken by God?* edited by Brad JERSAK and Michael HARDIN (Fresh Wind Press and Eerdmans, 2007). SNYDER BELOUSEK's book provides an exegetical, historical, and theological contribution that treats atonement, justice, and peace as inherently interconnected. Moreover, its gift is a coherent and constructive understanding within Christian orthodoxy that explains in detail, not assumes, *why* an alternative view to the *penal* satisfaction theory is better and more faithful to Scripture, and also *how* that interpretation connects significantly to justice and peacemaking.

What critique do I have for a book I highly recommend? Most disappointing is its lack of a Bibliography (which I understand the publisher omitted because of the full footnoting). At times in my reading some uneasiness arose regarding God's retributive justice, evident in many scriptures. SNYDER BELOUSEK, however, affirms God's prerogative to judge, which includes also Jesus as God's executive agent of divine judgment (421-23, 429-33), but within the context of the OT prophetic tradition (416-19) and God's goal of cosmic redemption and reconciliation.

Willard Swartley

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Dietmar Regensburger

We invite you to send books and articles dealing with René Girard and Mimetic Theory to Dietmar.Regensburger@uibk.ac.at (digital format and references) or to Girard-Documentation, c/o Dr. Dietmar Regensburger, University of Innsbruck, Karl-Rahner-Platz 1, A-6020 Innsbruck / Austria (print copies).

The *Bibliography of Literature on the Mimetic Theory* (Vol. I–XXXIII) is Online available at:
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Editor's Thanks

I want to thank all who contributed to this issue of the Bulletin. Please continue to alert me to important things that go on in and around COV&R and please continue to write in the Bulletin about them. This time I also want to express my gratitude to all who communicated their concern about my health (some of you may know that I could not attend our meeting in Japan for health reasons). I am happy to report that I am well again and looking forward to rejoining you at the next conferences.

Nikolaus Wandinger

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