



VULNERABILITY AND TOLERANCE

COV&R-Conference Amsterdam, 4-8 July 2007



Call for papers

The Girard Study Circle and the Blaise Pascal Institute of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam are hosting next year's Colloquium on Violence and Religion. The dates are set on 4-8 July 2007 and the preparations are in full swing.

Theme: The theme of the Conference is *Vulnerability and Tolerance* and is inspired by recent historical developments in The Netherlands, where two political murders sent a shock wave through a country that prides itself on its historical tolerance. On 6th May 2002 the politician Pim FORTUYN was killed by an animal rights activist. Two and a half years later, on 4th November 2004, Theo van GOGH, a publicist and filmmaker, was killed by a Muslim fundamentalist. Both murders manifest the heightened tension between immigrant minorities and the native population in the Netherlands.

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COLLOQUIUM ON VIOLENCE AND RELIGION MEETING AT THE AAR/SBL ANNUAL MEETING, WASHINGTON, DC:

Saturday, November 18, 2006, Session Number: AM18-48, 9:00 am-11:30 am, RW-Meeting Room 17.

For more see next page

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://theol.uibk.ac.at/cover/bulletin/x1.html>

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COV&R AT THE AAR/SBL (CONTINUED)

**Saturday, November 18, 2006, Session Number: AM18-48,
9:00 am-11:30 am, RW-Meeting Room 17.**

9-10:15 am: Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History (Princeton University Press 2006) by David FRANKFURTER.

Commentary by Mark JUERGENSMEYER, Director, Global and International Studies, U. of California at Santa Barbara. Response by David FRANKFURTER.

David FRANKFURTER is Professor of Religious Studies and History at the University of New Hampshire. He is author of *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton) for which he won the 1999 award for excellence in the historical study of religion from the AAR. In this new book, Professor FRANKFURTER addresses moral panics—witch crazes, red scares, rumors of Satanic abuse—and analyzes them in reference to a discourse of evil. Central to his analysis is the mimetic performance of evil in moral panics. The topic on which he focuses will be of intrinsic interest to persons attending the COV&R session. Because Professor FRANKFURTER does not draw explicitly on GIRARD for his mimetic analysis, his observations on the mimesis of evil will be especially intriguing to COV&R members.

10:15-11:30 am: Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics (Eerdmans, 2006) by Willard SWARTLEY.

Commentaries: Michael HARDIN, primary writer for the website www.preachingpeace.org, and Director, School of Peace Theology, Lancaster PA. Richard B. HAYS, George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament, the Divinity School, Duke University. Response by Willard SWARTLEY.

Willard M. SWARTLEY is Professor Emeritus of New Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana. His other books include *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels*; *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, and *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case issues in Biblical Interpretation*. In *Covenant of Peace*, Professor SWARTLEY observes that “peace,” a term that occurs as many as one hundred times in the NT, does not feature prominently in theology and ethics textbooks. He remedies this deficiency, restoring to NT theology and ethics the peace that many works have missed. Retrieving this neglected element in the Christian message, SWARTLEY confronts readers anew with the compelling New Testament witness to peace.

Members of COV&R,

The COV&R meeting at the AAR/SBL is a wonderful opportunity to introduce colleagues and graduate students to COV&R. If you know someone who would find the topics of our morning conversation of interest, please do invite them.

Please join your other COV&R colleagues at the COV&R session at the AAR/SBL this year!

Sincerely,

Martha J. Reineke, Professor of Religion
University of Northern Iowa, and
Coordinator, COV&R at the AAR/SBL
martha.reineke@uni.edu

COV&R-Conference Amsterdam (continued)

FORTUYN had broken the conventional code of political tolerance by giving voice to populist discontent about immigrants; van GOGH had relentlessly tested the margins of freedom of expression, especially regarding sensitive minorities like Jews and Muslims. Both of them in their own way had exposed the indifference underlying Dutch discourse on tolerance. The killings of these two men have prompted a heated public debate on tolerance and the freedom of speech that continues today. Witnessing the vicious spiral of intolerance in the wake of van GOGH's murder and the measures taken by the authorities to stem the tide of polarisation, the Amsterdam city chronicler Geert MAK wrote a compelling pamphlet in defence of tolerance advocating a *culture of vulnerability* giving a positive political thrust to the notion of vulnerability.

Themes for concurrent sessions: The committee preparing COV&R 2007 in Amsterdam proposes to link up with MAK's challenge to rethink the concepts of tolerance and vulnerability in different social and political contexts and in different disciplines. The developments in the Netherlands do not stand alone. They epitomise fundamental questions concerning vulnerability and tolerance in today's world. We invite the participants to explore the significance of the connection of tolerance and vulnerability in their respective disciplines and in their various professional or personal experiences using the models of mimetic theory in their analyses.

In order to offer some focus for the different fields and disciplines involved in the COV&R network, the conference committee has already identified specific themes for concurrent sessions. An elaborate description of these themes can be found on the conference website (see end of article) For lack of space we limit ourselves here to only a few lines just to give you an idea.

1. *Growing intolerance: the Dutch case as an example of global tendencies:* Participants in the workshop will place the above mentioned tendencies and the responses of government and civil society in a global comparative perspective and hopefully provide the beginning of an answer to the vexed question: "What does a society that is tolerant of minorities do when it is confronted with a minority that is violently intolerant?"

2. *Tolerance and vulnerability in sustaining complex systems:* Different disciplines, like biol-

ogy, psychotherapy, social anthropology and catastrophe theory have elaborated models of the conditions under which systems maintain their identities in the face of change and internal or external threats. The question is: how can self-definition be maintained if tolerance of diversity and change is a part of self-definition?

3. *Vulnerability and tolerance in the theological traditions:* 1] Do Christians have something that is sacred. If yes, what is sacred to them? 2] In Western Europe religion lost its function to give a kind of transcendence to society, what contribution can/should religion make at present from a theological point of view? Support law-enforcement or plead for accepting more vulnerability? 3] Should new minorities be asked to integrate into society or only to participate? What does tolerance mean here, thinking of the intolerance of the God of the prophets? 4] Are there absolute (religious) truths or is truth always relative? Can we say something about the vulnerability of Christ?

4. *Vulnerability and progress of knowledge: ethics and epistemics:* Concepts are developed and transmitted in a mimetic setting (GIRARD) that tries to overrule the basic vulnerability humans feel of being separated from the original flux of being. Can one mitigate the inherent intolerance of this process by taking the appeal of the other (LEVINAS) as a guide, rather than as an obstacle for reconnecting to that primal union?

5. *Reconciliation as the conversion of negative into positive reciprocity:* A peace overture aiming at stopping a reciprocal spiral of revenge risks being seen as a sign of weakness by the enemy, while peace advocates lay themselves open to accusations of treason from their own side. What can the mimetic theory contribute to lessons about conflict resolution drawn from anthropology, history, political science, psychotherapy or other disciplines? Do practical methods exist to facilitate the leap from violent to peaceful reciprocity?

6. *The vulnerability of the hero in myth and literature:* Is there a cumulative discovery of the vulnerability of the protagonist in the history of literature? Within the oeuvre of single authors, are central characters in successive works increasingly marked by a sense of vulnerability? Can literary works be understood as narratives relating—or dramas staging—the discovery of the conceit of intolerance and invulnerability?

7. *Schools and organizations*: A description of a theme on vulnerability and tolerance in schools and organizations will be developed shortly.

Website and abstracts: By now the website is in operation (http://www.bezinningscentrum.nl/links/special_links3/covr2007.shtml) with a description of the overall theme and the themes for the concurrent sessions. Linkages are made to articles that provide background information. In the course of the coming months this information will be supplemented with information about key-note speakers and the moderators who are in charge of the concurrent sessions. The organizing committee would very much like to stimulate and

facilitate pre-conference contacts and discussions between the participants of different sessions by way of posting the abstracts on the website. To enable us to do this would like to receive your abstracts:

- **containing not more than 500 words**
 - **before 15th January 2007**
 - **accompanied by biodata and contact details of the author, if possible with linkages to relevant web pages**
 - **by E-mail to: covr2007@blaisepascal.nl**
- Be aware of prizes or travel support (see below)**

Thérèse Onderdenwijngaard

COV&R AWARDS AND GRANTS

Raymund Schwager Memorial Award

To honor the memory of Raymund SCHWAGER, SJ († 2004), the Colloquium on Violence and Religion is offering an **award of \$ 1,000** shared by up to three persons for the three best papers given by graduate students at the COV&R 2007 meeting in Amsterdam.

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) in an e-mail attachment to Simon Simonse, organizer of COV&R 2007 and chair of the three-person COV&R Awards Committee (covr2007@blaisepascal.nl). **Due date for submission: May 1, 2007.** Winners will be announced in the conference program. Prize-winning essays will be considered for publication in *Contagion*.

COV&R Graduate Students Sponsorship

COV&R **members are invited to suggest** graduate students or other scholars to the COV&R Board for scholarships supporting their conference attendance. Only first-time attendees are eligible. The board will sponsor the attendance of up to three persons with normally an amount of \$ 200, maximum \$ 300 each. The officers of COV&R will base their decision above all on the need of the suggested persons.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our compliments go to Vern REDEKOP and his staff at St. Paul University for the fine conference he conducted in Ottawa last June, and we look forward to plans for us this summer, July 4-8, at the Amsterdam Free University, in the Netherlands. The theme is "Vulnerability and Tolerance," and Thérèse ONDERDENWIJNGAARD, Simon SIMONSE, and André LASCARIS promise us a similarly rich and varied program (see call for papers). Our welcome is also extended to Martha REINEKE, presiding this year at the COV&R session at the annual joint meeting of the AAR/SBL

this November in Washington (for more information see the notice in this *Bulletin*, page 2)

The big news is that we received notification from the IRS this summer that we have now officially been given not-for-profit status. Our hearty thanks goes to Duncan RAGSDALE and his staff in Tennessee for securing for us what we have been told is one of the fastest application responses on record. This notification, it seems to me, marks the beginning of significant changes for COV&R and distinctly new forms. Among other things, it means that for the first time in its 16 year history, COV&R will be able to do its own fund-raising and, concomitantly, support a wide variety of in-

tellectual endeavors. Book publications, video interview projects, travel scholarships for students (and new COV&R members) to conferences, subventions for residence at special learning centers are only a few of the avenues now within our compass.

But so are other possibilities. Should we have a Girard Center? Should COV&R buy a building and begin conducting classes and lectures throughout the summer on GIRARDian thinking, inviting lecturers and students to come and teach and learn the way they now do once or twice a year at the two annual meetings? The large majority of COV&R membership tends to work in academic and/or congregational settings. We have tried in the past to imagine a consortium of colleges and universities teaching GIRARD's ideas (and its extensions in the disciplines) and hit significant roadblocks. Curricular demands of our home institutions are already severe; it is not easy to set up even a minor or concentration in GIRARDian studies, let alone a Masters or Ph.D. Program. Or when one is set up, deans come and go, provosts come and go, programs are dissolved and reconstituted, and suddenly everything falls apart in ways exceeding our control.

Churches have reported to me similar limitations. GIRARD's ideas usefully serve as a basis for sermons. But these organizations also address other needs—spiritual and practical—apart from the “extracurricular” programs in which GIRARD's ideas circulate. Attempts to join Catholics and Protestants in common programs have proved even more difficult than common programs between Christians and Jews (which, I am told, are relatively easy by comparison). A single ongoing Girard center or Girard institute would answer some of these concerns, although undoubtedly new difficulties would arise.

Other current institutes have faced these questions in their history. The network of psychoanalytic associations that formed itself in this country around FREUD's work after the war faced similar questions and the Freudian institutes were the result. Girard is already established in the United States, Austria, England, France, and elsewhere. These centers sustain interest and encourage new students. But they are not enough. A rigorous program for the perpetuation of GIRARD's ideas outside the churches and academia needs to be developed. It is not a matter of thinking big but of thinking realistically. The day will

arrive when the first generation of Girardians is no longer teaching or writing. Unless concrete steps are taken to secure its future, Girardianism could assume the fate of so many other once powerful and vibrant sets of ideas, transformative in their time, but receding to history's shadows once their primary articulators are no longer doing their work.

Specifically, I think, we will need to set up at the least, two new groups in COV&R: one to handle all the practical and theoretical development issues that come up (an “OCD,” an office of COV&R development, so to speak); and a second to imagine, think out, and bring to execution new modes for the understanding, circulation, and extension of the mimetic hypothesis, the scapegoat mechanism, and the role of scripture in revealing such cultural phenomena to us, a GIRARDian “think tank,” so to speak, that is constantly envisioning new ways of considering GIRARDian ideas. We have begun to think about these groups on the advisory board, and no doubt will continue to do so. But I invite you to think about them as well, and to communicate your thoughts to those of us on the advisory board by email, phone call, or postal service.

As Julie SHINNICK has served COV&R's financial needs in the past in the United States, so she has agreed to remain the point person for financial transactions relating to this new not-for-profit status, and I encourage you to contact her with donations, ideas for donations, or ideas about how the donations we have received may be used. I would also encourage you to consider more generally ways in which COV&R may play a continuing role in your life, in the life of your religious or academic institution, in the life of your nation, and in the life of our planet.

I look forward to hearing from you, and wish you a good year, and a safe trip to Amsterdam.

Sandor Goodhart, President of COV&R

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Attending many COV&R conferences I have again and again made the experience that these meetings usually give me so many new insights, ideas and references to articles and books that it is most of the time more than I can swallow until the next meeting. This was also true of our conference in Ottawa for which I like to say a word of thanks to Vern REDEKOP and his superb team

organizing that meeting. Most important for me this time was meeting David CAYLEY, a Canadian writer and broadcaster to most of us familiar through his radio interviews with René GIRARD in 2001. Recently CAYLEY published a book comprising interviews with the late Ivan ILLICH (1926–2002) that address his thoughts on religion and society (*The Rivers North of the Future: The Testament of Ivan Illich as told by David Cayley*. Foreword by Charles Taylor. Toronto: Anansi, 2005). The focus of this book is ILLICH's thesis that the modern West is a perversion or betrayal of Christian faith. Again and again ILLICH refers to the Latin saying *perversio optimi quae est pessima* [the perversion of the best is the worst] to underline his main insight. CAYLEY points out in his books that ILLICH's thesis on modernity differs from GIRARD's claim that modernity is a working out of the implications of the Gospel. At first sight CAYLEY's claim seems to be correct because the views of ILLICH and GIRARD on modernity are really not the same. A closer look, however, reveals that GIRARD himself has more and more emphasized perverted consequences of the Biblical revelation in recent years. What GIRARD says, for instance, about such a tricky topic as the Antichrist—identified with contemporary victimology that results in scapegoating scapegoaters—comes very close to ILLICH's view. ILLICH also addresses the sinister figure of the Antichrist, a topic, he tells us, he was not able to talk about publicly and openly for over thirty years. Both ILLICH and GIRARD are apocalyptic thinkers who realize that Biblical revelation forces us to decide between following the loving, humble and non-violent example of Christ or facing world-wide catastrophes resulting from perverted consequences of the Gospel. I think this whole topic deserves a proper discussion soon because it addresses the most important problems of our contemporary world. Today we usually meet either religious people accusing secular humanism of causing destruction in our world or, even more frequently, secularists blaming Biblical monotheism of causing violence and death. Understanding the crisis of our time, however, means to realize that we are all living in a world that is deeply shaped by the legacy of the Biblical revelation. We all are therefore tempted by the Antichrist, that means the dangers coming along with fragmented or perverted versions of the Gospel. Understanding the signs of the times

means to analyze the meaning of the concept of the Antichrist today. Oliver O'DONOVAN, an important theologian at the University of Oxford, indirectly joins ILLICH and GIRARD by referring to the Antichrist when he reflects on the relationship between Christianity and our modern world: "Modernity is the child of Christianity, and at the same time ... it has left its father's house and followed the way of the prodigal. ... Modernity can be conceived as Antichrist, a parodic and corrupt development of Christian social order" (*The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 275). Hopefully we can soon focus on this important issue during one of our next conferences. A deeper look at the relationship between GIRARD's mimetic theory and ILLICH's reflections on religion is overdue anyway.

Wolfgang Palaver

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

"Mimesis, Creativity and Reconciliation" Report on the 2006 COV&R Meeting in Ottawa

During the conference in Ottawa I asked someone to write a report on this year's COV&R conference for this *Bulletin* and he agreed. Unfortunately he was not able to deliver a report before the time I had to go to print. Since COV&R conferences are, however,



conference.

Organizer Vern Redekop greeting the audience

too important to be passed over in the *Bulletin*, I have decided that I will have to write a brief summary on the conference myself. Since the task only came to me during the past days, I rely mostly on my memory. It is a report on what still sticks out in my mind about the Ottawa conference.

There is first the beautiful city of Ottawa and the Canadian landscape around it, to which some Canadian friends treated me. Vern REDEKOP's team of very friendly helpers was outstanding and Vern's unique way of trying to integrate a wide range of interests and characters was admirable.

But let us get to the contents. I assume that I was not the only one who was disappointed at the cancellations of some announced speakers, although those we heard were very interesting. I especially liked

the idea to invite younger members of COV&R to give plenary talks and enjoyed that of my colleague from Innsbruck, Petra



STEINMAIR-PÖSEL (picture).

Another special experience for me was Walter WINK, who managed to bring Jesus' rather strange commandments of turning the other cheek etc. to life and to show that they were not to the effect of submission but rather a kind of nonviolent resistance (see also the remark and picture in James Williams's review on p. 19f.).

This year's session on Israel-Palestine was an interesting, yet challenging, event. While the sole presenter, Benny BEIT-HALLEHMI, was Israeli, the views he propounded sounded very Palestinian. He argued that Jewish settling in Palestine was akin to colonialism and solutions could only be found along the lines of other colonial histories. He also polemicized against the expression "Middle East" because it was Eurocentric. Instead the region should be called "West Asia". The statement of a gentleman from Asia, who retorted that this region was not West Asia at all, revealed to me that the attempt to find a "neutral" or "objective" formulation to refer to the region was futile in any sense but the merely geographical. We cannot escape our histories, we can only try to work with them productively. The other scheduled presenters could not attend because, we were told, they had been imprisoned. Although we did not know on what grounds, this emphasized how dangerous and volatile the situa-

tion was, and how important a peaceful solution would be. Events that have occurred since in the "Near East", as continental Europeans call the region, have accentuated that even more.

Another highlight was the panel discussion composed of Patrice BRODEUR, Sandor GOODHART, Diana CULBERTSON and Duncan MORROW. Diana CULBERTSON clearly and dramatically named the frustration that women in the Catholic church often experience. While she did not conceal any of the problems, she still succeeded in not falling into the trap of resentment or fundamental criticism. I found this talk was a real model of constructive criticism. Duncan MORROW talked about his experiences with the conflict in Ulster/Northern Ireland and impressed by his thoughtfulness and lucidity. I especially liked his distinction that the Church, in his view, should not be a "counter-culture" but a "contrast-culture". Again this takes out any resentment against and negative mimetic dependence on the established culture without uncritically blending in with it. Contrast is difference without enmity. There was, however, one drawback to this panel: every participant talked—very intriguingly—about his or her topic, but it was hard to see a common theme; for large periods it was, therefore, not a dialogue but assorted monologues.



Panelists: Diana Culbertson, Sandor Goodhart, Patrice Brodeur, Duncan Morrow

The biggest drawback of this year's conference, in my opinion, was that there was no room or time assigned for socializing. Therefore it was much harder to get to know new people than in past years, because instinctively you stuck to those you already knew, when you had to arrange for a time and place to get together.

The conclusion of our conference, the dinner in the Canadian Museum of Civilization, was to be a high point of the whole conference. It almost became one. The tour through the

museum was very interesting, the food was a pleasant surprise after the days at the cafeteria, and the performance program was a real treat. I was especially fascinated by the Inuit Throat Singers, who reminded me just a little bit of yodeling. The presentation by the museum's architect, Douglas CARDINAL, however turned out to be an outstanding example of resentment and condescension, which somehow diminished the evening's quality.

For those who were still present the Sunday worship was another high point, where Józef NIEWIADOMSKI explained in his introduction what an "Ecumenical Mass open to everyone" might be, how it did not exclude anybody but still respected the otherness of the other and monopolized no-one. The many contributions to this Mass from persons of different denominational background proved his point. To me it was a real spiritual experience.

Nikolaus Wandinger

Notes on the COV&R Business Meeting 2006

This is not a complete report but only some notes on subjects that were not yet touched upon by the letters from the President or the Executive Secretary.

The yearly conference in 2008 is scheduled to be held at the UC, Riverside, California, on "Catastrophe and Conversion". It will be organized by Robert and Sabine DORAN.

Stephen GARDNER was elected as a member of the Board to replace Guiseppe FORNARI, whose 2nd term had expired.

Maria Stella BARBERI was re-elected to a 2nd term on the Board, Wolfgang PALAVER was re-elected to a 2nd term as Executive Secretary.

Martha REINEKE will supervise COV&R's presence at the meeting of the AAR/SBL.

Bill JOHNSON announced that *Contagion's* publication date will move to fall. In fall 2006 a double-issue will appear.

The Bulletin Editor

Dr. Leopold-Lucas-Prize for René GIRARD

About the Prize Every year the Dr. Leopold-Lucas-Prize is awarded for outstanding achievements in the fields of theology, historical research, and philosophy. The intention of the prize is to honour personalities who have made an essential contribution to the fostering of relationships between humans, peoples, and religions and

who have—with their publications—promoted the idea of tolerance.

The award was endowed in 1972 by Consul General Franz D. LUCAS († 1998), an honorary senator of the Eberhard-Karls-University of Tübingen, on the occasion of the 100th birthday of his father Leopold LUCAS. Dr. Leopold LUCAS had been a Jewish scholar and rabbi, who was killed by the Nazis in the concentration camp of Theresienstadt in 1943.

The Protestant theological faculty annually assigns the prize in the name of the University of Tübingen. With a prize money of 40,000 € it is the most highly remunerated award of the University of Tübingen.

Among the previous laureates are renowned scholars like Sir Karl POPPER (1981), Karl RAHNER (1982), Hans JONAS (1984), Paul RICOEUR (1989), and Michael WALZER (1998), but also outstanding personalities in politics and culture like Léopold Sédor SENGHOR (the former president of Senegal, 1983), Tenzin GYATSO (the 14th Dalai Lama, 1988), and Richard von WEIZSÄCKER (former president of the Federal Republic of Germany, 2000).



Photo: Ulrich Merz/Schwäbisches Tagblatt

The Award Ceremony Since May 16 René GIRARD has to be named in line with these personalities as he has been chosen the 2006 laureate of the Leopold-Lucas-Prize. Many faculty members and students had come to take part in the ceremony, thus showing their interest in GIRARD's person and thinking. In his laudation the dean of the Protestant theological faculty, Eilert HERMS, called GIRARD a laureate, whose lifework exactly corresponded to the intention of the Leopold-Lucas Prize. HERMS pointed out that with his theory on the anthropological foundations of culture, GIRARD had confirmed the fundamental connectedness of the Jewish and Chris-

tian heritage and the special position of the biblical religions towards other religions.

Almost without consulting notes, René GIRARD gave a brilliant and highly acclaimed talk on “Knowledge and Christian Faith in the Twenty-first Century”, explaining and summing up in short terms his mimetic theory. GIRARD earned standing ovations when he was finally presented with the prize document in the presence of Martha GIRARD, Frank LUCAS, the son of the donor, and Eberhard SCHAICH, the rector of the university.

Petra Steinmair-Pösel

TARP Grant for Mimesis Research

I am pleased to announce that the School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California has been awarded a Templeton Advanced Research Project (TARP) grant for a two-year-study on “Imitation, Mimetic Theory, and Religious and Cultural Evolution.” The project was one of 11 selected from over 400 qualified proposals to receive the prestigious TARP grant. Awarded to help further scientific understanding of religion and spirituality, the grant is funded by the John Templeton Foundation and administered through the Metanexus Institute on Religion and Science.

The Templeton Foundation was established in 1987 by renowned international investor Sir John TEMPLETON to encourage a fresh appreciation of the importance, for all peoples and cultures, of the moral and spiritual dimensions of life. The Metanexus Institute advances research, education, and outreach on the constructive engagement of science and religion, seeking to create an enduring intellectual and social movement by collaborating with persons and communities from diverse religious backgrounds. It works with more than 300 partners in 40 countries and publishes an online journal.

Fuller Seminary is one of the largest multid denominational seminaries in the world, with nearly 5,000 students from 70 countries and more than 100 denominations. It provides professional and graduate-level education in its schools of Theology, Psychology, and Intercultural Studies.

The overall objective of this project is to commence a research program that will pioneer interdisciplinary collaboration between *scholars of the mimetic theory of religion* and *researchers within the empirical sciences* concerning the core motiva-

tional aspects of imitation in human relations and their powerful implications for the study of religious and cultural evolution. The specific aims of this project will be 1) to corroborate the mimetic theory of religion with an empirical basis in the cognitive and social sciences and 2) to expand the science of imitation to include hypotheses and methodologies for studying human cooperative/competitive dynamics and religious and cultural evolution.

This work will be accomplished by a select group of scholars and researchers with interdisciplinary expertise in the fields covered by the scope of this project. Among the participants are COV&R members René GIRARD, Jean-Pierre DUPUY, Mark ANSPACH, Robert HAMERTON-KELLY, and myself. The following researchers are also participating in the project: William HURLBUT is a physician and consulting professor in the Neuroscience Institute at Stanford University, Andrew MELTZOFF is a developmental psychologist and imitation researcher at the University of Washington, Steven QUARTZ is a neuroscientist at the California Institute of Technology, and Christian KEYSERS is a neuroscience researcher studying mirror neurons and the neural basis of empathy at the University Medical Center Groningen, Netherlands. This core group of participants will facilitate an integrative dialogue between the interpretive hermeneutics of the mimetic theory of religion and empirical research on imitation from within their perspective fields during two different two-day conferences. The primary goals and activities of these meetings will be 1) to present and discuss the latest advances on imitation research from developmental psychology, cognitive neuroscience, neurophysiology, evolutionary theory, and related disciplines in the humanities represented by mimetic scholars, 2) to develop various core topics, hypotheses, and research questions to be investigated by each participant that will be reviewed and integrated as chapters to be published as an edited book, and 3) to develop additional research questions, methodologies, and grant proposals for continued collaborative work between scholars and institutions.

As a clinical psychologist in private practice and Assistant Research Professor in Fuller’s School of Psychology it will be my privilege to coordinate this project over the next two years. I am convinced that this work is important because it will allow for the initiation of cross-fertiliza-

tion between imitation researchers and mimetic scholars who, up to this point, have more or less been working independently from one another, yet at the same time have been calling for a dramatic shift in thought and research within their own fields based on the rediscovery of imitation as an incredibly dynamic and foundational force in human development and cultural evolution. It is my hope therefore, that this collaborative effort will help facilitate this much needed, and seemingly inevitable, bridge between the humanities and social sciences concerning human imitation.

Scott Garrels, Pasadena

BOOK REVIEWS

Bartlett, Anthony: *Cross Purposes. The Violent Grammar of Christian Atonement* Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2001, 263 pages + Index, ISBN 1-56338-336-5; \$ 34.95

Trail blazing books are rare. Anthony BARTLETT's *Cross-Purposes* is one of those books that heralds new lines of thought and directions for Christian theology. Here, five years later it is coming into its own, finally getting a review in the *COV&R Bulletin*!

Bartlett's work has caught the eye of those who are writing on the atonement. *Cross Purposes* has been the subject of a dissertation by Sharon BAKER, and has been compared to J. Denny WEAVER's *The Nonviolent Atonement* by David EAGLE in the recent issue of the *Conrad Grebel Review* (winter 2006). *Cross Purposes* is the center-piece of the upcoming conference on The Nonviolent Atonement (January 22-23, for information see www.preachingpeace.org). Bartlett has continued his work of cultural analysis and philosophical deconstruction in *The Jonah Zone* (published as an e-book on www.preachingpeace.org).

What makes this book special is the combination of disciplines the author brings to the task of deconstructing the ANSELMic theory of the atonement through the lens of mimetic theory. Calling ANSELM's *Cur Deus Homo?* a "master hinge in the whole two thousand year tradition of interpretation of the Crucified" (1), Bartlett sets himself the task of analyzing the violent grammar of the atonement through the history of Christianity. Using GIRARD's mimetic theory as a lens, Bartlett demonstrates that Western Christian theology has been be-

holden to the violence inherent in Platonic dualism, as well as the "evil god" effects of Gnosticism, and the legal mindset of early Western theology (TERTULLIAN, AMBROSE and AUGUSTINE). This metaphysical super-structuring has affected and subverted the promise of the gospel whereby humanity is liberated from the illusion of sacred violence.

At the heart of *Cross Purposes* is the premise that this deconstruction must be done "from below", from the perspective given by the anthropology of the cross rather than "from above", from the perspective of inherited dogmatic traditions. The benefit of this approach is that it enables Bartlett to engage the entirety of the western philosophical tradition, its attendant dualisms and its hidden attachment to violent presuppositions. Bartlett is able to generate this discussion in conversation with narrative hermeneutics arguing that the New Testament does not participate in an ontology of violence with reference to the death of Jesus but instead uncovers the hidden system of the logic of sacrifice; a logic (logos) that will once again be covered over by the early Christian fathers.

Bartlett's metaphor for this reappraisal of atonement is the abyssal love of God in Jesus Christ, "[the] positive, redemptive meaning of the cross is articulated by the Crucified's endless response of love in the foundationless depths of human life infected with violence" (13). Rather than seeing the cross as a place of transaction or substitution, Bartlett perceives the death of Christ to be the ultimate expression of his life: viz., an uncompromising witness to the peacemaking God who eschews violence as a means of divine and human existence.

Through successive chapters *Cross Purposes* demonstrates the problem that plagues Christian discussion of atonement (and thus also doctrines of the Trinity), namely, the importation of dualism into doctrines of God. Bartlett challenges the *Christus Victor* theory of the early Greek fathers suggesting that they have misplaced a MARCIONITE dualism into atonement discussion whereby God has to bargain with the devil for the salvation of humanity. This trenchant critique of IRENAEUS, et al., does not evacuate the work of Christ of the liberating element from evil powers, what it does

is to provide an anthropological reassessment of this logic. Here, in the death of Christ, is to be witnessed the liberation from the bondage of violence and the logic (logos) of retribution. This can be clearly seen in Jesus' utterance from the cross, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing."

The heart of *Cross Purposes* though is the chapter on ANSELM of Canterbury. Bartlett contexts the writing of *Cur Deus Homo?* in the light of Pope URBAN II's "savage fervor of the First Crusade" (97) Bartlett buttresses his argument with rich documentation of the mimetic violence of the First Crusade. URBAN's "crusade indulgence" as an act of satisfaction and the role of "warrior mimesis" and "meritorious violence" (103) played a significant rhetorical role in ANSELM's atonement theory according to Bartlett; "once the language of satisfaction has become part of the stock-in-trade of medieval preachers and writers, so that it provided the meta-theory by which to interpret the cross, then the rhetoric of transformation generated by the wounded Christ would always meet a shocking dissonance at its core... At the level of abyssal compassion violence is dissipated; at the level of atonement doctrine it is essentialized. It is the classic mixed message..." (132). Thus, atonement, a central doctrine of Christianity "has been constituted by chronic mimetic crisis." Bartlett's argument for contexting ANSELM's theory within the historical rhetoric of the First Crusade is a deconstruction of the first order.

It ought not to be overlooked that the substitutionary framework of medieval theology gave rise to the transactional culture fostered by both crusade preaching and *Cur Deus Homo?* which set up the conditions for the Protestant Reformation. "Works" is really a transaction; it is not "doing good deeds." LUTHER was reacting against the violence inherent in transactional salvation. LUTHER's failure to dislodge the Augustinian double election, though, led him to an even more reciprocally violent "hidden God" who hated Jews, Turks and Anabaptists. The problematic of divine violence in election and atonement inherited from the Reformation bloomed not only at the time of the Shoah but has also blossomed in modern American Fundamentalism's Manichean war of "good vs evil."

Asking how one is to achieve transformation of atonement from violent to nonviolent, Bartlett draws upon KIERKEGAARD's notion of repetition. Noting that KIERKEGAARD brings repetition into a discussion of the cross, whereby true repetition is the boundless self-giving of God, infinite because always new as grace, Bartlett harnesses KIERKEGAARD's philosophical notion in light of the repetitive character of the mimetic sacrifice, contrasting KIERKEGAARD with NIETZSCHE. Yet, even here, NIETZSCHE is a witness to the 'abyss' of the cross and the breakthrough for atonement theory occurs in the repetition; "a contingent set of events that becomes an encounter with the Crucified and thus attains the value of repetition in the awakening of compassion" (153).

Drawing upon the New Yale Theology of George LINDBECK and Hans FREI, Bartlett sets forth criteria "to test how a GIRARDIAN hermeneutic might register in their narratological schemes" (162) proposing a biblical typology of violence. This typology is "a kind of inverted logos theory" (164) which separates the discourses of the church and the academy and leads to a transformational grammar of atonement. Examples from DOSTOYEVSKI and Oscar WILDE round out this hermeneutic enterprise.

Bartlett moves next to an examination of the restructuring role of apocalyptic noting the GIRARDIAN emphasis on the anthropological character of New Testament apocalyptic discourse. Tackling philological, historical-critical and hermeneutic issues, Bartlett proposes that a reading of the New Testament does not produce a metaphysical substantiation of atonement whereby Jesus is presented as a sacrifice for "sinners who fall into the hands of an angry God" but rather is seen as the exemplar of the Creator's deep compassion; atonement might have been correlated with incarnation here, as is done e.g., in Eastern orthodox christology.

Nevertheless, Bartlett is able to demonstrate that a sacrificial rendering of apocalyptic is inconsistent with contemporary narrative hermeneutics seen e.g., in the work of N. T. WRIGHT and Ben WITHERINGTON III. This is underscored in the recent publication *Covenant of Peace* (Eerdmans, 2006) by Willard SWARTLEY (see review on p. 18).

Finally, Bartlett underscores that at stake in the doctrine of the atonement is not a rupture in the Godhead, a struggle between mercy and justice; what is revealed in the cross is “the problematic of human violence” (224). Calling upon the deconstructive work of DERRIDA, Bartlett illumines this stark reading of the cross and the compelling conclusion that the cross is the place of the abyss of the love of God. This reframing of the ABELARDIAN moral influence theory is the strongest to date, for it is the only one that deals with the core issue of the cross. The question then is not “Cur Deus Homo?” but “Why Did Humanity Kill God?” The answer, which is no surprise, is our propensity to violence, the ultimate ground of all human sin. And it is only the infinite compassion of God upon all and for all that can lead us to an *imitatio Christi*, a positive mimesis, that authenticates the nonviolence and peacemaking character of God revealed in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Cross Purposes is a book to be read several times. Its rich illustrations, critical exegesis, historical contexting and philosophical discussion are strengths. Its major weakness lies in the density of the prose and I found myself not only reading sections several times but reading them aloud to follow the argument. Nevertheless, *Cross Purposes* is essential reading for theologians and pastors exploring the implications of the death of Jesus for the 21st century.

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Büchele, Herwig: *Vor der Gefahr der Selbstauslöschung der Menschheit. Die Zeichen der Zeit—theologisch gedeutet*
[Before the Danger of the Self-Annihilation of Humanity. The Signs of the Time—in theological interpretation]

(BMT 20) Wien—Münster: LIT 2005. (278 pp.), ISBN 3-8258-9067-8, € 14.90

The sepulcher of Andrej RUBLEW has presumably been found recently in a Moscow monastery; a sensational discovery. RUBLEW was an Orthodox monk and one of the most important painters of religious Russian art in the 14th century. For a long time the admirers of icons would not have been interested in the painter who has “written” the icon, they would not have been interested in

the story of his life or the place where he has been buried. The only important thing was the picture itself; or more precisely: the deeper reality it refers to. Modern man is different from these religious admirers. He is interested in facts. For the knowledge of facts means power: the power to understand and to form his own world, even to create and recreate it on his own. The great interest in the facts of the life and death of the painter of the icon which is printed on the cover of Herwig BÜCHELE’s current book could be a symbol of what Büchele tries to tell us about modern man and present Western society in a wide-ranging essay. The retired professor of Christian Social Teaching in Innsbruck and close friend of Raymund SCHWAGER’s analyses important fields of this present society: the socio-cultural system, the market economy, the state and the relation of states in the context of globalization and their impact on mankind and creation. The result of these analyses has to be called apocalyptic. But apocalypse does not mean flat catastrophism in this book, it rather has to be understood in the original meaning of the word, which is uncovering and revelation. Büchele wants to uncover the real reasons for the destructive and dangerous dynamics of modernity. Hardly anyone wants to destroy the world we are all living in. Scarcely do people try to diminish the quality of life of whole nations or generations intentionally. But exactly these scenarios seem to be imminent. How does it happen that people who are trying to build a society of peace, unity and wealth are instead producing division, disastrous wars and misery? Büchele points to the fact of mimetic rivalry that produces a sphere of enmity and conflict to explain such a paradox. This sphere is like a trap and we are incapable of finding a way out, even if we try.

But Büchele—like J. P. DUPUY, to whom he refers in detail,—does not want to be a prophet of doom. Yet, his apocalyptic warnings should stimulate a new way of acting. Thus the author looks for possibilities to realize an alternative to our present lifestyle. He lists three possible ways. First we may refuse to participate and condemn the whole realm of the current social reality and try to construct a completely new and utopian world. But this would mean to deny a lot of positive achievements of our time on the one hand and to evoke a new kind of enmity—the fundamentalist hostility to anything that appears to be

dangerous or strange or just not willing to be changed—on the other. Secondly we could hope that the present system is going to repair its faults by itself. Defects could be understood as results of a lack of perfection of this system. Then we would have to fight the symptoms of failure eagerly but would not need to transform the essence of the system at all. But if we decided acting in this way, we would have to face the danger that suddenly it could be impossible to stop destructive developments or to change our previous course altogether. Thus Büchele argues for a true transformation of our global system from the inside. This he calls a system-transcending approach, which neither means merely choosing the lesser evil nor starting a revolution. But how can such a change take place?

Remember that Büchele—similar to the admirer of an icon, who tries to recognize the reality behind the picture—is looking for the real causes of violence and destruction. Mimetic rivalry is not the final answer to this query. The author presents a theological interpretation of the phenomena mentioned, as is announced by the subtitle of the book. This interpretation starts with a reflection on the biblical story of the tower of Babel. The aim of the people of Babel is unity, the result of their initiative is scattering. They fail because they try to realize their purpose by merely technological means. They assert an ability to establish a heavenly world-order on their own. Büchele argues that God's destruction of the tower reveals that the people's pursuit was nothing but a pseudo-unity rooted in the assertion of human power. Finally Babel's society is a society without God, because the people are not able to receive being and being together as a gift. Isn't the crucial question for current societies still the same as it was for Babel? Unity among people cannot be produced by the people, it can not be realized unless there is an experience of love that is freely given, the gratuitousness of love, as Büchele calls it. Without this experience everyone is the potential rival of everyone else. Thus each kind of progress is nothing but the accumulation of means to maintain control. The epitome of free love beyond fear and distrust, beyond mere barter and justice is Jesus himself. His benevolence does not demand anything in return and does not fear to lose anything. Therefore he is able to break the vicious cycle of suspicion and violence. But even Jesus has to receive this abil-

ity. He receives it from the heavenly father. According to Büchele the Divine Trinity is depicted as a model of the unity that frees the subject by mutual love and trust and enables it to behave in a way different from mimetic rivalry and conflict. This model is the germ of a system-transcending behaviour in the middle of our present society. This is why Büchele chose the icon by RUBLEW called *Philoxenia* (hospitality), which probably is the most famous work by this painter, to illustrate the cover of his book.

Vor der Gefahr der Selbstausslöschung der Menschheit joins together sociological competence and a deep Christian conviction. It is a book not written only or even primarily for academic scholars, but for Christians who are responsible for the further development of our society: for business-leaders, politicians, scientists, engineers, in the end for each Christian. And—according to Büchele—it does not want to motivate to mere activism in the face of doomsday but to encourage people to make this world a little bit more human because of their awareness of being called to be co-creators. So even if this book may be an intellectual challenge and is written in a sophisticated language, it deserves to find numerous readership.

Wilhelm Guggenberger

Finlan, Stephen: *Problems with Atonement: the Origins of, and Controversy about, the Atonement Doctrine*
Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005
144 pp., \$ 15.95, ISBN: 0814652204.

“Bad Theology Leads to Bad Morality” was the title of the paper I promised for the 2005 Schönstatt meeting of COV&R dedicated to the theme of “Images of God and the Imitation of God.” For, if one's image of God essentially includes violence, that introduces violence as an essential part of Christian morality. FINLAN's trenchantly written exposé of bad atonement theology made my case for me. For if God is a “sacrifice demander,” and Jesus a “punishment bearer” (p. 120), this logically leads to a worldview that takes violence for granted, and to a spirituality and morality in which Christians try to imitate a God perceived as violent, or arbitrary, or impotent. One can see this in: (1) the relationship between the Incarnation and atonement theories, (2) the differences between the implications of some of the metaphors of atonement and authen-

tic Christian teaching about atonement and salvation, (3) the problem of divine violence, (4) sacrifice and cult, and (5) the pervasiveness of the legal and the judicial, especially in the West.

(1) The Incarnation is a central Christian doctrine; the Atonement, derivative of the Incarnation, is not. Even less central are theories of the Atonement. “It is incorrect to identify ‘Christianity’ with atonement without remainder” (p. 104). Some atonement theories can be flatly incompatible with an authentic Christian understanding of God—take, for example, the following summary of a widely accepted understanding of traditional Western atonement theory: (a) God’s honor was damaged by human sin; (b) God demanded a bloody victim—innocent or guilty—to pay for human sin; (c) God was persuaded to alter the divine verdict against humanity when the Son of God offered to endure humanity’s punishment; (d) the death of the Son thus functioned as a payoff; salvation was purchased (p. 1). This turns God into a great and fearsome judge, or offended lord, or temperamental spirit; it calls into question God’s free will, or justice, or sanity (p. 97–98); it is incompatible with the central biblical idea of a loving and compassionate God. The Epistles of Paul show us how this could begin to be thought of as Christian.

For St. Paul, what we receive through the Christ-Messiah is justification, reconciliation, and adoption, achieved via processes that are judicial (justification), diplomatic (reconciliation), and familial (adoption), and expressed in metaphors that are cultic, economic, judicial, social, diplomatic, and familial. After Paul, however, these processes began to be seen as transactions susceptible to the residual overlay of archaic magical ideas. But Paul himself had combined, conflated, and rapidly switched between these metaphors; apparently seeing none of them as absolute or normative. Thus it was a deformation when theologians began to select just some of these metaphors and push them to “theo-logical” conclusions quite at odds with the central biblical revelation of a loving and merciful God eager to save, rescue, and forgive, and also quite at odds with what Paul himself was groping to express (p. 34, 62). Ominous signs of this deformation are visible as early as the Pastoral Epistles and the Deutero Pauline Letters where fidelity to right doctrine begins to be emphasized as the sign of a true Christian (p. 39–62). Increasingly, an

interpretation of Jesus’ crucifixion seen as a cultic, juridical, and even quasi-magical transaction, became the core message of Christianity; the actual teachings of Jesus, “became a secondary body of information” (p. 57), a disastrous reduction of atonement theory down to the idea that God deliberately intended Jesus’ violent death (p. 101, citing Walter WINK). It reduced the Incarnation, Jesus’ whole human life, to a lengthy prologue to the crucifixion (p. 123).

(2) In isolation, some of Paul’s metaphors, have unacceptable “theo-logical” implications. Does God’s favor or forgiveness have to be bought? Does God’s anger have to be assuaged by sacrifice? Is God a retribution-seeking, restitution-seeking judge? Is God a dishonored lord whose honor needs to be restored? The metaphors sometimes imply a selfless Messiah over against a God who must be paid off, or an implacable Father over against a compassionate Son (p. 39–62). But fairness to Paul requires attention to all his metaphors and all his teaching, perhaps especially to places where, apparently giving up on attempted “theo-logical” exposition, he would break into song (see esp. Romans 11:33–36 and Philippians 2:6–11). Remember, it took Christianity three or four centuries to struggle its way to a mature theology of the Trinity that excluded tension and opposition, to say nothing of violence, from its image of God.

(3) However, this central trinitarian insight was easily forgotten. In the West, by the time of ANSELM (c. 1033–1109), popular atonement doctrine had devolved to the point where it is no longer the devil who is the source of violence against humanity, but God the Father (p. 72). This took for granted an inner-divine “scenario of divine violence restrained by divine mercy, but a mercy that had to be mediated through violence” (p. 75).

René GIRARD challenged the hegemony of this way of thinking, basically by exposing the violent mechanisms of sacrificial scapegoating, and by rejecting these mechanisms and the traditional (destruction-of-the-victim) idea of sacrifice as essential to Christianity. However, the theological appropriation of GIRARD’s insights, as, e.g., was being so insightfully done by the recently deceased Raymund SCHWAGER, S.J. († 2004), remains a work in progress. For example, we are still struggling with the residue of magical transactional thinking (p. 98) in Christian atonement

doctrine and in some popular understandings of the sacraments. Such thinking implicitly, calls into question the free will, or the justice, or the sanity, or the power of a benevolent God. So too with the “absolutization” of suffering so graphically illustrated, e.g., by the popularity of Mel GIBSON’s film *The Passion of the Christ*. As a de facto part of the historical (and therefore conditioned) economy of salvation, there is, in the suffering of Christ a transcendent sacredness, but no unconditioned absoluteness. There is absolute divine necessity only in the love with which Christ suffered. For ultimately, it is not suffering but love that saves. The suffering of Christ is not what God the Father did to Christ, it is what we humans did to Christ; it was evil and should not have happened. In other words, as CRYSDALE has pointed out, suffering and the violence that causes it is a consequence of union with God, not the precise means to it [see Finlan’s development of this theme on pp. 104–106. He acknowledges his dependence on Cynthia Crysdale, *Embracing Travail: Retrieving the Cross Today* (New York: Continuum, 1999) passim, but esp. 100].

(4) Atonement, although not synonymous with sacrifice, overlaps with it. Problems with atonement end up also being problems with sacrifice, and vice versa (3), with both commonly being perceived to be instances of divine violence. After Paul, the increasing emphasis on and blending together of ideas of penal substitution and the idea of death-as-payment caused sacrifice to become the dominant image of atonement for many in Christian antiquity. This was a time when people generally assumed that a sacrificial death was required for a mediator or reconciler to appease God transactionally with a unique sacrifice (p. 70–71). This was perceived to be a necessity in God, or a necessity outside of God to which God was bound. Part of the problem was, of course, the apparent scriptural warrant for this necessity: “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer?” (Luke 24:26). The ensuing false ideas about God and a consequent false morality are inevitable if the scapegoating death of Jesus is a necessary, divinely planned, transactional sacrificial event that God brings about like a puppet master manipulating human events.

(5) As time went on, recourse to legal thinking became increasingly necessary. By the time of AUGUSTINE, ransom theory (with its sub-themes of rescue, deception, mousetrap, etc.) was being

increasingly trumped by legal theory (p. 70). Then GREGORY THE GREAT, in his blending of legal and sacrificial motifs, and in his stressing of the need for a *proportionate remedy*, locked legal-logical thinking, with its inevitable correlates in violence and bad morality, into the core of Western atonement thinking.

So, what can free us from this vicious circle? Some hope can be gleaned from two predominantly Eastern developments: an apophatic theology that reminds us of the limits of all human projections and images of God, and the theology of *theosis*/divinization that reminds us that our salvation does not come about by any transaction that can be adequately explained or imagined in human terms. But the West also contributes, first, with its strong intellectual conviction that we are capable of at least some self-correcting true knowledge, and second, in its development of critical biblical and historical studies that enable us at least to begin to identify, and thus to correct, where and how we may have gone wrong.

This review has offered no critique of Finlan’s work. This does not suggest that I think it is perfect. No picture that is produced with such broad brush strokes can be without flaw either in detail or in the application of a broad theological bias without which such a picture could not be produced in the first place. But here, I felt it more important to focus on the many theological issues and implications thereof that desperately need our attention.

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Negel, Joachim: *Ambivalentes Opfer. Studien zur Symbolik, Dialektik und Aporetik eines theologischen Fundamentalbegriffs.* [Ambivalent Sacrifice. Studies in the Symbolism, Dialectic and Aporia of a Basic Theological Concept] Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2005. 629 pp., ISBN 3-506-72817-2, € 79

This voluminous work was written as a dissertation in dogmatic theology at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Bonn, Germany. Its author counts among the friends of G. BADER who wrote *Symbolik des Todes Jesu* [*Symbolism of Jesus’ Death*] (Tübingen 1988; referred to on p. 15). NEGEL undertakes a rehabilitation of sacrifice and wants to bring out its posi-

tive meaning. He emphasizes that commitment and effort, even bitter renunciation and hard suffering, are part of human life. If one accepts that, one will experience joy and an increase of life springing from it. Sacrifice, thus, is primarily understood in this work as self-dedication (*Selbsthingabe*), as the tension between loss and gain that is characteristic for human conduct. In relation to that a critique of sacrifice is only a secondary concern.

This approach already determines the onset of the work. The *Introduction* (pp. 17-57) relates W. BURKERT's, J. P. VERNANT's and M. MAUS's theories of sacrifice. Since the differences between these theories are unbridgeable, the author decides to approach the problem from a different starting point: the traditional theological understanding of sacrifice. Thus the first part of the book *Symbolism. Sacrifice as Reality of Salvation* (pp. 59-333) utilizes a characteristic example of that tradition as a starting point: the Innsbruck dissertation of Max ten HOMPEL *Das Opfer als Selbsthingabe und seine ideale Verwirklichung im Opfer Christi [Sacrifice as Self-Dedication and its Ideal Realization in the Sacrifice of Christ]* (Freiburg 1920). The traditional theology, which HOMPEL presupposes, is related—often too lengthily—, then the author presents how more recent German-speaking theologians—among them R. SCHWAGER—have modified the scholastic positions. In this part sacrifice is synonymous with dedication to God or Christ. Thus the biblical and Christian critique of sacrifice—the turning away from bloody animal and human sacrifices toward a dedication to God and His commandments—does not come into view. An important note is the indication that the magisterium of the Catholic church has emphasized the sacrificial character of the Eucharist but refrained from any decisions as to how this character is to be understood (p. 40, ref. 93).

The second part, *Dialectic: Sacrifice as a Symptom of Unredeemed Patterns of Life* (pp. 335-511) deals with modern critique of sacrifice. This part is disappointing because it concentrates on the critique of religion brought forward by F. NIETZSCHE, K. MARX and S. FREUD—in accordance with the wide notion of sacrifice propounded in the book. A critique of sacrifice as such is only presented in connection with feminist and political theology. After this GIRARD's theory of religion is explained and his anthropol-

ogy is criticized, as well as G. BAUDLER's anthropological optimism for believing that we can completely do without sacrifice. Yet the author admits: "The modern perspective sensitizes for certain aspects of sacrifice that were underdetermined by the theological tradition: the aspect of being destructive, negative, ambiguous." (p. 510)

The shortest third part *Aporia: Sacrifice as a Basic Theologoumenon* (pp. 513-583) emphasizes that *Gewalt*—this German term means not only *violence*, as we shall see—belongs in many ways to humans and to God. Then this study explicitly addresses the ambivalence of sacrifice. This ambivalence cannot be solved anthropologically or Christologically. For in absolute dedication living and dying fall into one (cf. p. 555). This even intensifies when we face Jesus' death on the cross: "Does a God in whose eternal bliss one can only live by walking through death deserve to be called a 'God of Love' (1 John 4:8.16b)? Can a creation that could only be preserved, respectively redeemed, by an act of sacrifice ever have been 'very good' (Gen 1:31)?" (p. 560) This ambivalence is solved in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Christ has, "through laying down his life" (p. 568), fundamentally changed the cycle of life in which "life sustains itself only through death" (p. 563). Receiving the body of Christ is at once a sublimely spiritual and a primitively natural occurrence. In this paradox of "sensual spiritualization" (p. 574) the believer is enveloped by God's Trinitarian love. I will not discuss this solution here; instead I want to deal with Negel's notion of sacrifice and his stance towards GIRARD's thinking.

Negel thinks that a sacrificial character pertains to every instance of taking action (cf. 446). "Life is sacrifice" (p. 582). Human beings cannot live without renunciation, commitment and dedication and in these they can experience an increase of life. This notion accentuates the positive significance that sacrifice—self-sacrifice—can have. But it is too broad and too undetermined. What kind of theoretical clarification is achieved by describing all human action as sacrifice? Neither is all renunciation, all suffering, all dedication already sacrifice. Of course there are cases of renunciation and suffering that are sacrifices, and dedication to your neighbor or to God entails a readiness to sacrifice—even unto death. Yet we have to ask whether the problem of violence can be isolated from the notion of sacrifice

as clearly as Negel aspires. In today's use of *sacrifice* the bloody animal and human sacrifices of the history of religions are still subliminally present.

Fascinated by his own approach, Negel only takes marginal note of a Christian or non-Christian critique of sacrifice (cf. pp. 361ff, 436ff, 448, 551 ref.); this critique is not systematically integrated into his notion of sacrifice. The motto "Life lives off life", which Negel especially likes to quote (pp. 15, 24, 560f., 568, 581), implies the possibility that human persons, in sharing life, attempt to shift its burdens onto others, to sacrifice them—even onto death. The connection between renunciation and an increase of life, which Negel rightly emphasizes, entails the danger of increasing one's own life at the expense of one's fellow human beings. This should be made explicit in developing a notion of sacrifice. If someone refuses dedication to God and to neighbor, they will almost inevitably sacrifice someone else, and make them a victim. Refusal of dedication to God and to one's neighbor thus becomes the sacrificing of the other. True: this is a very GIRARDian argument. It is characteristic for Negel that it is alien to him. The fact that a refusal of renunciation mutates into violence—it somehow does not interest him.

Several times Negel refers to GIRARD, appreciatively but mostly critically. GIRARD has posed "the question of the connection between sacrifice and violence" (p. 413). This brings "a completely new aspect of the problem of sacrifice into view" (ibid.), so that "the current theological debate is hardly intelligible without a sufficient appreciation of his theses" (ibid.). Negel especially concurs with GIRARD's criticism of a traditional theology of the cross (cf. p. 465, 476). Only in passing does he note that GIRARD has given up his initial negative qualification of sacrifice and has admitted that it can have positive significance as well (cf. p. 465). In a longer section (§ 9.3 of part II, pp. 449-476) Negel relates GIRARD's theory of religion and his Christology and ends with a harsh criticism of his "anthropological premises" (p. 466), viewing GIRARD from J. GREISCH's objections. He accuses GIRARD of the "bad metaphysics" (p. 468, ref. 276) of an evolutionary naturalism. Negel admits that violence played a massive role in the process of hominization. Yet: "In my eyes the devaluation of the spiritual to a psychic, respectively instinct-driven function is the πρώτον ψεύδος of Girard's theory of relig-

ion" (p. 469, ref. 279). As happens often, GIRARD's thought is taken to be a closed system. That way the tension between GIRARD's evolutionary approach and his conviction that human beings are metaphysical and religious beings becomes an irrational hiatus.

Negel's approach to violence is dependent on the German word for it—*Gewalt*—which cannot be translated into English with the whole range of meanings it has in German. *Gewalt* can mean violence, but it also means power (as in the separation of powers), might, even grandeur. While *violence* is the dominant meaning of *Gewalt* in contemporary German, Negel insists on the plurality of its meanings and the resulting ambiguity of the concept, and emphasizes that it may not be seen as merely negative, but must be valued positively as well. This is—in my view—the principal divide that separates Negel from GIRARD. Because of his intention to highlight the positive aspects of *Gewalt/power* Negel never brings GIRARD's central "premise" into focus: the moral judgment that human beings may not become victims of *Gewalt/violence*. Negel's connection between sacrifice and an increase of life takes some orientation from G. BATAILLE (p. 524, ref. 25), although he admits that this could amount to ethical problems (p. 551, ref.). He even summarizes: "Bataille stands in the tradition of Nietzsche [...], Girard in a broad sense in that of Kant" (p. 525, ref.). In continuation of BATAILLE's thought Negel looks "for a form of *Gewalt* that is highly creative without being destructive in the same vein." (p. 525) Therefore he postulates: "God is *Gewalt*—God is love." (p. 580) This is only possible because Negel grounds his thinking in the plurality of meanings that pertain to the German expressions *Opfer* (which can mean *sacrifice* and *victim*) and *Gewalt*; he often accentuates their enigmatically indeterminate character (pp. 409, 518, 560). Avoiding conceptual clarifications and distinctions actually amounts to a methodological axiom of his (cf. p. 519f.). This also makes it quite hard to understand what he means. He does not develop elaborate concepts of sacrifice or *Gewalt*. For ethical reasons, however, such a clarification is of utmost necessity because human agents are always in danger of abusing their *Gewalt/power*, thereby making others the victims of their *Gewalt/violence*. A minimal prerequisite for avoiding that danger would be precise conceptual distinctions.

I am not saying here that Negel wants to justify violence. Of course, as a Christian theologian, he distances himself from “destructive *Gewalt*” (p. 525, 529). But such a formulation renders violence harmless. Many of the mass murderers of history denied that their atrocities were destructive and tried to justify them as hard, yet unavoidable, necessities. It is quite strange that a theological work is so disinterested in ethical problems. One could get the impression that the horrors of the past century are no challenge for it: “The astonishing success of the Girardian theory of religion might be grounded in the disastrous history of the 20th century: a collision of totalitarian ideologies, two world wars with 80 million people killed, annihilation of European Judaism ...” (p. 476, ref. 309).

Here I have one-sidedly emphasized the weaknesses of Negel’s book, the objections to be raised against it—not only from the point of view of the mimetic theory. Yet there are also strengths of the work. In this vein I want to mention the deliberations about the connection between Christ’s crucifixion and the Eucharist. They are the main focus of this work and it is impressive how the two-fold character of human nature as body and spirit is made fruitful for a theology of the Eucharist. I also laud the emphasis on the interdependence of dedication to God with freedom and self-determination. Finally I want to express my admiration for the author’s being a person of wide reading.

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Swartley, Willard M.: *Covenant of Peace. The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006. (xviii + 542 pp.) ISBN 0-8028-2937-6, \$34.00.

This book by Willard SWARTLEY comes out of a lifetime of personal religious experience and scholarly study filtered through his background as a Mennonite and pacifist; while in turn his experiences and scholarly research have enlarged his religious and cultural background to the point of an informed and inspired ecumenical, peace-making perspective. What he accomplishes in this volume is truly his *magnum opus*.

Swartley notes that peace, *eirene*, is a term that occurs 100 times in the New Testament, yet

none of the textbooks in New Testament theology and ethics deals with it in the comprehensive way the subject merits. (“Peace” is indeed a “missing piece” in modern NT scholarship.) He refers to these works frequently, and he devotes a long appendix to an “Analysis of Important Contributions to New Testament Theology and Ethics” (431-471), which includes examination of 25 books.

For most readers *Covenant of Peace* will serve as a reference book on subjects in the range or configuration of NT theology, ethics, peacemaking, the problem of violence, etc. Few readers will have the time, interests, or in some instances the technical scholarly background to work through all of this. But there is something here for everyone committed to research or action in the range of subjects mentioned. Word studies in the semantic field of *eirene* (e.g., reconciliation, forgiveness, love, righteousness); studies of particular writings (especially the synoptic Gospels, the Johannine corpus, the Pauline and deutero-Pauline letters, and Revelation); the message of Jesus and of Paul; synthesizing theological and ethical reflection; a survey of research in NT theology and ethics (Appendix 1): one can look into any of these parts of the book and find these topics treated in their own right, while at the same time they are always connected to the overarching theme of the book. Swartley even includes a service of worship based on the book of Revelation (345-355) and proposes three additions to the Apostles’ Creed (425)!

The author’s thesis is that the New Testament witnesses consistently to the new covenant of peace prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This peace, which is proclaimed by Jesus and found through him and his witnesses in the world, has many dimensions and implications. It is not only spiritual peace that transcends rivalries, conflicts, and violence, but is also the reality and goal of peacemaking, of reconciliation with God and between human beings who practice the forgiveness that redeems them. He develops his argument from many angles as he examines the entire NT and current scholarship. Here I will mention a few of the specific points that are particularly important for me in my own recent thinking and teaching.

1. The Lordship of Jesus Christ. In his chapter on the Gospel of Matthew Swartley points out that Matthew subverts the Roman mode of impe-

rial domination, “whether in Judaism’s messianic hope or Gentile Roman rule,” but at the same time “he accentuates loving enemies, peacemaking, and good deeds done by the Father’s children ... These behaviors are the identifying marks of God’s reign inaugurated by Jesus” (83; see also 252 on the Pastoral Epistles).

2. Dialogue with the work of the late John Howard YODER, who was a Mennonite like Swartley. Since the 1970s YODER has had a greater influence than any other Christian ethicist in the stream of American theological reflection about Christian discipleship, particularly as it revolves around Jesus as revealer of peace and social justice through his teachings, passion, and resurrection. Swartley has YODER in mind practically throughout the book and cites him more than any other author. YODER is best known for his book, *The Politics of Jesus*, which first came out in 1972, with a revised edition in 1994. He looked primarily to the Gospel of Luke in arguing that Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God was a proclamation integrating religious, political, and social hopes. The key text is Luke 4:16-20, where Jesus reads from Isaiah 61. YODER held that Isaiah 61 and the passage in Luke were based on the ancient Israelite Jubilee tradition. This model of Jubilee YODER took as the paradigm for his interpretation of the rest of Luke and as the key to the Jesus tradition represented in the synoptic Gospels. Swartley offers an appreciative overview of YODER’s argument and then presents further ways of thinking about the theme of Jubilee in order to support and enhance YODER’s point that the historical Jesus is relevant to social ethics. These include blessings to the poor and warnings to the rich in chapters 12, 16, and the end of 18 in Luke; Luke’s emphasis on the role of women; Jesus’ acceptance of sinners, outcasts, and outsiders; the connection of the verb *euan-gelisasthai* (“to gospelize”) with the leading of the Holy Spirit beyond racial and national boundaries in Luke-Acts; and the gospel’s release of people from Satan’s power in Luke-Acts.

3. The social meaning of justification by faith. The author shows that Paul’s doctrine of justification is “social-political to the core....” (198). It manifests God’s righteousness that is at work for Gentile as well as Jewish Christians, both having equal access to God through Christ. God’s blessing to Abraham is transmitted not only to the Jews but is given to Gentiles as well (Galatians

3:14). The social dimension of community in the body of Christ is clear in passages such as Romans 14-15 and 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. In this context, Swartley quotes once more from John Howard YODER, *The Politics of Jesus*: “It is the Good News that I and my enemy are united, through no merit or work of my own, in a new humanity that forbids henceforth my ever taking his life in my hands” (198).

4. Engagement with GIRARD and the mimetic theory. In chapters 13-15 Swartley highlights the importance of René GIRARD’s work and indicates his appreciation as well for the work of a number of Girardians. He also cites and supports some criticisms of GIRARD, including attempts to enhance the mimetic theory. My view is that most of the criticisms are not substantial.

However, there is one criticism that I think is just, and it regards the issue of the moral life and character formation. Swartley makes this criticism by way of quoting Jim FODOR. FODOR asks how it is “that one might become initiated in and apprenticed to a particular way of life that actually manifests non-acquisitive, nonviolent mimesis” (405). FODOR says also that “[t]he incarnation includes actual training and participation in particular peaceable relations and reconciling patterns of existence. It means learning a whole new *idiom*, a completely different set of skills and practices and language games” (407).



Walter Wink (center) with acting helpers

Now in one sense the criticism is not fairly directed to GIRARD for the reason that he has not accepted it as his task to make ethical applications of the mimetic theory. At the most recent meeting of COV&R in Ottawa Walter WINK, with the aid of colleague helpers, enacted Jesus’ injunctions in Matthew 5:38-41 in a series of

skits that were both very funny and very serious and were much appreciated by the plenary gathering. One could argue that the form of nonviolent active resistance to oppressors that the skits portrayed was itself a form of rivalry, a way of getting “one up” on the opponent. Was this a form of good rivalry? However debatable that might be, GIRARD did not comment directly on the dramatic enactment. Instead, he emphasized that his work was a quest for truth, and that quest could not be drawn into specific stratagems and modes of behavior. GIRARD has pursued that quest now for more than fifty years, and he has done so with persistence and courage.

Yet the quest for finding and knowing the truth cannot be simply separated from doing the truth. In the biblical sense of truth, it is something that is both known and done. “If we say we have communion (*koinonia*) with him while we walk in darkness, we are lying (*pseudometha*) and are not doing the truth (*ou poioumen ten aletheian*)” (1 John 1:6). In fact, according to the mimetic theory, at least in its original GIRARDian form, human being does not begin simply with

language or knowledge or representation but with a dawning, mimetically structured awareness that is inextricably intertwined with desire and action. Unveiling the truth is an awesome thing, but then so is doing it. And can one unveil it without doing it?

In conclusion, Willard Swartley is to be congratulated for this book that he has presented to the world. I highly recommend it to the COV&R constituency and to all who are concerned with the biblical basis of peace, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

James G. Williams, Edmond, OK

Publication Notice

We are glad to announce that finally the English translation of Raymund SCHWAGER’s book on original sin is in print:

Schwager, Raymund: *Banished from Eden: Original Sin and Evolutionary Theory in the Drama of Salvation*. Leominster: Gracewing 2006, 200 pp. ISBN: 0852446063. A review will appear in next spring’s *Bulletin*.

The Editor

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- The *Bibliography of Literature on the Mimetic Theory* (Vol. I-XXII) is Online available at: http://theol.uibk.ac.at/cover/mimetic_theory_bibliography.html

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We invite you to send us copies of your articles (digital or print format), as well as references to any kind of literature dealing with the Mimetic Theory by E-mail: Dietmar.Regensburger@uibk.ac.at or Fax: (43 512) 507-2761 or by mail: Girard-Documentation, c/o Dr. Dietmar Regensburger, University of Innsbruck, Karl-Rahner-Platz 1, A-6020 Innsbruck / Austria.

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EDITOR'S THANKS

Again I want to thank all who have contributed to this *Bulletin*. Some things are new this time: A detailed preview on COV&R's presence at the meeting of the AAR/SBL. Let us hope that this is the beginning of a new tradition which will enhance the attendance at these meetings. A short briefing on the results of the Business Meeting of COV&R. It occurred to me that this should be provided in the *Bulletin* and that the burden could be reasonably placed on the editor, as long as he (or she) was able to attend these meetings. And finally: One publisher (Eerdmans) has begun sending me copies of books for review (W. M. Swartley's book found its reviewer that way, another one has arrived already, which will be reviewed in the next *Bulletin*). I think this is a positive development and I would encourage other COV&R authors to ask their publishers to do likewise. I hope to see many of you at the next meetings.

Nikolaus Wandinger

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