



## APOCALYPSE REVISITED

### Japan, Hiroshima, and the Place of Mimesis



*The Hiroshima A-Bomb-Dome*

### Meeting of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion International Christian University, Tokyo, 5-8 July 2012

As organizer of this coming year's conference, my hope is that it will incarnate two of the dimensions that have been the hallmarks of recent conferences. At each conference there has always been a real continuity with past conferences, as COV&R rededicates itself to the "exploration, criticism, and development of René GIRARD's mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture." And yet each conference has brought forth new and exciting aspects, often related to the place in which they were being held. So we have a unique opportunity opened up by the fact this conference is the first one being held outside a Western venue. The place of our meeting highlights the question of the universality of GIRARD's model outside the direct influence of the Western intellectual or Judeo-Christian traditions.

Given also that GIRARD's most recent work has focused on escalating conflict and "total war," it is significant that COV&R's next conference takes place in Japan, the only nation to experience the devastation of an atomic weapon. We will be privileged to hear Prof. Michel SERRES (Académie Française) speak on this theme.

*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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### **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 \$1,500.00 shared by up to three persons for the three best papers given by graduate students at the COV&R 2012 meeting at the International Christian University. 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 Jeremiah Alberg, organizer of COV&R 2012 and chair of the three-person COV&R 2012 Awards Committee at [jlalberg@gmail.com](mailto:jlalberg@gmail.com). Due date for submission is the closing date of the conference registration, June 1, 2012. 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*.

### **COV&R Travel Grants**

Travel grants to attend COV&R 2012 are available for graduate students or independent scholars who are first-time attendees of the COV&R conference and will normally be expected to present a paper at the conference. Write a letter of application accompanied by a letter of recommendation by a COV&R member to that effect to Executive Secretary and conference organizer, Jeremiah Alberg ([jlalberg@gmail.com](mailto:jlalberg@gmail.com)) until the closing date of the conference registration, June 1, 2012. The board will sponsor the attendance of up to ten persons with a maximum amount of \$ 500 each. The officers of COV&R will award the grant in the order of application.

In addition I am hoping that there will be papers submitted that use mimetic theory especially within a Japanese context. It would be wonderful to have panels on Japanese cinema (both classic and contemporary), anime, manga etc. As a plenary speaker we will have Prof. Norio AKASAKA (Gakushuen), an ethnologist who has used mimetic theory extensively in his studies of Japanese culture.

Of course, Japan itself is part of the larger Asian world. We have an opportunity to open COV&R to the voices from this part of the world, voices that are not often heard in our conferences. For this reason I have invited Somaly MAM from Cambodia to address us. Somaly MAM's biography is quite dramatic but, unfortunately, not unique. She was sold into prostitution at a young age. She worked to free herself from this slavery and has founded two organizations to help free other women who are enslaved in this way.

We will also be privileged to share this conference with the members of the Generative Anthropology Society and Conference. Prof. Eric GANS (UCLA and Honorary Member of the Board of COV&R) will be an honored speaker. This will afford an opportunity for dialogue be-

tween COV&R members and those scholars who are working on Generative Anthropology.

We will have the Annual Raymund Schwager Lecture presented by Rev. Richard SCHENK, O.P., newly installed President of the Catholic University at Eichstätt. Prof. Julia ROBERTS is preparing a plenary and a supporting panel discussion on the topic of lynching. There will also be the presentation of the Schwager Awards for best paper submitted by a Graduate Student.

The languages used for presentations will be English and Japanese with some French. Simultaneous translation will be available in addition to copies of the text.

The actual site of the conference is the International Christian University, founded in 1953 by an international (although mainly North American), interdenominational group of Christians. Its beautiful, 600 acre park-like campus is located on the western edge of Tokyo. Flights into either Narita or Haneda (the two international airports serving Tokyo) will work best.

We will be staying in student dormitories. These dorms are brand new and quite comfortable. We will be holding plenary sessions in the university's new "Dialogue House" or conference center. Our meals will be in the same building, in the cafeteria.

Due to costs, I have had to cancel the planned Part II of the conference that was to be held in Hiroshima. I am still willing to plan an excursion there if sufficient people show an interest. There will be way on indicating this interest on the registration page.

### Call for Papers

We welcome papers that use mimetic theory to deepen our understanding of:

- Different instantiations of crisis and their impact, interpretation, or cultural significance (war, natural disaster, man-made catastrophe, social or economic crisis)
- The application of mimetic theory to Japan (ancient, premodern, modern, or postmodern) and its art, media, social developments, or sacred traditions
- Nuclear war, nuclear proliferation (particularly in Asia), and conflict resolution
- Utopian ideals, their roots, and their consequences
- Any paper on subjects related to Girard's thought, the development of mimetic theory, or critical challenges to it

### Submission of Proposals, Panels, and Seminar Topics

Papers for concurrent or parallel session are for 20 minute presentations followed by a brief discussion period. Panels are for 90 minutes. In addition to paper proposals, the Organizers of this conference welcome proposals for seminars on specific topics of interest to the Colloquium. Such proposals should include a designated seminar leader to coordinate the discussion, a description of the topic to be discussed, and a reading list. Accepted seminar proposals will be posted on the Conference webpage. Seminar participants in the Conference should sign up in advance for the given seminar, they will read the assigned essay(s), and they will be requested to write a short reflection (150 words) in response to the reading(s) as a preparation for the discussion.

Proposals for papers, panels, sessions, and seminars are due March 16, 2012. They should include contact information, a title, and an abstract (300 word limit), sent to Jeremiah Alberg via e-mail at: [jlalberg@gmail.com](mailto:jlalberg@gmail.com).

For more information please consult our website: [http://japan-girard-association.org/gatherings\\_activities\\_e\\_callforpapers.html](http://japan-girard-association.org/gatherings_activities_e_callforpapers.html)

*Jeremiah Alberg*

## COV&R AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

### Program of the Annual Meeting November 19-22, 2011, San Francisco, CA



I am pleased to announce that COV&R will be offering three sessions at the upcoming AAR meeting. Most welcome is news from the AAR that each session has been assigned a distinct time: attendees with interests in GIRARD will not be confronted with the need to choose between two equally compelling sessions! COV&R members are encouraged to take this program listing to the AAR meeting because finding our sessions in the program is sometimes a challenge. If you do wish to confirm room assignments on site, please note that the first two sessions are categorized as "additional meetings" and have an "MP" session heading. The final session is an AAR session and has an "A" session heading. In looking in the online program, select "additional meetings" to find our MP sessions. In looking in the print program, summon your best detective skills to identify the page placement in the book of MP sessions. 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](mailto:martha.reineke@uni.edu). I look forward to seeing many of you in San Francisco and hope that all of you will **attend our business meeting** to help plan the 2012 COV&R at the AAR sessions.

The business meeting will take place at approximately **3:00 p.m.** at the conclusion of our **Sunday afternoon (MP 20-201 session)** in the same room.

#### MP19-102

**Saturday November 19,  
2011 9:00 AM-11:30 AM Room: PW-Fillmore**

##### **Colloquium on Violence and Religion**

**9:00-10:10 a.m. Book Session:** Charles Bellinger's, *The Trinitarian Self: The Key to the Puzzle of Violence*

Panelist: Charles Bellinger, Brite Divinity School

Responding: Jim Fodor, St. Bonaventure University

*The Trinitarian Self* suggests that the insights of Kierkegaard, Voegelin, and Girard can be synthesized to form a Trinitarian theological anthropology. Each illuminates a structural dimension of human existence: the temporal trajectory of selfhood, the vertical axis of God and nature, and the horizontal plane of cultural formation. The thesis speaks to important themes associated with the ethics of war and peace (from the press statement).

##### **10:10-10:20 a.m. Break**

**10:20-11:30 a.m. Book Session:** Anthony Bartlett's *Virtually Christian: How Christ Changes Human Meaning and Makes Creation New*

Panelist: Anthony Bartlett, Theology & Peace

Responding: Diana Pasulka, University of North Carolina

Using the seminal anthropology of Girard and drawing out its radical implications *Virtually Christian* reconfigures the traditional framework of theology. Gone are the heavenly otherworld and its metaphysical God. In their place is revealed a God deeply implicated in the human story and laboring with us for a transformed earth. The identity and mission of Jesus become fully understandable against this background. The consequences for teaching and practice are enormous and especially relevant for emerging church Christians. This book provides a vital contemporary reading of both the gospel message and classical Christian thought (from the press statement).

#### A20-122

**Sunday Nov. 20, 9:00 am-11:30 am**

**Room: IC-Grand Ballroom C**

**Co-Sponsored Session with the Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Group**

**Theme: Film and Mimetic Theory: Probing the depths of contemporary film with René Girard's insights**

This session invites consideration of the theological and philosophical perspectives of French thinker René GIRARD when applying these insights to film (especially visual violence). Presenters apply a mimetic theory perspective to select films and interrogate such issues as the visual body as site of mimetic violence; the role of the filmic and narrative double; the social role of symbolic violence; and the role of deception in violent substitution.

**Nikolaus Wandinger, University of Innsbruck, Austria, Presiding**

##### **Presenters:**

**Brian Collins, North Carolina State University**  
*The Sacrificial Ram and the Swan Queen: The Surrogate Victim Mechanism and Mimetic Rivalry in "The Wrestler" and "Black Swan"*

Using René Girard's concepts of the surrogate victim mechanism and mimetic rivalry, this paper explores the ways in which male and female bodies become the sites of conflict and sacrificial violence in Darren ARONOFSKY's two companion films *The Wrestler* (2008) and *Black Swan* (2010). Taking the films together, as the director intended, the paper argues that they each present one aspect of mimetic theory. *The Wrestler's* aptly named protagonist Randy "The Ram" Robinson embodies the power to restore and renew broken social bonds that archaic thought systems suppose the sacrificial victim to have. And the heroine of *Black Swan*, through her rivalrous-erotic relationship with her doppelganger and understudy, exemplifies the violent trajectory of mimetic desire. Ultimately both films expose sacrifice as an empty structure bereft of its efficacy if not its power.

**David Humbert, Thorneloe University**

*Hitchcock and the Scapegoat: A Girardian Reading of "The Wrong Man"*

This paper will establish that scapegoating, as a theme and moral problem, is present in different forms in the body of HITCHCOCK's work, but especially in *The Wrong Man*. René GIRARD's scapegoating theory, which is founded on a theo-

ry of mimetic desire, best accounts for themes that recur in HITCHCOCK's films: mistaken identity, the double, and the innocent man accused. The paper will examine how these themes are crystallized in an underestimated work of HITCHCOCK's maturity: *The Wrong Man* (1956). The film concerns a man whose life is turned upside down when his physical double commits a crime and he is arrested for it. The fate of Manny Balestrero, falsely accused of a series of robberies, reveals the operation of a specific kind of scapegoating mechanism that has its roots in mimetic desire.

**Una Stroda, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago**

*"No Country for Old Men," Rene Girard and Georges Bataille: Can Violence Make Sense?*

The 2007 film "No Country for Old Men" by Joel and Ethan COEN exposes our globalized world as entering a new stage where injustice is merciless, evil no longer has an ethnically or geographically identifiable face, and violence is pointless. From Rene GIRARD's perspective, violence can be explained as a regulatory social mechanism. But can violence make deeper, sacred sense beyond simply being a channel for negative human emotions? George BATAILLE's theory of religion focuses on making sense of violence: ecstatic experience of death eliminates the non-essential mortal self, helps to step out of ordinary experience, to reestablish the lost intimacy with the sacred, to erase boundaries built by individuals of each society, and to create community. Is there a level on which BATAILLE's theory can articulate meaning of violence in the world as it is envisioned to come in the film of the brothers COEN?

**Nicholas Bott, Graduate Theological Union**

*"How Can Satan Cast Out Satan?" Violence and the Birth of the Sacred in Christopher Nolan's "The Dark Knight"*

This essay argues that Christopher NOLAN's, *The Dark Knight*, offers a sustained and successful representation of the hallmarks of GIRARD's mimetic theory—mimesis, rivalry, scandal, and crisis—and finds its climax and subsequent dénouement in the outworking of the mimetic mechanism of the surrogate victim—the scapegoat. This essay next critically examines the Christological conclusions viewers of *The Dark Knight* reach. Batman is often held up as the hero, a Christ figure, whose self-sacrifice is an imitation of Christ's willingness to suffer violence

rather than inflict it. On the contrary, this essay argues that the movie's plot and characterization reveal Batman's willful complicity with the surrogate victim mechanism and identifies him as a figure of the anti-Christ. Finally, the essay argues that viewers' conflicting evaluations of Batman's character testify to GIRARD's claim of the power of the sacred to conceal the truth even after it has been revealed.

**MP20-201**

**Sunday, Nov 20, 1:00 pm-3:30 pm**

**Room: PW-Cyril Magnin II**

**Colloquium on Violence and Religion**

**Martha Reineke, University of Northern Iowa, Presiding**

**Theme: Mimetic Theory and Apocalypse**

Kevin Miller, Huntington University:

*The Jewish Mirror: Double Mimesis in the Apocalyptic Narratives of the Christian Identity and Christian Zionist Movements*

William Johnsen, Michigan State University:

*Achebe's Apocalypse*

Kevin Lenehan, Catholic Theological College, Melbourne:

*Living Faithfully Where Danger Threatens: Christian Discernment in Escalating Times*

The three papers in the session approach the theme of mimetic theory and apocalypse in complementary but distinct ways. MILLER examines the double mimesis at work in the apocalyptic narratives of two contemporary Christian groups: the white supremacist movement called Christian Identity and the dispensationalist movement known as Christian Zionism. Both see Jews as central to the unfolding of end-of-time events. He examines how the hermeneutical practice of the reading of the identity of "the other"—the Jewish other for these groups—through sacred apocalyptic scripture serves as a basis for the construction of the identity of the self.

Considering ACHEBE as an apocalyptic writer, JOHNSEN explores ACHEBE's *Things Fall Apart*, which shows the anthropological insights of Christianity in its reading of 'archaic' religion and the influence of those insights on the community even as ACHEBE extends but perhaps also hijacks a reading of victimization which was slowly emerging in the indigenous religious community.

LENEHAN interrogates a Christian imaginary that empowers a process of conversion from the

dominion of a violently constructed “sacred” (le sacré) to participation in a peaceably created realm of “holiness” (le saint). Recognizing that this journey of conversion leaves us still standing “where danger threatens” (HÖLDERLIN), LENEHAN locates in the Conferences of Cassian practices of discernment that, from a Girardian perspective, offer prospects for encountering—even in apocalyptic darkness—a presence of “that which saves from the danger.”

### 3.00 p.m.: Business Meeting to plan 2012 sessions

*Martha Reineke*

#### **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Since this is my first presidential letter to the members of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, I want to begin with an expression of gratitude on behalf of all of us to Wolfgang PALAVER, who concluded his second term as President at the COV&R Business Meeting in Salina, Italy. Wolfgang has led the Colloquium wisely and well, serving in a series of different leadership positions over the course of two decades. He has given COV&R his loving attention, his time, his talent. He has nurtured especially our younger members, in order to safeguard the future of COV&R. He has collaborated cordially with other Girardian organizations. He has supported the scholarly work of others in many ways, including the organization of the 2003 COV&R Conference in Innsbruck and the recent Symposium on GIRARD and World Religions held at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, the editing of several volumes of collected essays, and his own exemplary monographs on mimetic theory, political philosophy, and inter-religious relations. We all owe a great deal to Wolfgang PALAVER. Thank you, Wolfgang!

A debt of sincere gratitude is owed, too, to Maria Stella BARBERI, Pasquale MORABITO, and the entire team who hosted the 2011 COV&R Meeting in Salina. The insular site admittedly presented some logistical and linguistic challenges, but that same site also afforded our members a rich experience of incredible natural beauty, of Sicilian tradition, and of hospitality. One can hardly imagine a better place in the Mediterranean for COV&R to gather together to meditate on the mimetic conflicts, the order and the disorder, that have shaped the European past and that qual-

ify its present and future. Thank you, Maria Stella and Pasquale! I join with the hard-working organizers of COV&R 2011 to thank all who attended the conference and contributed in any way to its success.

At the Business Meeting we gratefully saluted the contributions made by out-going members of the Advisory Board, at the completion of their terms: Simon De KEUKELAERE, Michael KIRWAN, Simon SIMONSE, and Susan SRIGLEY. We accepted the re-appointments to the Board of Dorothy WHISTON and Martha REINEKE. We approved the appointments to the Advisory Board of five new members: Scott COWDELL (Australia), Pasquale MORABITO (Italy), Sheelah HIDDEN (UK), Mathias MOOSBRUGGER (Austria), and Thomas RYBA (USA). And we elected Jeremiah ALBERG as Executive Secretary.

I feel privileged to serve COV&R in company with these fine colleagues, with our continuing members of the Board (honorary and elected), and with our other officers—William JOHNSEN, Dietmar REGENSBURGER, Keith ROSS, and Nikolaus WANDINGER—each of whom brings a special contribution to our common work. I pledge myself to continue to serve COV&R to the best of my ability, counting on your help and your strengths to make up for my disabilities.

And what is our common work? At the beginning of a presidential term, it's appropriate to reflect on that and to remind ourselves of our four-fold mission as an organization:

First, *to study* the mimetic theory that is our precious inheritance from René GIRARD. The recent establishment of the Girard archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, France—a scholarly deposit of tremendous import, for which we owe heartfelt gratitude to the whole GIRARD family and to the notable efforts of Benoît CHANTRE—affords new opportunities in this regard. This obligation to study the mimetic theory is a serious and challenging one. GIRARD's many writings; the development of his thought across an entire lifetime; the contextual understanding of individual statements, books, and essays; the precision (and imprecision) of technical terms employed by GIRARD; the recurrence of themes and citations in different contexts—all of these demand study, and not only by novices seeking to know the ABCs of mimetic theory.

In this regard, one only has to think about how much the members of the Colloquium have

learned about the mimetic theory in this past year through the re-reading of GIRARD's first book, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, fifty years after its first publication in French. A Girardian "classic," it yields ever new knowledge as our contextual understanding of it (in its own time and in the present) changes.

Similarly, one might consider the on-going reexamination of key Girardian terms: "lynching," for example, "misrecognition," "mediation" (internal, external, vertical, innermost), "envy" (in contradistinction to "jealousy"), "guilt" (as opposed to "shame"), "sacrifice," and even mimesis itself (positive, negative) in relation to violence. As these key terms come into question, they draw us back to the texts, to the sources, to study.

(Under the heaving of "study," I want to commend especially the work of Thérèse ONDERDENWIJNGAARD and all those involved in the Girard Summer School, which, with the support of Imitatio, Inc., is introducing a new generation to the mimetic theory.)

Second, *to apply* the mimetic theory. GIRARD himself has applied his insights concerning mimetic desire, scapegoating, and violence, to an ever growing number of fields of inquiry. COV&R has inherited this spirit. It is always exciting to see a new field, a new discipline, represented on the program of a COV&R conference—for example, musicology, architecture, law, medicine, rhetoric, neurology—and a delight to see the applicability of mimetic theory to practically everything.

In recent years, the Raven Foundation has enriched COV&R through its special efforts to encourage the application of mimetic theory to popular culture and to contemporary politics as a way of illuminating its phenomena. This sustained practice of application has had an educational impact and, in Suzanne ROSS's analysis, shed light upon the pedagogical work of gifted educators (notably, Maria MONTESSORI). The regular application of mimetic theory argues for its practical importance and shows its relevance to everyday life. It also provides a way of studying mimetic theory through a series of examples.

COV&R members involved in professional work aimed (in one way or another) at conflict resolution—whether spiritual, psychological, domestic, within businesses, or societal—have applied, and continue to apply, mimetic theory in

real-life settings. The stakes involved in such applications run high. We owe a great deal to these peacemakers, from whose experience we continue to learn.

Third, *to criticize* the mimetic theory. This third function presupposes the first (to study) and second (to apply) and is, to some extent, their natural outflow. GIRARD himself humbly has offered the "mimetic hypothesis" (as he sometimes called it) up for "scientific" testing, and he—unlike many French intellectuals—has publically revised and retracted earlier statements of his that had drawn constructive criticism, even as he has consistently defended and forcefully reiterated the fundamental principles of his insight.

The criticism of GIRARD's work by COV&R members and by others has taken a variety of forms. Theologians, for example, have tested it against the rule of faith. Literary scholars have invoked the standards and techniques of close-reading, of source study, of biographical criticism. Anthropologists have pointed to cultural instances that do not conform (at least superficially) to Girardian generalization. Feminists have called attention to this or that apparent blindspot, while welcoming other aspects of GIRARD's theory. Virtually all critics have compared and contrasted GIRARD's mimetic theory with the theoretical observations of others (e.g., PLATO, SARTRE, SCHMITT, FREUD, FRAZER, HOBBS, KRISTEVA, ARENDT, WEIL, LEVINAS, AGAMBEN, DERRIDA, TAYLOR, VATTIMO, VON BALTHASAR) who have commented on the same or similar objects of analysis.

In general, the constructive criticism of the mimetic theory is to be regarded as thoroughly Girardian in its *ethos*. The end result of such criticism—especially as it is defined by a process of comparison and contrast and presupposes a solid, appreciative knowledge of GIRARD's work—has been a strengthening of the mimetic theory and increased respect for it within the wider academy and reading public.

Fourth, *to develop* the mimetic theory. This fourth function presupposes the others and arises as their consequence.

When asked "What's next on the agenda?" COV&R members have answered in different ways. Robert HAMERTON-KELLY has made a forceful case for the combination of mimetic theory with biological research in the cognitive sciences (building upon Scott R. GARREL's research

concerning mirror neurons). Speaking in Salina, Andrew MCKENNA has called for a stronger integration of the study of history by Girardians, following the leading of GIRARD himself in *Battling to the End*. In his closing “Letter from the President,” Wolfgang PALAVER advocated the application of mimetic theory to the study of non-Christian religions and to comparative theology. Sandor GOODHART has seconded Wolfgang’s call, but he has also made his own appeal for a renewal of Girardian literary criticism under the banner of ethical reading. In his contribution to a forum of essays on GIRARD’s *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, forthcoming in *Religion and Literature*, Robert DORAN urges the study of GIRARD’s existentialist sources.

Clearly, then, there is more than one answer to the “What’s next?” question. My hope is that every member of COV&R will have a personal answer to give to it—an answer marking each one’s own continued study, application, critique, and possible development of the mimetic theory. If each one can find someone else who shares the same general answer and interest, all the better, because COV&R is not a collection of individuals who just happen all to have read GIRARD. No, it’s that rare thing—a community of thoughtful persons who have found a location and a language in the mimetic theory that allows them to speak with each other, to think out loud in the freedom that friendship affords, about things that really matter. Let’s do our best to keep it that way.

Ann W. Astell

### **MUSINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

I have decided to simply continue with Ann’s “Musings from the Executive Secretary,” although my muse is of an entirely different order from hers. (Rumor has it that hers was from the very top of the angelic hierarchy, perhaps a Seraphim. While I cannot confirm the rumor, it would not surprise me. Mine is more like Clarence from *It’s a Wonderful Life*, still trying to earn his wings. But no complaints, one works with what one is given.) I hope that I will be forgiven for beginning this series of musings with a self-introduction that concentrates on how I got involved with COV&R.

Let’s take a somewhat oblique path. I am not sure exactly why, but as a child of seven or eight years, I had decided what I did *not* want to be

when I grew up. I knew that I did not want to be a “Nazi.”

I cannot reconstruct the exact events that led me to that conclusion, but I do remember thinking that I desperately needed to find a way to make sure that I did not become a “Nazi.” I am using the concepts of my eight-year-old self here (thus the quotation marks). I did not mean that I wanted to make sure that I never became a member of the German National Socialist party. Rather, I understood that there had been a dominant group that had killed a lot of people and that only a few, the heroes, I will call them, had challenged this. The heroes were also killed. So it seemed to me at the time that I would eventually be faced with the choice of being either a Nazi or a hero (it never seemed to enter my mind, interestingly enough, that I might be one of the victims). I really wanted to be a hero, but I perceived all kinds of difficulties with making sure that that would happen. It was not because of the courage needed to be a hero—at nine I had no difficulty thinking that I could be very brave. The difficulty was of a different order. I somehow understood that a lot of the people who had lived through this period probably all wished now that they had been heroes, and that when they were children probably did not want to grow up to be “Nazis.”

I knew a couple of other things, or at least figured them out as I thought about this problem. First, just deciding I would never do what the dominant group was doing would not work. This had seemed like a promising way. “The crowd is wrong,” therefore do the opposite of what the crowd does. Even as a child there was something much too reactive about that way of thinking. I would always have to watch others, trying to decide if this constituted a large movement and then do the opposite. Also at the time, there were leaders like the Rev. Martin Luther KING who were calling people to be part of a movement that was dedicated to doing something good.

Second, I knew that whatever I meant by “not wanting to be a Nazi,” it would not look like Nazism when it was my turn. In other words I understood that looking back with 20/20 hindsight was the easy part, it was looking forward and seeing the truth through the fog of current events that was the challenge. So I was always on the lookout for some failsafe way to be on the “right” side.

I can see now that there was a lot of impurity in my desire not to be a “Nazi” and the concomi-



tant desire to be a hero. When the movie was made about my life I wanted to be the good guy who dies for the right cause. But there were other things at work, especially the idea of both my need to develop the kind of vision that gives a person moral clarity and my lack of capacity to do it on my own.

I also grew to realize that there was no failsafe method. More deeply, I came to see how the only way to take even baby steps away from becoming what I most feared was to admit that I was “it” already and that the very desire at all costs not to be associated with “them,” even when “them” was the “Nazis” is one of the deepest manifestations of the problem.

Fast forward to middle-age. I would still like to develop a moral vision. In spite of the difficulties, in spite of being powerless by myself to ensure that I see and live the truth, I remained convinced that it is a real possibility. It is in this context that I discovered GIRARD’s thought in my mid-thirties and I attended my first COV&R conference in my mid-forties. To date, I have been spared through historical accident the terrible necessity of making the choices people had to make in Nazi Germany.

What I have discovered, and I know of no other way of expressing it, is that mimetic theory undoes me. It dissolves layers of belonging to, of longing for, of entanglement with. In mimetic theory I found a way of thinking that at the very least has made it more difficult for me to accuse others. It seems to take away, rather than provide, the kind of foundation I would need in order to know that I am so much in the right that others are not only wrong but also evil. Mimetic theory has made scapegoating not impossible, but more difficult. By privileging the victim’s viewpoint, mimetic theory opened the door to developing the kind of vision that gives one moral clarity.

But developing that vision is still beyond my capacity. I need others in a variety of ways. COV&R provides for one of the ways that I need others to help develop this vision. In COV&R I found a group of people who, for all their differences and failings, are committed to a theory that has real world implications and applications. Accordingly, I am very happy to be able to serve this group in some small way by performing the function of Executive Secretary.

Jeremiah Alberg

## REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

### COV&R Conference 2011 on Salina (Italy)

In sight of the constantly smoking peak of Stromboli and only a few kilometres away from Vulcano, in Roman mythology believed to be the smithy of the god Vulcan himself, there could hardly have been a geographically more adequate location for this year’s COV&R conference entitled “Disorder / Order in History and Politics.” It seems quite appropriate that the beautiful Aeolian island of Salina near Sicily with its thousands of years of history of human culture built upon the slopes of what used to be nothing but a volcano itself (dormant or extinct, that’s the question) was where the *Colloquium on Violence and Religion* started its third decade of dealing with questions of desire, violence, chaos, and the possibility of human society. Organized by Maria Stella BARBERI, Pasquale Maria MORABITO, Francesco SAIA and Margherita GENIALE (University of Messina, *The European Center of Studies on Myth and Symbol*), the “Godfathers” and “Godmothers” of the whole event, the big Italian group within COV&R brought the conference to Italy for the very first time. It obviously was not the easiest job organizing an event like this attended by about 150 people on a small touristic island where there was no university infrastructure (or anything like it) at hand and where all the participants had to be housed in residences all over the place!

The conference started with Francesco MERCADANTE from the Roman University *La Sapienza* who gave the *Raymund Schwager, S.J. Memorial Lecture* dealing with the *Weltanschauung* of the famous Italian poet and moralist Giacomo LEOPARDI and presenting him as an example of a life being lived torn between a sorrowful longing for life and a nihilistic drive toward death and destruction. Unfortunately, the technical means that were to allow the majority of us, who did not speak Italian, to follow the train of thought were not compatible with MERCADANTE’s extempore-presentation—let alone that the projection of his main theses on a white-board could hardly be read by those sitting in the first two rows of the audience. This problem occurred in several of the following sessions. Of course, this definitely should not discourage future organizers from the indeed very promising approach to integrate key thinkers of the country hosting the conference in-

to the programme, even if they cannot give their presentations in English. For conferences to come it seems to be a good idea, though, to provide simultaneous or at least consecutive translation in such cases. The active attendance of numerous young Italian graduate students in the parallel sessions was quite impressive, as well, and showed the importance of mimetic theory among young Italian scholars. But, in my eyes, in the future the problem of language has to be faced in these cases, too, if one does not want the crowd resp. the conference to get split into the “indigenous” who only visit the sessions held in their mother tongue, and the others.

As usual, the three-and-a-half-day conference consisted of a vast variety of approaches to numerous topics from the viewpoint of mimetic theory, reaching from (political) philosophy to literature, history of art and film to theology and religious studies, and they certainly cannot be displayed in a short report like this (not least because the parallel sessions do not allow to attend all the talks one would actually like to, anyway). Nevertheless, I think there were two focuses, which were quite present in several papers and talks throughout the whole conference and which, at the same time, set the tone for important general questions lingering within the COV&R group as a whole.

One was the question of the identity of Europe and its standing in times of deep crisis. Papers like Andreas OBERPRANTACHER’s “Mare Nostrum. Or: What is a mass grave?” and Pasquale MORABITO’s “Reformation vs. Counterreformation: a Paradigm of European Identity and Rivalry” addressed this question from different approaches. How to deal with this challenge remains highly controversial, as the conference has shown once again, not only on a global level but also among those who specifically use a Girardian approach in their work. There seems to be one approach, in Salina especially represented by Wolfgang PALAVER’s elaborate attempt “Europe and Enmity: How Christianity can Contribute to a Positive Identity” in the plenary session entitled “Europe: the Land Opposite.” He started from the sociological concept recently labelled “parochial altruism”, promoted by anthropologist S. BOWLES and others, understanding solidarity within a group as based on enmity against an outside-group. PALAVER suggested, following S. WEIL and H. de LUBAC, that Europe’s contribu-

tion from its Christian heritage, which was historically often deformed to fit in the boundaries of this sociological process of exclusion, could be to transform this internally productive and yet externally violent “parochial altruism” through what he called a “new form of saintliness.” In this vein PALAVER reminded us that the original meaning of “parochial”—a word coming from ancient Greek—was not focused on the maintenance of a distinct social group against others but on a specific social life-form of people who felt like living as foreigners in exile themselves. In PALAVER’s eyes, Europe’s identity, historically resulting from its battles against Islam (T.G. ASH), could thus be renewed by a form of group solidarity not dependent on systematic exclusion. In his talk “Building Bridges of Truth: The Church, the Pope, and the Survival of Europe”, given in a parallel session, Gil BAILIE chose a quite different path. Europe is, in his eyes, a continent which has to be rescued, and it is the current pope, BENEDICT XVI, who started this rescue mission intellectually in his famous speech at the University of Regensburg in 2006. It is, for BAILIE, simply necessary for the survival of Europe’s cultural heritage to keep its Christian foundations alive, which means not least defending the essential connection of faith and reason. This connection is endangered not only by modern relativism but also by the considerable growth and influence of Islam because, as BAILIE suggested, within this religion there is no place for human reason at all; for the more irrational a religious act is, the more pious it is regarded within Islam. Islam can therefore, according to BAILIE, be no essential part of a European identity and must remain excluded from it. In the conference one could almost feel the differences within the COV&R group, when it came to deciding whether the one or the other approach was the appropriate one. So, it came as no surprise that the plenary talk, again given in Italian, of the Italian politician Magdi Cristiano ALLAM, MEP, a born Egyptian and Muslim baptized by BENEDICT XVI himself in 2008, entitled “Mediterranean Sea: A Place for Clash. Cultural, Geopolitical, and Religious Matters” and displaying his opinion of the necessity of working against an aggressive Islam as the arch-enemy of the European values of personal freedom and political liberty, was received rather ambiguously. It seems to me that this latent controversy is an important one

because the decision whether one leans more towards the one or the other approach not only affects the relation between mimetic theory and Islam (and other religions) or the self-concept of Europe but also the question whether it is possible from a mimetic point of view to develop forms of human social life without the exclusion of others—or whether this is impossible. Or could it be that Girardian thinking as a whole is intrinsically paradoxical, as Stephen GARDNER pointed out in his talk following PALAVER's? But wouldn't such a "third way" in between the two paths proposed by PALAVER and BAILIE make it impossible to deal with these important matters practically at all and render mimetic theory, consequently, a purely rationalistic and idle pastime for academics?

What I believe to have been the second focus of the conference was, naturally, a far less controversial one: The *Colloquium* had reason to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> "birthday" of mimetic theory, because, as is well known, in 1961 René GIRARD first published his *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*. With this book he began his long journey of exploring the humanities from what he had come to believe to be of the utmost importance: mimetic desire as the anthropological force behind the cultural, psychological, and religious history of humankind. This anniversary was taken into account by several speakers. So, for example, Scott COWDELL pointed out in his fascinating paper "The Kingdom Growing in Secret: Conversion or Apocalypse?" that starting from *Mensonge Romantique* one could develop a theologically valid form of dealing with the difficulties of human desire, if the notion and process of *conversion*, which has ever been so important for GIRARD, is further developed as a certain discipline of renunciation and self-abstention on the background of what COWDELL called "redeemed desire." This form of positive mimesis imitates Christ as a "non-model-model" who, to a certain extent, did everything not to be imitated himself and thus turn off the engine of rivalistic desire. To live this kind of mimesis today without going mad, one needs, as COWDELL pointed out referring to the late Raymund SCHWAGER, a rethought ecclesiology seeing the church as a "non-tribal tribe," where there is no systemic rivalry among those following Jesus. Developing such an ecclesiology is a task not yet engaged with. Such questions were also addressed in a seminar given by

Nikolaus WANDINGER and myself, "Mimetic Theory and Dramatic Theology in the Making. A Correspondence and its Consequences": In SCHWAGER's last and unfinished book "Dogma and Dramatic History" he also dealt with such issues. In a plenary discussion exclusively dedicated to *Mensonge romantique*, Sandor GOODHART, Benoît CHANTRE, William JOHNSEN, Andrew MCKENNA and Silvio MORIGI talked about their relationship to GIRARD's earliest book and how they connected it with the development of mimetic theory in general and their own intellectual life. CHANTRE especially drew attention to Girard's latest book *Achever Clausewitz*, which in his eyes is nothing but the logical end of the intellectual project GIRARD had begun in 1961, then starting with analysing the "ontological sickness on a *psychological* level" and, finally, climaxing in the "ontological sickness on a *military* level." MCKENNA addressed the question of the future of mimetic theory and argued that after literature, anthropology, psychology, theology, etc. the next step mimetic theory has to take is to develop a mimetic historiography, maybe the last of the humanities where mimetic theory has to date not only hardly attracted any interest, but also an academic field where hardly any Girardians work themselves. Coming from a historical background myself I cannot but wholeheartedly agree with this.

This year's Raymund Schwager, S.J. *Memorial Essay Prize* for graduate students was shared by three winners, John EDWARDS (1<sup>st</sup> prize), Leon MARINCOWITZ (2<sup>nd</sup> prize), and Marco RUSSO (3<sup>rd</sup> prize). EDWARDS's essay gave a reconstruction of James ALISON's use of mimetic theory in his theological thinking, especially focussing on the importance of the traditional distinction between *fides quae* (what is believed) and *fides qua* (the process of believing). He showed that ALISON's connection between GIRARD's anthropological thinking and theological work is not to be situated in the field of *fides quae*, but that GIRARD's understanding of the Romanesque conversion is, in a way, a distinct form of what the theological tradition meant when it spoke about *fides qua*. MARINCOWITZ took up the subject of revenge, a key notion of mimetic theory, and, coming from the point or view of political science, posed the question how this destructive logic of reciprocity could be undermined by the logic of forgiveness. He presented Václav HAVEL,

the former president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, as a man who promoted such a logic, although HAVEL failed in fully transferring it into political reality. Marco RUSSO's paper dealt with the Italian film-maker and philosopher Pier-Paolo PASOLINI and his understanding of myth and its relevance for human society, especially when it faces deep crisis. According to him, PASOLINI seems to have been a thinker who understood the ambiguous roots of myth perfectly, but at the same time was drawn to it, because—more and more—he tended to see it as the only possible escape from ultimate chaos and disorder.



*Schwager-Prize-Winners Leon MARINCOWITZ, John EDWARDS and Marco RUSSO with then Executive Secretary Ann ASTELL*

Salina definitely was a COV&R conference to remember, not only because of the simply wonderful possibility of refreshing oneself in between sessions in the Mediterranean Sea—a possibility regularly taken by several participants. In my eyes, it also showed quite clearly where open questions and breaches linger within the COV&R group itself, when it comes to using the insights of mimetic theory in concrete, socio-political agendas like the standing towards Islam and—more generally speaking—on the possibility of human social life without exclusion. Consequently dealing with controversial issues such as these alone will definitely provide us with more than enough material for the coming 50 years of thinking and re-thinking mimetic theory.

*Mathias Moosbrugger*

## **Briefs from the Business Meeting on June 17, 2011 in Salina**

I will keep this briefing as short as possible. Therefore I will leave out all information given at the Business Meeting that appears already in any other section of this Bulletin.

After a brief evaluation of the current conference—which is well reflected in the President's Letter (p. 6) and the Report on the Conference (p. 9)—, Bill JOHNSEN informed us that Imitatio will continue to sponsor the free distribution of the *Studies in Violence, Mimesis, And Culture Series* to COV&R members. The book series will also be on project Muse and will go into the same database. Imitatio's generosity is appreciated very much in this regard.

In my function as Bulletin editor I informed the audience that the Board had decided to make the respective current Bulletin also available online to everyone, that means without password restriction.

For information on next year's conference by Jeremiah ALBERG see p. 1 of this Bulletin. Outgoing President Wolfgang PALAVER reported on plans for the 2013 meeting. Earlier plans to go to Eastern Central Europe were postponed with regard to the fact that two thirds of our members are North American. It did not seem wise to go so far away from America for three times in a row. Therefore it was decided that the **2013 conference** will be held at the **University of Northern Iowa**. It will be hosted by **Martha Reineke** and will take place from **July 10-14**. The suggested theme will be "Land between two Rivers: Space, Place, and Mimetic Theory".

Wolfgang also gave some departing advice for the future of COV&R: He recommended that 2014 should see a COV&R conference in Eastern Central Europe (Poland or the Czech Republic). The Board should try to gather suggestions for this. Scott COWDELL, head of the Australian Girard Seminar, which was founded this year (see *Bulletin* no. 38, p. 9-10), extended an invitation for a COV&R conference in Australia, which Wolfgang thought would be best to accept for 2015. Scott explained that it could take place at the University of Canberra. Another possibility would be to come to Sydney. Possible topics would include relations with Aborigines and immigration.—By the way: **The Australian Girard Seminar** will hold its second annual **meeting on**

**January 13-14, 2012 in Melbourne** (see: <http://www.australiangirardseminar.org/>).

Another recommendation of our outgoing president was that the Board should do even more to enable young scholars who have scarce means to attend COV&R conferences, so that young scholars can stay in contact with COV&R.

The previous year it had been decided, following Sandy Goodhart's suggestion, to make a five-year-commitment to the topic of lynching at COV&R conferences. When the Board tried to find a concrete form for this, it was realized that a five-year-commitment would be too ambitious and would place too many financial constraints on COV&R. Therefore it was decided that there will be a planning committee to develop a concrete suggestion of how to organize this important objective; and there will be a plenary session on the topic at next year's conference. The results of the planning committee and of next year's session on the matter will provide us with more experience to decide on how to proceed. Sandy Goodhart agreed to this plan and will be a member of planning committee.

The results of the elections to the board are already given by our new President's, Ann Astell's, Letter (see p. 6). She proceeded to thank Wolfgang PALAVER for his long-standing engagements in COV&R in a variety of functions: Bulletin Editor, Executive Secretary, Conference Organizer, and finally President. This was greeted with a long applause.

Life-time honorary Board Member Robert HAMERTON-KELLY took the chance to thank Wolfgang, remembering that he had been there from the beginning, together with Raymund SCHWAGER and Józef NIEWIADOMSKI, and Bob recalled that during the first years the survival of COV&R was only possible through the institutional support given to it by the University of Innsbruck through this group. Bob also recalled former presidents of COV&R.

President Ann ASTELL asked us to hold back further applause and words of appreciation because there would be a general round of thanks at the conference's concluding banquet in the evening. The meeting was adjourned with this happy prospect.

*Nikolaus Wanderinger*

## **Surviving our Origins: Violence and the Sacred in evolutionary-historical time.**

**Centre for Research in the Arts,  
Social Sciences and Humanities**

**Friday 27th May – Saturday 28th May 2011,  
St John's College, Cambridge**

The exquisite city of Cambridge, or more precisely, the serene setting of its St John's College, seems an unlikely and perhaps ironic venue to contemplate our survival as a species. But the Cambridge based Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) sponsored a conference there on May 27th and 28th entitled: "Surviving Our Origins: violence and the sacred in evolutionary-historical time."

Convened by Dr Pierpaolo ANTONELLO (University of Cambridge) and Professor Paul GIFFORD (University of St Andrews), the conference was devoted to the 'Mimetic Theory' of René GIRARD, "insofar as it addresses the role of mimesis and violence in the constitution of human culture and social order."

On the Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, the speakers addressed various aspects of "Violence, the Sacred and the Science of Origins" and, on the Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>, "A History of Violence (and its renunciation)."

David WILSON (Binghamton University SUNY) "More than a blank slate? Biology, evolutionary inheritance and violence". Dr WILSON posed questions such as "Are religious meaning systems more prone to violent conflict than non-religious meaning systems?" "Is human violence a human universal or an evolutionary universal?" He posited that "cultural diversity is like biological diversity; it is part of the evolutionary process."

David BARASH, (Washington) "Payback: retaliation, redirected aggression and revenge in animals and humans". Dr BARASH saw the evidence for this phenomenon of redirected aggression as having a biological underpinning, arguing that this fact provided a new way of understanding the mechanism of scapegoating.

Melvin KONNER (Emory) "Sacred Violence, Mimetic Rivalry, and War"

Dr KONNER cited a series of anthropological evidence which attempts to substantiate some of the claims made by GIRARD. He spoke of the role of violence and sacred violence in the formation, organisation and stabilisation of groups of primates and more evolved hominids alike. He



**GIRARDstudiekring**  
dutch GIRARD society

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## ***SECOND SUMMER SCHOOL MIMETIC THEORY 2012***

**The Netherlands**  
**15 – 29 July 2012**

The second Summer School Mimetic Theory will be held from 15-29 July 2012 in Leusden the Netherlands. The Summer School offers an in depth and interdisciplinary understanding of Girard's basic texts and their contexts, and targets students who have some preliminary knowledge of Mimetic Theory as well as those students who want to explore its specific interdisciplinary character.

The way Mimetic Theory addresses culture, religion and violence is of great interest for an understanding of crises in our world today. Where information technology instantly connects people across the globe, where time accelerates with an unprecedented speed, and where political and organizing processes have become extremely complex, Girard's insights in the centrality of mimesis in the emergence of desires, conflicts, and violence provide a firm ground for the formulation of new research questions.

The Summer School is a unique opportunity for students to gain an intimate knowledge of Mimetic Theory, to share their interests with each other and to connect with established Girardian scholars in different fields.

### **Student profile**

The Summer School targets Master students and PhD students who intend or consider using Mimetic Theory in their studies, or are otherwise interested in Mimetic Theory. Some preliminary acquaintance with the work of René Girard is required. The number of participants is 25 max.

### **Teachers**

The teaching team includes James ALISON (independent scholar Sao Paolo, Brazil), Paul DU-  
MOUCHEL (Ritsumeikan University Kyoto, Japan), and Sandor GOODHART (Purdue University West-  
Lafayette, US), who have published articles and books on mimetic theory and have taken on the chal-  
lenge to develop the central insights of the theory in their own fields. Their intimate acquaintance with  
mimetic theory and with GIRARD's teaching style guarantees an inspiring learning experience.

### **Course content**

The course addresses the three core books by René Girard: *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, *Violence and the Sacred*, and *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*.

The course aims at:

- Mastering of basic concepts
- Understanding and appreciation of the innovative character of the theory
- Acquiring a different way of reading texts
- Appreciation of the place of each work in the overall corps of Girard's work

The course will be taught in English. Teaching takes the form of lectures, seminar groups and individual supervision. Reading assignments will be given before the Summer School proper, as well as during the course. We expect students to write a proposal for a paper.

### **Preliminary requirements**

Students are expected to have read *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, *Violence and the Sacred* and parts of *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*.

## Venue

The International School of Philosophy in Leusden, known for its inspiring learning climate and located 50 kilometres from Amsterdam, will host the Summer School.

## Tuition fee

The tuition fee is € 500, and includes food and lodging. Participants should arrange their own travel and insurance. The tuition fee has to be paid via bank transfer and should be received by 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

## Application and information

For more information regarding programme and application, please, visit the website of the Dutch Girard Society, link through to Summer School 2012, and download the application form. The application deadline is 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

*Thérèse Onderdenwijngaard*

stressed the role of narratives and the fact that the human species is the only one to remember and teach through narratives, citing the stories of Cain and Abel, the sons of Oedipus, Simone WEIL's "The Iliad, or the Poem of Force", the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the Sacrifice of Isaac.

Paul DUMOUCHEL (Kyoto) "Naturalizing ethics: a Girardian perspective." Professor DUMOUCHEL pointed out that the Girardian approach does not set out to naturalize ethics but rather proposes a different research programme from much that usually goes under this name. He saw the Girardian approach as bringing the tools and methods, rather than simply the results of natural science to bear on its objects and questions, and argued that GIRARD's approach gives much finer grained explanations of various moral beliefs and practices.

Roberto FARNETI (Bozen-Frankfurt) "On Political Origins: Words or (Mimetic) Deeds?" This paper informed us of a strand in modern intellectual history which challenges the "in the beginning was the word" hypothesis and the time-honoured idea that humans socialise by means of words. Dr FARNETI maintained that the deed-first hypothesis has to date failed to challenge its rival; he elaborated by taking a number of variants of the deed-first school (notably the mimetic hypothesis on the process of hominization) and demonstrated how its tradition illustrates its epistemic advantages.

James WELLMAN (Washington) Jon PAHL (Philadelphia) "The Origins of Nations and Religious Violence: Imagining Trans-Atlantic America; interrogating Evolution." This paper, which was presented conjunctly, touched on aspects of some American Protestantism and its Calvinist origins, where science and the biblical text are scapegoated in creationist readings. Religious sadism and American pre-emption, mega churches and blood atonement theory, were discussed. Both speakers saw a regression to the archaic sacred as being at the heart of these beliefs, where "religion has been used to rationalise war, by using

religious-sacrificial systems that make holy the scapegoat/victim."

Paul GIFFORD (St Andrews) "Girard, the Gospels and the symmetrical inversion of the Founding Scapegoat Murder." Professor GIFFORD, who sees the gospels as a relatively little visited zone of Girardian theory, demonstrated to us that GIRARD believes that the most essential default mechanism programmed into us by evolution, was, and remains, the scapegoat or victimary mechanism. Imprinted at the threshold of hominisation, as a recourse against intra-specific violence, this default mechanism formed the prime condition of human emergence, survival and civilisational progress; yet it is also what mortgages human survival today, unless evolutionary survival is relayed and replaced by some genuine hope of salvation, such as that proclaimed by the Christian gospels.

Wolfgang PALAVER (Innsbruck) "From closed societies to the open society: parochial altruism and Christian universalism." In describing altruism as a condition that benefits others at a cost to one's self, Professor PALAVER went on to demonstrate how altruism towards one's own and hostility and suspicion towards others is the basis for an exclusive society where solidarity is based on the friend/enemy dynamic. Recent anthropological research has shown how much throughout history human solidarity has relied most often on enmity against outside groups; enmity against other groups is one of humanity's strongest forces to foster solidarity. But Christianity has most profoundly challenged this type of solidarity and slowly, along with other mystic religious, has transformed the world by replacing closed societies with an open society. This is not without its own problems as we are still in the middle of a cultural struggle which the birth to the open society necessitates. As parochial altruism weakens it regresses to the beginnings of human culture without the means to develop strong forms of universal solidarity. René GIRARD interprets this current state of our world as an apocalyptic age.

Michael NORTHCOTT, (Edinburgh) “Battling to the end in melting ice: the failure of climate politics and the duel at the end of history.” With summer at the North Pole on course to melt completely by 2020 the earth will enter a geological phase of rapid warming that it has not been in for more than a million years. Professor NORTHCOTT sees the possibility of retreating from the crisis as receding as the nations, and in particular the USA and China, envisage the quest for energy. Growing climate instability, in terms of a duel for power and domination will escalate in the twenty-first century. In this context GIRARD’s recent account of von CLAUSEWITZ’s view of modern warfare as not only a duel, but an act of force with no logical limit, is perceptive.

Michael KIRWAN (Heythrop College, University of London) “Apocalypse Girardian and theological: a new heaven and a new earth.”

Dr KIRWAN refers to the “apocalyptic turn” in the writing of GIRARD as a revaluation of his earlier thought. The “apocalyptic turn” in *Achever Clausewitz* offers a historical thesis—that it is in the French Revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath that the origins of our current crises are to be found—and a biblical-theological one—that the Book of Revelation and other scriptural apocalyptic texts provide unique insight into our predicament.

Derick WILSON (University of Ulster) “Girard, violence and the Troubles in N. Ireland.” Dr WILSON described the recent conflict in Northern Ireland as “being in the midst of a vortex of revenge and retaliation.” He continued, “our violence to ‘different others’ has been simultaneously visible and yet denied. To find freeing relationships and structures in civil, public and political spheres is essential if we are to find new ways to acknowledge one another and to seek repentance and forgiveness.”

The conference was supported by Imitatio, San Francisco, the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) and St John’s College at the University of Cambridge’

*Sheelah Treflé Hidden*

### Good News from Poland

I can report from Poland that the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (UKSW) in Warsaw is opening up to the mimetic theory. Last year, professor Marian KOWALCZYK, SAC, director of the Institute of the Theology of Apostolate (ITA), which constitutes part of the Theological Faculty of the university, invited Wiel EGGEN (SMA, member of the Dutch Girard Society) and myself to lead a course applying René GIRARD’s thought. The ITA educates postgraduate and doctoral students (about 40), mainly Catholic priests, though there are also a few nuns and lay people among them. Since feedback from the students was very positive, placing our lectures among the

most interesting and valuable, professor KOWALCZYK offered us a four-year course.

In the academic year of 2011/2012 another 100 postgraduate and doctoral students (in the majority Catholic priests) of the School of Pastoral Theology (belonging to the Theological Faculty UKSW) will familiarize with the mimetic theory, because they will attend our course for four years too, separately. We owe this opportunity to the recommendation of Vice-Rector for Science and Finance, professor Jan PRZYBYŁOWSKI.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of GIRARD’s first book, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, we are organizing a university conference, in English, on November 14, 2011: “René Girard and the discovery of scapegoating: threats and hopes”. Its aim is to introduce the mimetic theory to a larger academic audience, which—as we expect—will reach about several hundred people, students and lecturers. The papers will range from anthropology through theology to political science. Apart from “committed” Girardians, like Wiel EGGEN, Adam ROMEJKO and myself, two other scholars will present their papers, applying the Girardian thought. We hope that our present initiatives will arouse interest and inspire the academics of the university.

*Agnieszka Burakowska*

### BOOK REVIEWS

#### Gespräch über Jesus.

**Papst Benedikt XVI. im Dialog mit Martin Hengel, Peter Stuhlmacher und seinen Schülern in Castelgandolfo 2008.**

**Im Auftrag der Joseph Ratzinger Papst Benedikt XVI. Stiftung herausgegeben von Peter Kuhn. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck 2010:**

**ISBN 978-3-16-150441-9, 137 S., € 19,90**

At the end of the summer term 1967, Joseph RATZINGER, being a professor in Regensburg at that time, together with his PhD students visited two distinguished theologians in Basel: the Reformed Karl BARTH and the Roman Catholic Hans Urs von BALTHASAR. A tradition originated then, which Joseph RATZINGER continued, first as bishop now as pope in his summer residence in Castelgandolfo. It is a substantial ecumenical sign that two protestant New Testament scholars were invited as speakers for the conference in 2008: Martin HENGEL (1926-2009) and Peter STUHLMACHER (\*1932) from Tübingen. The invitation was probably motivated by BENEDICT’s book about Jesus of Nazareth whose second volume about Jesus’ cross and resurrection he was working on at the time, because both scholars have published fundamental works about the historical Jesus and New Tes-



tament Christology. In their presentations, HENGEL and STUHLMACHER summarized them and it showed that their Christology is very close to BENEDICT's. These lectures constitute the center of this small book, which also documents the discussions at the conference and Cardinal SCHÖNBORN's concluding sermon. Here, I merely want to present those passages of the book that refer to its central topic, the crucifixion of Jesus and its theological interpretation as atonement.

M. HENGEL's opening paper: "On the historical quest for Jesus of Nazareth. Considerations after the completion of a book about Jesus" (p. 1-29) lays the historical foundations. HENGEL emphasizes that the peculiarity of Jesus can be historically ascertained. Though all historical statements are hypothetical in nature, one is not to infer fundamental skepticism from that; rather the consequence is the task of cautious historical research. Against the mainstream of—primarily American—research, the author endorses Jesus' messianic self-awareness and makes statements about Jesus' understanding of his own death. He underlines that it results from Jesus' Jewishness. In HENGEL's view Jesus has not merely died as a prophetic martyr and suffering righteous, but has accepted death with regard to the servant of God in Isaiah 53.

P. STUHLMACHER specifies this thesis in the second lecture: "Jesus' Self-Sacrifice" (p. 63-84). According to him, the crucifixion of Jesus was foremost orchestrated by the priesthood of Jerusalem. By the Temple cleansing Jesus had faced them with the decision to "either to follow him and his message of the coming kingdom of God or to continue their cultic service (which was useless without conversion)" (p.66). That way, "Jesus deliberately risked his life" (ibid.) because from then on the priesthood worked toward killing him. Though they misjudged his actual concern, they acted rationally from the point of view of the religious law (p. 68), defending the religious order in Israel. The center of this order "consisted in the divine permission to ransom Israel day after day from its sinful indebtedness to God by means of sin-offerings with high symbolism." (p. 68) Pilate's activity, by contrast, was a rather routine performance. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century the Romans eliminated all messianic insurgents "as soon as possible" (p. 69).

It can be ascertained in the gospels that Jesus expected his death and understood it in the light of Isaiah 43:3-4 and 53:12. "He viewed himself in his passion as the servant of God advocating for the people of God, as the man whose life constituted the ransom that God had designated to redeem Israel" (p.75). "Salvation is only possible for the people of God, who are threatened with the judgment of destruction at the last judgment because of their sins, if God himself provides and uses a ransom for Israel. Jesus himself ought to and wanted to be this very ransom." (p.76) Already in the cleansing of the temple he claimed,

against the traditional sacrificial cult, that Israel could merely be saved "by the God-son's substitutional giving of his life 'for the many' (comp. Is 53:12)" (p. 78), Jesus' institutional words at the last supper repeat that once more. STUHLMACHER corroborates GIRARD's emphasis on Isaiah 53 and his insistence upon the cleansing of the temple being intended to criticize the cult.

STUHLMACHER opposes the theory of satisfaction. Jesus' own view of his death has nothing to do with satisfaction. Jesus' death is "no sacrifice that God claimed in order to be able to forgive" (p. 83, footnote 19), but it is "God's free act of grace. He has given his Son over to death out of love for Jews and Pagans" (p. 83). Coming to a close, STUHLMACHER refers to the motif of the throne of mercy, which emerged in medieval art: the father holding his dead son on the cross in his arms.

The subsequent discussion suffers from the fact that the presenters are New Testament scholars, their audience, however, systematic theologians. In the beginning the pope mentions the problems the modern age has with the thought of atonement. He as well as STUHLMACHER emphasize that it is indispensable for biblical thinking. One has to keep in mind that already in the Old Testament the daily sin-offering in the temple is not to be considered as satisfaction provided by man to God, but as an institution by God himself. STUHLMACHER regrets that contemporary Protestant theology neglects the idea of judgment in such a way. It is the background for the thought of atonement. The people of God, as well as individual human beings have "to be expiated to escape the verdict of death" (p. 91).

Anselm of Canterbury's theory of satisfaction is rejected by all participants – at least in its coarse, popular form, which says that God claimed Jesus' death as satisfaction for human sins. But this reaction of the systematic theologians remains feeble and academic; obviously they are hardly perturbed by the fact that essential questions of the image of God are directly linked to the theory of satisfaction and that it largely determines the understanding of Christianity – among Christians as well as Non-Christians. Furthermore, STUHLMACHER's term for the crucifixion "verdict of death" is not discussed. One should also ask how this term is related to LUTHER's idea of Jesus' substitutional penal suffering, which is as problematical as the theory of satisfaction. The term "ransom" meets as little scrutiny as the thought of atonement. It can be conceded that this term is indispensable for theology, for its intention is that God reacts to human sins, and humans have to grapple with their guilt – their own and that of their neighbors. But both STUHLMACHER's presentation and the discussion examine atonement in isolation. No systematic examina-

tion is undertaken of how atonement works and what makes Jesus' cross atonement.

The theory of satisfaction has undertaken this very attempt. If one rejects it, one has to question anew what turns Jesus' crucifixion into atonement. His death as such or his dying, i.e. the faith in which he bore his suffering. STUHLMACHER emphasizes that the peculiar character of the Jewish sacrificial cult was that it was not about "placating the godhead" (p. 89) through bloody sacrifices, but about an institution by God in favor of his people. This does entail that in the Jewish rite atonement was not worked by the slaughtering of the lambs, but by God's will, which has instituted this rite. Does this not hold true even more for understanding Jesus' atoning death? Needn't one say: It was not Jesus' death as such that worked atonement, but Jesus' proclamation of God's merciful will to which he remained true even unto death? STUHLMACHER and the pope agree on God having given Jesus over to death for love of Israel and humankind. But they do not continue to investigate the meaning of Jesus' death in a systematic way. L. WEIMER states in the discussion that Jesus' death "could have been the last death of an innocent person in this world, if Christianity had continuously celebrated this death in solidarity and in an appropriate way, thus preventing further victims" (p. 99). But prior to this, it has to be said that Jesus' death on a cross was not necessary and would not have taken place, if humans had accepted his message of the Kingdom of God. By raising the crucified one, God committed himself to this message. Therefore the atonement gained by Jesus' crucifixion cannot be properly discussed outside the context of his raising.

In the German-speaking countries, theologians who work in the proximity of mimetic theory, such as R. SCHWAGER or R. MIGGELBRINK, have attempted to integrate Jesus' announcement of judgment into his proclamation of the Kingdom of God. It is regrettable that their ideas have not been taken up by the discussions at this conference.

At the end BENEDICT XVI says: "I believe that we have not yet reached the point from which we can sufficiently explain to a non-Christian but well-meaning contemporary what atonement in the biblical sense really means" (p. 112). The second volume of his book about Jesus has been published meanwhile. It contains his continuing efforts to interpret atonement. It is noteworthy that he has drawn upon protestant theologians in this quest.

*Bernhard Dieckmann,  
Translation: Sebastian Dieckmann and  
Nikolaus Wandinger*

**Girard, René: *Géométries du désir*.**

**Paris – Editions de l'Herne: Carnets, 2011. (219 pp.) ISBN: 978-2851979223; € 9,50**

How is it possible that in some of the Western world's most famous literary love stories the heroes' desires are trapped in rigid (and very unromantic) geometrical schemes? That's the theme of *Géométries du désir*. The prestigious series "Carnets" of the French "Editions de l'Herne" has made seven early articles by GIRARD available in a handy little book-format. Some of those essays were completely new to me. In all these literary articles GIRARD shows how idolatrous mimetic desire makes the main characters in the studied texts give up their relative freedom and become puppets in a fascinating ballet of which they ignore the very choreography. Mark ANSPACH wrote in his excellent short fore-word: "In Chrétien de Troyes, Dante, Racine or Marivaux, the game of love owes nothing to chance, but obeys implacable laws that become visible in the light of the mimetic hypothesis." (p. 7) Shedding light on these "laws" makes the love stories look much more funny and satirical than has often been thought. At the same time this light also fully reveals the human tragedy behind what GIRARD constantly refers to as idolatry. The outcome of idolatrous desire is universal frustration: "the law of mimetic desire is universal frustration" (p. 82). Not some Freudian libido is the main driving force in the studied love stories, but mimetic competition, rivalry. In the described love-game both losers and winners get frustrated. As soon as the winner has taken possession of the desired "object" it loses its magical appeal and becomes terribly boring and frustratingly uninteresting.

The first of the seven essays explores the vicinity of love and hate in Chrétien de TROYES's *Yvain*. According to GIRARD this twelfth century French poetry is a satire of the Feudal aristocracy's competition for fame, a competition that governs even love choices. The aristocratic woman Laudine falls in love with the knight who has just killed her beloved husband, even though she has never even seen her man's murderer. According to GIRARD this strange state of affairs has nothing to do with some repressed Freudian desire. In Chrétien de TROYES's poetry the sexual innuendos are too obvious to be repressed. Yet the sexual drive humbly bows before mimetic competition for fame. Laudine, like all the others, simply falls in love with the winner. Her husband used to be the best knight, till he got beaten by a better and now more famous one. The winner takes it all. By falling in love with the champion, Laudine is in perfect harmony with the crowd. The whole poem refers to the crisis of Feudalism. In the identical knights fighting each other with covered, unrecognizable faces, Chrétien found a telling symbol of the loss of symbolism, of a crisis of identity in his time.

The second article is an early text on DANTE's Paolo and Francesca. For GIRARD these celebrated lovers are not in DANTE's hell by chance. The "inferno" is not a nice and exotic poetical setting: "Hell, for Dante, is a reality", GIRARD writes (p. 49). Paolo and Francesca incarnate the impossibility of true communion, the defeat of idolatrous love. The famous lovers' adulterous desire is purely mimetic, aroused by the book they were reading together. Reading about Arthur's wife kissing another knight, Paolo and Francesca first kiss. Francesca could have said the same as Julia to Romeo: "you kiss by the book"!

GIRARD wonders about the many romantic readers who have turned DANTE's poem into what it denounces: a mediator of untrue desires. "Travelling to Italy George Sand and Alfred de Musset take themselves to be Paolo and Francesca, yet never doubt their spontaneity". (p. 52) GIRARD ends this essay by finding something in common between MARX, FREUD and the early Church fathers (!): their opposition to different kinds of fetishisms and idolatry.

The third and more recent essay is again about lovers: Romeo and Juliet, maybe the most famous ones in western history. In his book on SHAKESPEARE GIRARD has argued that the concept of "true love" covers a mimetic illusion. *Romeo and Juliet* seems to be a blatant exception to this rule. We find no rivals in the play and despite a very difficult family context both lovers remain true to each other till death. Yet, Girard finds many clues that make us think that SHAKESPEARE does not take his lovers half as seriously as we do. If Romeo and Juliet's love for each other seems perfectly peaceful and harmonious, why are their love dialogues full of the most violent oxymora? Why is their speech full of the rhetoric of frustrated and jealous desire, of a love full of hate? During the whole play, till their common suicide, the "love" that binds both lovers has nothing to do with a true and peaceful communion. Already at the end of act one Juliet declares: "My only love sprung from my only hate! ... Prodigious birth of love it is to me, that I must love a loathed enemy". That Romeo and Juliet continue to seem perfectly innocent is due to the strategic context. Romeo is really Juliet's enemy in the sense that both families are fighting each other. During a balcony scene the lovers just keep talking about Juliet's cousins who would gladly kill a member of the other family. The violent speech seems justified by the fearful context, yet the cousins never show up to interrupt the lovers' conversation. To our (post-)romantic ears GIRARD seems a bit severe when he points to the fact that the lovers need theses cousins, not only to justify the internal contradictions of their speech, but also to have something to speak about. "As most young lovers, Romeo and Juliet do not have much to tell to each other". (p. 72).

GIRARD finds another example of this play with the context in Jean RACINE's theatre. In the fourth and long essay of this book GIRARD shows how through his intelligent use of historical and mythological settings RACINE sheds light on typical love-metaphors by bringing them back to the context from which they sprang forth. One example is the language of slavery and domination (in love) that is brought back to a real historical context of slavery. Yet RACINE immediately shows how this language often does not reflect the objective power structures. Mimetic desire is able to overturn the apparent structures. So we see masters who are the slave of their slaves in matters of love. Another example is the religious language. In *Phèdre* the mythological context serves as a dramatic extension of the language of love. The heroine declares that she *adores* Hippolytus and that she sacrifices everything for him at the feet of his burning altars. We are so used to this type of rhetoric that we do not often pause upon its profound meaning. The most important and unifying theme GIRARD studies in this article is the concept of glory. He even gives a probationary definition of desire as a "lack of glory". RACINE's characters are longing for glory, they long to be like gods, and find themselves attracted by the apparent glory of others. Here again the impossibility of real communion in (idolatrous) love is most blatantly visible. The characters fall in love with those who are indifferent to them. This indifference is seen as a clear sign of the desired glory. Delving into some of the ethical consequences of this human tragedy GIRARD sees RACINE's much discussed renouncement to his dramaturgical activities after *Phèdre* as a kind of self-criticism and (re-)turn to the Biblical religion. During the whole essay I kept thinking of this verse from the gospel of John about those who try to receive their glory from each other and "do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God" (cf. John 5:44).

The fifth and shorter article is about the eighteenth century novelist and dramatist Pierre de MARIVAUX. According to GIRARD the concept of "marivaudage" has never been really understood and the phenomenon behind it has not even been fully understood by MARIVAUX himself. When MARIVAUX tries to reveal the moral evil of the seemingly invulnerable and innocently coquette Marianne, among others, this task turns out to be more difficult than he thought. The author remains somehow "obsessed" by the woman he wants to judge in his literary creation. Girard argues that MARIVAUX himself was still a dupe of "coquette" women, i.e. of the mimetic mechanism behind his fascination. For GIRARD MARIVAUX looks a bit like MOLIÈRE's Alceste who has never been able to really criticize his Célimène because he cannot do without her, even though he feels persecuted by her and upset as he experiences his own weakness. MARIVAUX

thought he was a better psychologist than MOLIÈRE, but GIRARD does not agree.

The sixth and very early article (from 1953!) is about eroticism in André MALRAUX's fiction (twentieth century). GIRARD wrote this essay before formulating the mimetic hypothesis, but many elements of mimetic desire seem already present. Take for instance the importance of the obstacle. GIRARD quotes MALRAUX saying that there is eroticism in a book if physical love is linked to "the idea of a constraint" (p. 183). This constraint is a violent constraint. MALRAUX's depiction of passion is full of humiliation, masochism and the sense of the "absurd". As in the previous essays love has again little to do with real communion. One is reminded of Mark ANSPACH's words at the end of his introduction to this book (quoting GIRARD between brackets): "the 'flood of violence and pornography that today crashes down on the remains of our culture' does not signify the triumph of desire, but its feverish agony" (p. 13).

The last article (from 1960) is not about a single author, but about pride and passion in the contemporary novel in general. Some parts of the article are to be found in a slightly modified form in GIRARD's *Mensonge Romantique (Deceit, Desire and the Novel)*. It is about the strange paradox that romantic (in the broad sense) literature is a literature from and for the Self, but never manages to be what it wants to be. The modern egotist is *nearly* convinced he is God. He should be invulnerable and everything around him should be vulnerable compared to him. Yet the slightest exception to this rule makes him lose all his self-confidence. Roger VAILLAND's Monsieur Jean is a man like this: a woman who remains indifferent to him, immediately shakes his belief in himself (a thing he would never admit though). Don Juan was a man who deceived others, the modern Monsieur Jean also deceives himself. He has to suppress his desire as soon as the woman he wants to conquer looks at him. This self-imposed impasse of modern desire again stresses one of the most persisting themes in the *Géométries du désir*: the impossibility of harmonious union and communion in idolatrous desire.

After having read these seven essays from different times in GIRARD's career one might wonder at the strong thematic unity. As has been said elsewhere GIRARD did not really create a theory of literature, but has discovered literature to be powerful theory. This little book only reinforces this idea, and beautifully so.

Simon de Keukelaere

**Ted Grimsrud and Michael Hardin (eds),  
Compassionate Eschatology: The Future as Friend  
(Eugene, OR.: Cascade, 2011). 294 + xii pages. Pa-  
perback. US \$32.17 (Kindle Edition \$22).  
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### Eschatology as if Jesus Mattered

This is a very strong collection. Every essay makes a significant contribution to rethinking eschatology as if Jesus mattered—and forgiveness, and new beginnings beyond our human-generated hells of violence. The first part is devoted to biblical studies, chiefly on *The Book of Revelation* (René GIRARD's longstanding apocalyptic interest having focussed almost exclusively on Gospel texts). The second part offers a range of spiritual, theological and political reflections. The overall message is that the last things—death, judgement, heaven, and hell—can be good news not bad news for right-thinking Christians, despite widespread claims to the contrary.

The book is dedicated to René GIRARD, "teacher, visionary, prophet," though it is not heavily explicit in its Girardian content, with most references in the second half. I can only touch very briefly on each chapter, but it is important to do so.

Editor Ted GRIMSRUD makes a strong start with his overview of biblical apocalyptic texts and standard reading strategies. Focusing on *Revelation* he contrasts the witnessing Church with the death-dealing empire, interpreting the conquering lamb as a deconstructive sign of world-transforming power. Richard BAUCKHAM develops this sense of militaristic language referring figuratively to the overcoming power of Jesus' self-sacrificial love.

Nancy Elizabeth BEDFORD gives this a post-colonial twist, meditating on America's horde of undocumented migrants as an eschatological sign of escape from the power of empire, with reference to Jeremiah counseling Israel to settle at peace in Babylon, also his purchase of a field at Anathoth as a sign against that empire's future hold on Israel. My Canberra colleague David NEVILLE, in dialogue with the range of modern interpreters, reads *Revelation* against the grain of its violent language, based on a "hermeneutic of shalom" argued for in the light of a "critical traditioning" which he grounds in textual dissonances. I note with approval David's gentle but firm treatment of Miroslav VOLF's violent eschatology (I regard VOLF to be the Mel GIBSON of pacifist Christianity).

Barbara R. ROSSING squares up to the eschatological inferno of 2 Peter 3 in the context of today's global warming crisis, along with fundamentalist enthusiasm for a coming great conflagration. She finds surer ground in *Revelation*, where a warning to humanity and a call for witnesses forms the message, rather than a prediction of divine violence. James E. BRENNEMAN shows how Eucharist trumps the gloating vic-

tory banquet (familiar from ancient texts and modern practice) in a Christ-formed eschatological vision, while John E. PHELAN invokes Raymund SCHWAGER to reveal the non-violent arc of judgment in scripture. Next, J. Denny WEAVER identifies the dragon of *Revelation* in a variety of imperial pretensions, extending from the Roman Empire to today's militaristic nationalism and consumer capitalism.

Part II is quite diverse, beginning with Editor Michael HARDIN expounding authentic native American apocalypses as prophetic warnings about the consequences of human actions rather than divine violence, in tune with GIRARD's convictions. A veteran Girardian analyst of systemic forces, Walter WINK, provides an elegant, short summary of his position. WINK is strongly in tune with the writings of Wolfgang PALAVER and others on the *Katéchon* function of powers and principalities, but also their ready corruptibility.

Two insightful Girardian chapters follow. Anthony BARTLETT offers one of the best essays on GIRARD and philosophy yet, in conversation with HEIDEGGER's kinetic vision of being, in which eschatology outdoes ontology in best-revealing something's identity—its position in Christ and the new creation proving more important than its state of being in the old creation. Stephen FINAMORE names the post-*Achever Clausewitz* tension in Girardian circles, going on to expound GIRARD's apocalyptic vision as a neglected theme in presenting Girard's program.

The key theological chapters follow, arguing for compassionate eschatology but with a differing place for human free will. Jürgen MOLTSMANN develops the pacific eschatology he began in *The Way of Jesus Christ*, declaring eventual universal salvation. He interrogates violent eschatology about what Jesus' compassionate, transformative praxis actually reveals. MOLTSMANN dismisses the widespread modern view that damnation is our choice not God's, claiming that God would not be so easily persuaded. Andrew P. KLAGER offers a comprehensive Orthodox treatment

of eschatology as inherently compassionate, drawing on patristic and contemporary theological and liturgical sources. The human freedom that MOLTSMANN refuses to erect into a determinative principle is treated as crucial by KLAGER but, intriguingly, as non-determinative. How? By allowing us in freedom to variously construe a single, entirely compassionate eschatological outcome according to our own state of conformity to God's will. In other words, the eschaton *for everyone* brings eternal life with a compassionate God, though depending on where we are up to that will either seem like heaven or hell, joy or torment. I often question why theological entities need to be so multiplied, for instance wondering why heaven, hell and purgatory cannot simply be different ways that saints and sinners experience God's loving face turned towards them in eternity. Now I discover that this view has strong traditional warrant in Orthodoxy.

The book ends with a challenge from Barbara R. ROSSING for some reader to answer the un-biblical but popular, pornographically violent, dispensationalist nonsense of the "Left Behind" novels with a different eschatological novel: something orthodox, Gospel-driven, compassionate, and hopeful. Carol BERRY provides a fitting and moving conclusion with her luminous chapter on Vincent van GOGH as a mystical evangelist for God's compassionate embrace of creation and human life.

Volumes of essays are often a mixed blessing, but not in this case. *Compassionate Eschatology* works well as a collection and holds interest throughout due to the uniformly high quality, thoughtful arrangement, and cumulative impact of its chapters. It will assist Girardians to think through the bigger theological picture opened up by *Battling to the End*. More generally, it will help any reader to reset their eschatological thinking along more authentically Gospel lines.

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We invite you to send books and articles dealing with René Girard and Mimetic Theory to [Dietmar.Regensburger@uibk.ac.at](mailto: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).

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[http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/girard/mimetic\\_theory.html](http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/girard/mimetic_theory.html)

### Editor's Thanks

I am especially pleased that this issue carries an extensive and, to my knowledge, up to date and complete bibliography. For this special thanks go to my colleague Dietmar Regensburger. I am grateful, however, to all contributors for your engagement, your time and effort, and especially for your discipline in getting your articles to me on time. I hope the readers will enjoy this Bulletin and be enticed to contribute themselves in the future. Thank you all.

Nikolaus Wandinger

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