

2-2021

Signs of Atonement: Eucharist and Mimetism in the Brazilian Church

Guilherme Ribeiro De Paula

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

SIGNS OF ATONEMENT:
EUCHARIST AND MIMETISM IN THE BRAZILIAN CHURCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
GUILHERME RIBEIRO DE PAULA

PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY 2021

Portland Seminary
George Fox University
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Guilherme Ribeiro DePaula

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 16, 2021
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Semiotics & Future Studies

Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: Ron Clark, DMin

Secondary Advisor: Ekaterina Lomperis, PhD

Lead Mentor: Leonard I. Sweet, PhD

Copyright © 2021 by Guilherme Ribeiro de Paula
All rights reserved

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	V
CHAPTER 1: AWFULLY EVANGELICAL	1
A Crusader’s Inheritance	1
Is Jesus the New Saint George?.....	3
Cultural Hegemony v. Cultural Diaconate.....	8
A Brief History of the Protestant Church in Brazil.....	16
All Shall Be Thine	20
CHAPTER 2: THE AUTHORITY OF SUFFERING COMPASSION	26
The Beginning.....	26
After the Fall	31
Covenantal Relationship	37
“Pseudocovenantal” Relationship – False Atonement.....	41
Fire from Heaven	45
The Two Swords	51
Ancient Christian Views	53
Two Realms of Authority Subjected to One Church	54
An Alert for Imminent Persecution.....	54
A Spiritual Weapon.....	55
How To Use A Sword For Peace?	56
Armed Healers	59
CHAPTER 3: IMAGES OF ATONEMENT AND COMMUNION IN CHURCH HISTORY	61
Conflict, Victory, War, Conquest, Slaves, Bondage.....	64
Deification, Cosmological Unity, Incarnation	69
Honor, Offense, Satisfaction, Payment, Debt, Example.....	71
Law, Justice, Penalty, Economy, Exchange	76
Modern Approaches.....	87
CHAPTER 4 MIMETISM AND THE ORIGIN OF CULTURE.....	90
A Brief Biographical Background	91
Mimetic Desire.....	95
Rivalry and Escalating Violence.....	96
The Scapegoat Mechanism	98
The Origins of Culture and Its Rituals.....	101
The Christian Demythologizing Narrative.....	104
Scapegoat Mechanism and Epistemology	107
Pharmacological or Therapeutical Sword.....	111
CHAPTER 5: REMEMBER THE EARTH THAT NOURISHES	114
Cannibal Hospitality	114
“Hangry” People	118
The Power of a Ritual	122
The Crowd is Untruth	126
CHAPTER 6: THE MEAL IS THE MESSAGE	131
Food Patterns	131
Fast Food with Safety Demonstration.....	134

Therapeutic Eucharist	138
Signs of Reconciliation – Signs of Atonement	143
Conclusion	147
BIBLIOGRAPHY	155

ABSTRACT

The Evangelical Church in Brazil has grown in power in the last two decades. This new situation has revealed a church that seeks to change culture through power, resulting in violence and a dispute for cultural hegemony. This dissertation asserts that a contemplative practice of the Eucharist can produce renewed understandings of the atonement and can reorient the church toward a culture of reconciliation. Following the theoretical framework of René Girard, this thesis claims that we are the ones who need violence and sacrifice, not God. If we are not satisfied with the Eucharist, we will search for false atonements and scapegoating.

The first chapter presents a brief overview of how Protestantism in Brazil is revealing a theology of dominion. The following chapter casts the biblical foundations for a covenantal view of the doctrine of atonement and the progressive shift from Abel's sacrifice to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice. In the third chapter, I attempt to offer an overview of the main theories of atonement throughout church history and their semiotic relationship to their cultural context. Following this chapter, I present the mimetic theory of René Girard and his view of sacrifice as the origin of culture. The fifth chapter presents scapegoating rituals as forms of a false atonement and demonstrates how the Eucharist can transform a crowd into an atoned community. The final chapter demonstrates how a food pattern shapes a community, the therapeutic potential of the Eucharist, and the contemplative example of the monastic community of Taizé.

The way a church approaches the table shapes the way that church will relate to culture. If a church is not atoned in the Eucharist, that church will seek out false atonements. The Brazilian Evangelical Church has a great opportunity to learn the authority of suffering compassion with Jesus at his table.

CHAPTER 1:
AWFULLY EVANGELICAL

The state is secular, but we are Christians... We are awfully Christians. This spirit will be in every sphere of power; this is my commitment. I will be indicating two judges for the Supreme Court, one of which will be awfully evangelical.

— Jair Messias Bolsonaro, President of Brazil elected in 2018¹

A Crusader's Inheritance

Narraphors (Leonard Sweet's neologism for narrative + metaphor) holds a culture together. The intertwining of images and stories make sense of reality. Brazilian culture has a set of narraphors that have been shaping its paradigms, and so has the Evangelical Church in the country. To introduce a foreign reader to Brazilian culture, I will summarize what I consider to be the most important characteristics of Brazilian culture in four key symbols. Then, I will illustrate with my own family history how the Church deals with each one. Here are the four elements:

- *Samba* (carnival, beer, rhythmic music, sexuality, and suspension of the hierarchy);
- *Soccer* (playing, watching and supporting, engaging in a team, debating over technical decisions, violence sublimated);
- *Sacred* (Catholicism, Protestantism and African Religions merged, superstitions, saints and orishas, popular rituals);

¹ My translation for Bolsonaro's speech in an Evangelical service at the Deputies Chamber in 2019. Fernanda Calgaro and Guilherme Mazui. "Bolsonaro diz que vai indicar ministro 'terrivelmente evangélico' para o STF" G1, last modified July 10, 2019. Brasilia. <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/07/10/bolsonaro-diz-que-vai-indicar-ministro-terrivelmente-evangelico-para-o-stf.ghtml>

- *State* (an idolatry of the State marks our country from the beginning, the expectation that the good will come from those in power or reaching a position of power).

In the early decades of Evangelicalism in Brazil, the churches demonized all the elements related to Samba and Soccer, and several denominations still do. Gladly, most of the Pentecostal Churches embraced Brazilian rhythms for their worship, including Samba. But, Carnival is still a taboo within the Church. Soccer is now liberated for almost the entirety of the Church, as long as it does not compete with Church activities and as long as Christians see it as a missionary field. In the Sacred arena, the Protestant Church required exclusivity, which basically meant anything that resembled a North-American Protestant way of life. In the State arena (except for a few groups), the Brazilian Church found a “neutral” field, secular, available for dispute, blessed by God after Romans 13.

In 1960 my grandfather, a Baptist pastor, worked for a few years for the World Literature Crusade in Brazil. It was a ministry from Colorado that wanted to reach every home in a systemic, manageable, and strategic way with proselytizing literature. The ministry changed its name after a few years, but I find the original name most significant. Despite the love and admiration I have for my grandfather, I remember with some sorrow his posture as a crusader. Carnival was a taboo for our family, and it was rare to hear any kind of *Samba*, except maybe in a tone of mockery.

I remember his strong opposition to Catholicism, the most fundamental sign of the *Sacred* for the Brazilian people. By the time pope John Paul II visited Brazil, he wrote articles and preached that the pope was the antichrist, and we should not allow his visit. I remember him preaching about the futility of watching twenty-two men running after a ball in the *Soccer* games—although he would not miss the World’s

Cup. Regarding the last narraphor, the *State*, he campaigned for a governor and almost decided to run for a public office, but changed his mind for some reason. I remember him always listening carefully for the news; the news was sacred in his home.

Part of my journey in this thesis is to find a non-crusading way to be a Christian in Brazil. The crusade is still ongoing since the colonization, by different actors, with different Meccas and Jerusalems, but the goal is the same: “to win” Brazil for Christ, which implies the risk of “losing” and an open dispute. The sword is unsheathed, and we have today more swords than ever before (political power, money, influence, a third of the population and growing). It is not surprising, hence, to note how rapidly the Evangelicals are growing in Brazil, especially among those who yearn for power. Jesus in Brazil might look more like a warrior saint, than a suffering servant.

Is Jesus the New Saint George?

From January to September 2019, the Commission for Combating Religious Intolerance registered one hundred and seventy-six *Candomblé* temples closed due to attacks or threats made by drug dealers.² This happened because several of these individuals had become evangelicals in the past years. They were recently labeled “narcopentecostals” by a magazine that investigated their role in these attacks. The same magazine found out that one of the groups labeled itself the “Army of the Living God.”³

² *Candomblé* is the most important African-brazilian religion, similar to Haitian Vodoo.

³ Rafael Soares, “‘Narcopentecostais’: Casos de Intolerância Religiosa Crescem com Expansão de Facção no Rio,” *Época*, last modified October 11, 2019,

A similar movement was studied by sociologist Christina Vital da Cunha in her ethnography of a favela (slum) in Rio de Janeiro from 1996 to 2015. Her research produced the book called “*Oração de Traficante*,” which means Drug Dealer’s Prayer. In the book, she discusses how the symbolism and the moral framework of Pentecostalism have been “diffused throughout all sectors of the social life of urban peripheries, more than their consolidation in the institutional settings of the Pentecostal religious life.”⁴ Cunha demonstrates how Pentecostalism gradually replaced Catholicism and Candomblé in the slums, but without much difference concerning social values and practices.

A particular meaningful transition is expressed through the religious figures portrayed in the walls and niches of the slum. One was painted with an image of Saint George killing a dragon. Saint George of Cappadocia is the most venerated saint in Brazil⁵, the *warrior saint*, venerated in Portugal since the Crusades as a military saint.⁶ In Brazil, he is also loved, because in him the Catholic faith and the Candomblé faith are combined. The saint is equivalent to one of the African-Brazilian orishas called Ogum.⁷ His spirit, in the African-Brazilian tradition, is of a warlord, god of iron, son of the gods, the first orisha to come down to the Earth. “Ogum was a

<https://epoca.globo.com/rio/narcopentecostais-casos-de-intolerancia-religiosa-crescem-com-expansao-de-faccao-no-rio-24009662>.

⁴ Christina Vital da Cunha, *Oração de Traficante: Uma Etnografia* (Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2015), 10.

⁵ According to a specialized magazine, no other saint has so much music written in his honor in Brazilian music as Saint George. Listen to Vilmar Bittencourt, producer, *O Santo Guerreiro*, Rádio Cultura, April 23, 2012, <http://culturabrasil.cmais.com.br/playlists/o-santo-guerreiro>.

⁶ In Portugal the saint was already highly important, especially after a victory over the Muslims in the 12th century. See Adílio Jorge Marques and Marcelo Alonso Morais, “O Sincretismo entre São Jorge e Ogum na Umbanda: Ressignificações de Tradições Europeias e Africanas,” *Revista Brasileira de História das Religiões* 3, no. 9 (2011): 1-13, <http://www.dhi.uem.br/gtreligiao/pub.html>.

⁷ An Orisha is a kind of spirit in the African-brazilian religions, from the Yoruba tradition.

mighty and bloody warrior.”⁸ A few years after the wall received the painting, the drug lord of the slum converted to Pentecostalism. After that, Cunha writes, “The destruction of Catholic and Afro-Brazilian religious images, which had begun with the police in the mid-1990s, continued unabated, now with the blessing of the drug cartels who sponsored local artists to paint murals with Biblical texts.”⁹

Another wall once held the painting of Our Lady of Aparecida, patroness of Brazil, also a syncretic saint. The wall was later repainted proclaiming Jesus as the great saint. Here is the “gospel” painted over the former image of the saint:

It is true. Our Saint is strong. He needs no candle. Yet He has his own light. His gaze soothes the largest waves in the ocean; heals all diseases; casts out all types of bad spirits; and even the spirit of death. He rose on the third day. He is the only living God. He is the Saint from Israel. Jesus Christ.
By Acari Community. Fanatic and neurotic for Jesus.¹⁰

In the center of the slum, a pole with an image of Saint George marked the landscape in 1996. Ten years later, the image was removed, and a giant billboard was installed with the saying: “Jesus is the Lord of this place.” Another billboard was installed at the entrance to the slum containing Psalm 125:2: “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.” The sociologist da Cunha argues that the church today plays a role that the state is not able to play in providing a network of social care, education, and leisure. She notes, among other factors of this ethnography, the semantic field of the metaphors:

The wide use of metaphors that refer to warfare (between good and evil), struggle (over souls and between antagonistic forces), and tribulation (the daily struggle of individuals for material and spiritual survival), all inspire a

⁸ Pierre Verger, *Lendas Africanas dos Orixás*, 4rd ed. (Salvador, BA: Fundação Pierre Verger, 1997), 72.

⁹ Cunha, *Oração de Traficante*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

theology of domination which [puts its stamp on] the doctrines and rituals of contemporary Pentecostal churches.¹¹

In a recent episode, criminals from a sect threatened the criminals of another sect with three options: to convert to Christ in “an evangelical church,” to become a “soldier” in their frontline, or to be killed. One single evangelical church registered more than two hundred and fifty conversions in two days.¹² The pastor of this church regarded the event as God’s intervention by stating: “It was God who touched the hearts of these people to come to church.”

All these episodes would seem restricted to the poorer evangelicals, deprived of education and opportunities, which would already represent the large majority of the evangelicals in Brazil. But we also know of episodes where evangelicals from the upper classes demonstrated what Cunha considers a theology of domination. In September 2017, an art exhibit closed after protests by evangelicals, especially from historical reformed churches.¹³ The exhibit was called “Queermuseum – Cartographies of Difference in Brazilian Art.” A Baptist Church decided to close her account on the bank that was sponsoring the exhibit, and this started a movement of other churches following her example.¹⁴ On Social Media, people were posting photos of their broken bank cards. Within a few days, the exhibit was canceled.

In 2018, a theatre play was banned from three cities, accused of being offensive to both Evangelicals and Catholics. The play was called “The Gospel

¹¹ Ibid., 20.

¹² Fábio Pontes, “Conversão na Fé ou na Marra,” *Piauí*, last modified December 4, 2019, <https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/conversao-na-fe-ou-na-marra/>.

¹³ Paula Sperb, “Veja Imagens da Exposição Cancelada Pelo Santander, no RS,” *Veja*, last modified September 11, 2017, <https://veja.abril.com.br/blog/rio-grande-do-sul/veja-imagens-da-exposicao-cancelada-pelo-santander-no-rs/>.

¹⁴ JM Notícia, “Igreja Encerra Conta no Santander após Exposição Polêmica,” September 15, 2017, <https://www.jmnoticia.com.br/2017/09/15/igreja-encerra-conta-no-santander-apos-exposicao-polemica/>.

according to Jesus Christ, Queen of Heaven” and portrayed a drag queen in the role of Jesus.¹⁵ In Rio de Janeiro, one of the cities which banned the play, the spokesman of the Evangelicals was the mayor, a bishop from one of the largest denominations in Brazil (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God). He is also known for censoring a Marvel comic book from a book fair because it allegedly had pornographic content.¹⁶ In the narrative, two boys fall in love, and the book had an image of them kissing. His decision caused a national repercussion that gave fame to the book. The image of the boys kissing, because of the debate, was broadcasted in several TV shows and printed on newspapers. The following day, a YouTuber bought the whole print run of the book and distributed it for free.

Finally, a demonstration of this picture of Christ as a warrior saint is visible within the Bible market in Brazil. Our country never had so many covers of the Bible with Lion images. In a simple search on Google for “Lion Bible” (Bíblia de Leão), I counted thirty-seven different covers (only two with a lamb sharing the space with the lion). When I searched for “Lamb Bible” (Bíblia de Cordeiro), I could only find the same two that had the lion, and one with a phrase instead of an image. This cultural sign helps to illustrate how Brazilian believers want to see Jesus, not as the Lamb, but as the Lion.

¹⁵ Felipe Martins, “Peça com Atriz Travesti no Papel de Cristo é Proibida pelo Prefeito Marcelo Crivella,” *Revista Forum*, June 5, 2018, <https://revistaforum.com.br/lgbt/peca-com-atriz-travesti-no-papel-de-cristo-e-proibida-pelo-prefeito-marcelo-crivella/>.

¹⁶ Folha de S. Paulo, “Marcelo Crivella Manda Censurar HQ dos Vingadores na Bienal do Livros, no Rio,” *UOL*, September 5, 2019, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2019/09/marcelo-crivella-manda-censurar-gibis-dos-vingadores-na-bienal-do-livro-no-rio.shtml>.

Cultural Hegemony v. Cultural Diaconate

In the episodes reported above, there exists traces of an impetus to establish a hegemonic cultural religion or to defend what would already be a cultural hegemony. Crystal Downing, explains that “hegemony, for Gramsci, permeates multiple institutions of culture, controlling what people regard as ‘natural’ or ‘common sense.’”¹⁷ After explaining the realm of what hegemony can achieve in cultural “(re)signing,” Downing asserts that “the last thing Christians should desire, then, is cultural hegemony.”¹⁸ She goes on to state that Jesus calls his followers to “sacrifice hegemony.”¹⁹

Douglas John Hall in an exercise on negative theology offers a concept that might be helpful to distinguish how this position is different from what Christianity should be. If cultural hegemony is a sort of tacit social agreement to a group’s claim to have a monopoly on truth, the Christian faith should be the exact opposite. For Douglas, his search for hegemony might be considered a “religion.” Therefore, he states that Christianity is not a religion; faith and religion are not synonymous.

Probably faith never will be found apart from religion, some religion; but the biblically and theologically informed Christian will nevertheless be able to distinguish between what comes of faith and what comes of religion. And the greatest distinction of all, in this contrast, lies in the readiness of faith, unlike religion, to confess its incompleteness and insufficiency.²⁰

For Hall, the competition and dispute for hegemony is only natural for any religion. Religion is the way of the gentile kings and those in authority who rule over

¹⁷ Crystal Downing, *Changing Signs of Truth: A Christian Introduction to the Semiotics of Communication* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 142.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁰ Douglas John Hall, *What Christianity Is Not: An Exercise in “Negative” Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 26.

the people. Jesus' way is not like that. On the contrary, among his disciples, Jesus teaches that the greatest shall be the smallest, and the leader (ἡγούμενος, hēgoumenos) shall be as the one serving (διακονῶν, diakonōn), as described in Luke 22.25-26. In these terms, we could even state that Christians are not called to cultural hegemony but to a cultural diaconate. Hall highlights the conflictual character of religion as thus:

If and insofar as religion is inherently a kind of grasping, as Barth insisted, it follows that the religious impulse will also be inherently competitive and conflictual. A spiritual struggle motivated by the desire for permanence, certitude, and the possession of ultimate power and verity is not likely to manifest much openness to other claims to truth. To the contrary, it will in all likelihood manifest the kind of exclusiveness that guards its spiritual treasures zealously, and, having as it thinks wrested them from eternity, claims sole ownership of them.²¹

This conflictual nature is not only visible between religions, but also within Christianity itself. Paul Freston, a sociologist who studied Brazilian evangelicalism in depth wrote in 1999 about the “increasing struggle for hegemony within the Protestant world,”²² back in a time when evangelicals represented a growing minority of the Brazilian population. This struggle for hegemony in the evangelical world, he writes, had several motivations:

These included the wish to benefit from the respectability enjoyed by the older Protestant sectors in the country; to have more resources for defense against religious and secular enemies... The attempt to unify the evangelical field at various levels has characterized the moment of arrival at public visibility. The Protestant field, unlike the Catholic, suffers from organizational division...temporal power is used as a weapon in the struggle for intra-Protestant hegemony as a way of increasing firepower for structuring the Protestant field and for propagating a message. Far from being Erastianism (the supremacy of the state in church affairs) it is the appropriation of the democratic state by self-confident sectarian mentality.²³

²¹ Ibid., 24-25.

²² Paul Freston, “‘Neo-Pentecostalism’ in Brazil: Problems of Definition and the Struggle for Hegemony,” *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 105 (1999): 153.

²³ Ibid., 153.

This use of temporal power as a weapon for religious struggle is not new and is well registered in history. A metaphor that helps to illustrate two opposite stances towards this kind of weaponization of temporal powers is the distinction between the Sword (power over) and the Cross (power under). Gregory Boyd, while writing about the myth of a Christian nation uses these two images to describe what the rulers of this world do (the power over, the sword), and what Jesus called his disciples to do (the power under, the cross).²⁴

Analizira Nascimento, a Brazilian missiologist, defended the thesis that Brazilian Protestantism inherited a colonialist logic from the missionaries that arrived here. That logic was already operating in Catholic Christianity in Brazil, due to the Jesuit concept of mission and its legacy received by the crusaders. One of the most prolific priests of the Brazilian colonization would preach in his homilies that every Portuguese citizen is a missionary.²⁵ However, the Protestant missionaries brought yet another colonizing frontline within the emerging imperialism of the United States of America. Nascimento calls missiologists to a decolonial logic. For Nascimento, colonialist logic is synonymous with Christendom. It offers a civilizing mission, proselytism, and aims to convert pagans. It is ethnocentric and top-down oriented. Decolonial logic, however, should reflect a trinitarian dynamic, relationality, a frontier culture that can build bridges and empower the “other” in a dialogue of two parts that are equally worthy.

Another Brazilian thinker who observed the paradigms of the Protestant missionaries was Antonio Mendonça, who states that former missionaries tried, in

²⁴ Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 33.

²⁵ Analizira Nascimento, *Evangelização ou Colonização? O Risco de Fazer Missão sem se Importar com o Outro* (Viçosa: Editora Ultimato, 2015), 57.

goodwill, a “cultural transplant” from North America to colonize Brazil.²⁶ This transplant meant the presupposition of cultural and moral superiority, a dispute with the Catholic establishment, and an attempt to change the culture. The illusion that one can intentionally conduct culture in a specific direction is brilliantly described by James Davison Hunter in his *To Change the World*. He wrote that Christianity had become one of the “competing myths” with its attempt to control history. Hunter sees this desire for control as the result of a healthy desire to change the world for the better. These attempts however, though they may have a positive outcome, are rather ineffective and often disastrous.

Christians from many different traditions tend to believe that cultures are shaped from the cumulative values and beliefs that reside in the hearts and minds of ordinary people. The means and ends of world-changing, they argue, are to change the hearts and minds of enough people that the social order will finally come to reflect the values and beliefs that they hold. This is why Christians often pursue social change through evangelism (and conversion), civic renewal through populist social movements, and democratic political action (where every vote reflects values). The evidence of history and sociology demonstrates that this theory of culture and cultural change is simply wrong and for this reason, every initiative based on this perspective will fail to achieve the goals it hopes to meet... Were Christians to be in a position to exert enduring cultural influence, the results would likely be disastrous or perhaps mostly so.²⁷

Hunter states that this quest for influence and intentional cultural change leads to a quest for power, which, for modern Christians, is nothing else than political power. Christian activism, then, sees itself fighting the “dark nihilism of the modern age” and becomes a counterpart of a political dispute like any other, in a search for power fueled by resentment. The alternative, for Hunter, is not a single model, but he points to one that he calls the “faithful presence within,” a discrete witness that

²⁶ Antonio G. Mendonça. *O Celeste Porvir: A Inserção do Protestantismo no Brasil* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2008), 143.

²⁷ James Davison Hunter. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 273-274.

contributes to overall flourishing. Hunter exemplifies this with the example of the Jews in the Babylonian exile, whom God ordains to seek the welfare of the city, as well as with the neo-Anabaptists and radical Orthodox theologians. Nascimento also mentions a similar example of an alternative missionary endeavor, discrete and disregarded by the official narrative: the monastic movement.²⁸ These contrasting stances can be related to the distinction between “faith” (prophetic religion) and “religion” (cultural religion) described by Hall in his exercise in negative theology.²⁹ The concept of negative theology is in itself a path inherited by monasticism, the apophatic way, the *via negativa*.

These theories and concepts are neither equivalent nor exhaustive. As the Dutch Calvinist philosopher Dooyeweerd states, “The problem facing Christianity from its earliest organized existence was the same old problem in countless variations: the relationship of the Kingdom of God to the world, of nature to grace, of state to church, of faith to knowledge, of Christianity to culture.”³⁰ Christian faith is prophetic, which means that it somehow exposes what is “wrong” in the world and aims for a transformative process of reality. But when this prophetism searches for an ally in power to exert its function, it becomes coercive and ends up violent.³¹ This

²⁸ Analzira Nascimento, *Evangelização ou Colonização? O Risco de Fazer Missão sem se Importar com o Outro* (Viçosa: Editora Ultimato, 2015), 57.

²⁹ “The term culture-religion came into prominence in North America in the 1960s, though its antecedents—particularly in German theologies—are much earlier. The term has a particular usefulness in our New World setting, where (as I claimed at the beginning of this chapter) there is a continuing tendency to merge ‘Christ and Culture’ (to use the well-known categories of H. Richard Niebuhr).” See Hall, *What Christianity Is Not*, 28.

³⁰ Herman Dooyeweerd, *The Struggle for a Christian Politics: An Essay in Grounding the Calvinistic Worldview in Its Law-Idea*, series B, vol. 17, *The Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd*, ed. D.F.M. Strauss (Ancaster, Canada: Paideia Press, 2012), 5.

³¹ Miroslav Volf, “Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian way of Being-in-the World. Carson,” *Moore Theological College Library*, accessed December 2020, <https://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au>.

violence can be symbolic, in Bourdieu's terms, or can appear as concrete physical violence, such as the destruction of the temples, previously described.

The Evangelical Church in Brazil, although it is not monolithic, has been in its majority, institutionally using hegemony, coercively, as a way to transform Brazilian culture. Assemblies of God, thirty-four percent of the evangelicals in Brazil, try to dominate religion through politics.³² The Baptist Church, eleven percent of evangelicals, has close connections with politics and exhibits hostility towards other religions. The Universal Church, eight percent of the evangelicals, owns a TV channel, has politicians in strategic positions (such as the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro), and its founder published a book called “Plan of Power: God, Christians, and Politics.” Other denominations, such as the Adventists, with three percent of the evangelicals, and the Presbyterians, with two percent, are in dispute in the academic field with confessional schools and universities (and more recently on YouTube and Instagram). Both claim to hold a monopoly on truth.³³ The largest Presbyterian university in the country was involved in cases of censoring Marxist publishers and speakers who tried to join their events.³⁴

It is not my claim that a church should not have political or apologetic positions. But their search for power as a way to benefit their plans, attacks against other religions, Christian denominations, or ideologies, and the unapologetic apologetics that claim an uncontested monopoly of truth are some examples of this

³² Datafolha Instituto de Pesquisas, *Perfil e Opinião dos Evangélicos no Brasil*, December 2016, <http://datafolha.folha.uol.com.br/opiniaopublica/2016/12/1845231-44-dos-evangelicos-sao-ex-catolicos.shtml>.

³³ I wrote this as a pastor in a Presbyterian Church, walking along fellow pastors.

³⁴ Renato Zaccaro, “Mackenzie Censura Palestras Sobre Diversidade e Proíbe Editoras ‘Subversivas,’” *Portal Disparada*, 2019, <https://portaldisparada.com.br/cultura-e-ideologia/mackenzie-censura-editoras/>.

“confrontational model” of prophetism, as Walter Brueggemann suggests.³⁵ What is now required, Brueggemann writes, “is that a relatively powerless prophetic voice must find imaginative ways that are rooted in the text but that freely and daringly move from the text toward concrete circumstance.” This kind of confrontational prophetism has proved to be not only ineffective to the transformation of culture, as demonstrated by Hunter,³⁶ but also counterproductive as a bad testimony for the Gospel.³⁷ It is the wrong battle to be fought; it is a mazy and satanic way to transform reality through power. I will try to demonstrate in this dissertation how the Evangelical Church in Brazil has been yet another agent of dispute in an already violent struggle for power and hegemony in this violent country. Instead, it could seize the opportunity to open doors to the newness of Jesus Christ through prophetic and “Eucharistic imagination.”³⁸

Leonard Sweet writes that “the currency of the gospel of religion is fear and imposition. The currency of the gospel of Christ is love and invitation. Love engenders a spirit of wonder, where fear spawns anger and distrust.”³⁹ Sweet goes on to state that love creates a “posture” of invitation. Several other contrasts and metaphors could be listed to describe these two postures. If we could compare the

³⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2d ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 87.

³⁶ See Hunter, *To Change The World*.

³⁷ Miroslav Volf argues that the failures of a prophetic and active faith result, among other symptoms, in coercion in an attempt to produce transformation, and this is a bad testimony for Jesus. See Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011), 24.

³⁸ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 91.

³⁹ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), preface.

concepts presented so far, and some that I will present further, aware that they are not completely equivalent, they could be compared this way:

Posture 1	Posture 2
World-changers	Faithful presence
Colonialist logic	Decolonial logic
Sword (power over)	Cross (power under)
Cultural-religion (religion)	Prophetic-religion (faith)
Cataphatic	Apophatic
Dualistic	Non-dualistic
Dogmatic Spirituality	Contemplative Spirituality
Constantinian Church (institutional)	Monastic Movement (mystical)
Babel	Pentecost
Building the Kingdom	Living the Kingdom
Cultural Hegemony	Cultural Diaconate
Confrontational Prophetism	Eucharistic Imagination
Gospel of religion	Gospel of Christ
Anti-Gospel	Gospel
Violent Authority	Authority of Suffering Compassion

This “Age-Old Problem,” this tension between the Kingdom of God and the world, cannot be solved as a mathematic equation however. Some tensions, teaches my mentor Leonard Sweet, should be preserved, just as a bow needs the tension to throw an arrow forward. The tension between the Kingdom of God and the world is also like one who holds a sword and needs to decide (or imagine, or listen to God) moment after moment, what to do with that sword. This metaphor will be helpful to this study, for while Jesus came as the Prince of Peace, the second time Jesus commissioned his disciples to what we call “mission,” he advised them to take a sword. The fact that we are carrying a sword does not mean that we should use it for violence. This is the challenge we face day after day. The common factor that we can see in each theory above mentioned, and the one that is clearly visible in the Brazilian Evangelical Church, is the impetus for hegemony or the way of power. We do hold a sword. We have received authority from above. But for what should we use this sword? Jesus taught us what we should do regarding hegemony, the *hēgoumenos*:

“But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader (hēgoumenos) as one who serves (diakonōn).”⁴⁰

A Brief History of the Protestant Church in Brazil

The majority of Brazilian Evangelical Churches have as a foundation two distinct hegemonic paradigms brought by foreign missionaries, and in the bosom of these paradigms lies a kind of “cultural religion,” to use Hall’s typology. When evangelical missionaries arrived in Brazil, they found a land dominated by a colonialist Catholicism built on illuminist beliefs of progress and the cultural superiority of Europeans, who felt they were doing the will of God by dominating the “uncivilized” indigenous people they encountered. This clash of traditions shaped the theology of the two branches of Christendom in Brazil.⁴¹ Both Evangelicals and Catholics established strong positions against each other, with some minor influence from spiritualistic religions.

The Presbyterian sociologist Antonio Gouveia de Mendonça⁴² studied the influence of the North American paradigm in the Brazilian Evangelical Church in the late 1960s. According to him, missionaries and institutions were much aware of their role to prepare the people to exert their rights of sovereignty and democracy. They believed that this should happen after the people were convinced of the superiority of the civilization they represented, which was the best expression of the Kingdom of God for them. Mendonça describes in these missionaries the necessity to reproduce in

⁴⁰ Luke 22:26 (ESV).

⁴¹ Seventy percent of the Evangelicals in Brazil were Catholics before converting. See Gedeon Alencar, *Protestantismo Tupiniquim. Hipóteses Sobre a (não) Contribuição Evangélica à Cultura Brasileira* (São Paulo: Arte Editorial, 2007), 18.

⁴² Mendonça, *O Celeste Porvir*, 162.

Brazil what happened in North America. If American success were attributed to protestant colonization, Brazil could be put on the same path through a *cultural transplant* in every aspect. This was a strategy against the hegemony of Catholicism. This strategy ended up becoming a dispute for the hegemony that shaped Protestant history in Brazil.

The mission of Protestantism in Brazil faced many challenges regarding the Brazilian ethos, mainly because until 1889, Brazil was still a Catholic country. Protestant churches could not even present an explicit architecture, which is why, to this day, Protestant churches look like ordinary halls, lacking the presence of crosses or stained glass. However, the rejection of much of Brazilian culture, such as African rhythms or Portuguese Catholicism, would be the defining mark of these Protestant groups. Sociologist Gedeon Alencar, regarding the missionary phase of Brazilian Protestantism, says that these missionaries:

Came with an American mindset, American perspective, American music, and the American culture. They came from a country that already has technology, democracy, school, development, to a country that was agricultural, semi-illiterate, poor, with mixed-race. So the mindset was of a colonizer, superior, rich, that looks to the mulattos as people who need their leadership.⁴³

Hence, a stereotype of a spiritual leader would be constructed in the Brazilian imagination as a white man, elite, and well-educated (preferentially in the United States, from where all good emanates, the referential civilization). This stereotype was true not only for Protestantism but was especially important regarding the historic denominations. Although the Evangelical Church in Brazil today is the

⁴³ Afe Adogame and Gedeon Alencar, "Movimentos Pentecostais," recorded August 25, 2017, Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil, III Congresso Internacional de Teologia e Ciências das Religiões, Faculdade Unida, 1:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4B8G-CZt0A>.

largest black religion in Brazil,⁴⁴ mostly feminine and poor, the most important names in Brazilian Evangelicalism come from white males.⁴⁵ To be more specific, the largest black religion in Brazil is Pentecostalism, which suffers from the same kinds of misrepresentation, perhaps due to preserving its foreign roots.

Pentecostalism arrived in Brazil with Swedish and Italian missionaries, who had experienced the Azusa movement in the United States. The Pentecostal church became the largest branch of Christianity in Brazil. The movement started with the poorest and grew rapidly, gaining influence and visibility in a couple of decades. After the immense success of these churches, many independent Pentecostal denominations started a movement baptized by Paul Freston known as Neo-Pentecostalism. The most prominent neo-Pentecostal church started in 1977, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. With a strong strategy of using the media and rubbing noses with political powers, the church today boasts a chain of television, radio, and newspapers, more than one million eight hundred thousand members, and several elected politicians. Edir Macedo, its founder, published the book *Plan of Power: God, the Christians, and the Politics*, establishing his guidelines for the political action of his church members. He writes: “Our goal here is to awaken Christians like you so you know who you are and what should be your role in this project, this plan.” Macedo argues that the Bible reveals the project of a “great plan to get power.”⁴⁶

Among the critics of this second moment of Pentecostalism and, especially, the neo-pentecostalism is the emphasis on the Prosperity Gospel. According to Paul

⁴⁴ Marco Davi de Oliveira, *A Religião Mais Negra do Brasil* (Viçosa: Ultimato, 2015), 56.

⁴⁵ For example: Silas Malafaia, Estavam Hernandes, José Wellington, R.R. Soares, Hernandes Dias Lopes, and Edir Macedo.

⁴⁶ Edir Macedo and Carlos Oliveira, *Plano de Poder* (São Paulo: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 59.

Freston,⁴⁷ there are several different Prosperity Gospels. But one thing is clear to them all: *suffering is something one should overcome*. This view states that there is no intrinsic virtue in suffering. Contrary to fatalism, the neo-Pentecostal churches believe that Christians should constantly search for better living conditions and more privileged positions. One of the most famous TV shows broadcasted by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God is called “Stop Suffering” and promises miracles, resurrections, and healings. The program has reached several countries throughout whole world.⁴⁸

In recent decades, the Evangelicals have grown at astonishing rates (five times the rate of the population), supported by television shows, radio programs, public festivals, and events. The anthropologist Clara Mafra points to some reasons for the fast growth of the Evangelical Church. She writes that proselytism, personalist leadership, entrepreneurial character, and marketing techniques were the predominant growth agents.⁴⁹

As prosperity became the ultimate sign of a blessed life, the most prosperous country in the world economy became legitimized as the reference of what the Kingdom of God should look like, just as most of the first missionaries intended. Nascimento states that still “today, Brazilian Protestantism... has the United States as its reference and theological matrix.”⁵⁰ The Brazilian Church, she writes, openly and

⁴⁷ Paul Freston, “What is Prosperity Theology: A Sociological Review” (video of lecture given at the Lausanne Global Consultation on Prosperity Theology, Poverty, and the Gospel, São Paulo, 30 March–2 April 2014), accessed April 21, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsYEGgxm8SU>.

⁴⁸ Rodrigo Soberanes, “Pare de Sofrer: os Segredos da Igreja Universal no Chile,” *Carta Maior*, last modified January, 19, 2016, <https://www.cartamaior.com.br/?/Editoria/Internacional/Pare-de-sofrer-os-segredos-da-Igreja-Universal-no-Chile/6/35349>.

⁴⁹ Clara Mafra, “Distância Territorial, Desgaste Cultural e Conversão Pentecostal,” in *Religiões e Cidades: Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo*, ed. Ronaldo de Almeida and Clara Mafra (São Paulo: Terceiro Nome, 2009), 52.

⁵⁰ Nascimento, *Evangelização ou Colonização*, 91.

happily embraces the ecclesiological and missiological paradigms of the North-American Church. This influence, in the globalized world, also comes from other Anglo-Saxon countries like Australia and the UK. This kind of assimilation, or mimetic modeling, is developing more quickly each day, as reported by Pastor Caio Fábio, one of the pastors I interviewed in my field research. A couple of decades ago, a trend that would hit the church in the developed world would take several years to influence Brazil. Nowadays, almost instantly, the Church in Brazil is aware of what is happening elsewhere and a couple of weeks later is reproducing it. We are constantly putting down an Amazon Forest of diversity in the Brazilian culture for the sake of a standardized soy monoculture.

All Shall Be Thine

In 1904 an agnostic theatre writer decided to investigate the religions which were installed in Rio de Janeiro. He visited different temples and talked to several priests. One of them was the oldest Protestant minister in service alive in Brazil at that time, head of the third oldest Evangelical Church in the country. During the conversation with Reverend Antonio Marques, the priest said:

“The only religion compatible with our Republic [founded only 15 years before] is exactly the Christian Evangelism [sic]. It submits itself to the laws, preaches civil wedding, obeys the code, and it is, by its purity, a moral mainstay. Propaganda [religious leaflets] makes these ideas clearer each day, and in the public spirit crystallizes the sharp understanding of the religious duty. Evangelists will soon be a national force, with intellectual chiefs, becoming a great mass.” And suddenly, full of conviction, the old reverend concluded: “We shall have, very soon, in the national representative chamber, an evangelical deputy!”

The agnostic writer, then, observed:

“I shook hands with the oldest evangelical minister in Brazil. My soul was blissful after listening to all the efforts Antonio Marques told me. During Eucharist, as I saw the reverent group drink the blood of Jesus, I felt the balm of dreams. But while my eyes gazed with envy the other side of life, the

golden margin of belief, the pastor dreamed with the temporal domain and the Chamber of Deputies.”⁵¹

The bliss of the Eucharist, the mystery that opened a window to “the other side of life” for the agnostic writer was overshadowed by the temporal dreams of the pastor. This typifies the kind of testimony and posture I am trying to describe. Currently, almost all the sectors of the Church are interested in winning cultural hegemony, some by conquering positions in Government,⁵² some by influencing universities,⁵³ mass media,⁵⁴ and so on. Most recently in the news, we have seen the support of Evangelicals in the presidential election, resulting in the victory of Bolsonaro, the candidate who was called “the Brazilian Trump.”⁵⁵ As several newspapers and news agencies around the world reported, his victory would not have been possible without Evangelical support. This kind of linking of politics and religion is part of a movement that grows stronger in each election. Only 115 years after João do Rio wrote his chronicle, president elect Bolsonaro was anointed by Edir Macedo (the one who wrote the book *Plan of Power*) at the “Temple of Solomon of the Universal Church” in a spectacle of Old Testament references.

⁵¹ See João do Rio. *As Religiões no Rio* (Rio de Janeiro: H. Garnier, 1904).

⁵² Chayenne Polimédio, “How Evangelical Conservatives Are Gaining Power in Brazil,” *Foreign Affairs*, last modified March 7, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/brazil/2019-03-07/how-evangelical-conservatives-are-gaining-power-brazil>.

⁵³ Recently the largest Presbyterian University prohibited two publishers from selling books in their Book Festival. Both of them have Marxist tendencies. See Zaccaro’s article mentioned before.

⁵⁴ A study indicates that 21% of Brazilian TV content is religious content. See Felipe Brandão, “Programação religiosa ocupa 21% da TV aberta, aponta estudo,” RD1, last modified August 28, 2017, <https://rd1.com.br/programacao-religiosa-ocupa-21-da-tv-aberta-aponta-estudo/>.

⁵⁵ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “A Trump-like Politician in Brazil Could Snag the Support of a Powerful Religious Group: Evangelicals,” *Washington Post*, November 28, 2017,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/11/28/a-trump-like-politician-in-brazil-could-snag-the-support-of-a-powerful-religious-group-Evangelicals/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6dc15b361c39.

According to Davi Lago, in 1990 there were twenty-two declared Evangelical deputies in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies.⁵⁶ In 1998 there were fifty-three. In 2002 there were sixty-nine. In 2003 they organized a parliamentary front to act with a common strategy, even though they were from different parties. Currently, the front is known as “BBB” (Bíblia, Bala e Boi – which means Bible, guns, and cows) because it gathers deputies that serve these lobby interests. In 2018 ninety-one Evangelical deputies were elected. Not solely a result of the numeric growth of the Evangelicals in the country, this movement is the result of calculated actions to achieve political power.⁵⁷

In 2004, a mayor from a small town decreed an amendment to municipal organic law that stated: “As a prophetic act, eternal and irrevocable, I declare Jesus Christ as the sole Lord and Savior of this city.”⁵⁸ This reflects the North-American reference in what Gregory Boyd called the Church Militant and Triumphant.⁵⁹

Boyd states that from the first century, the church, as well as its Lord, has been tempted to renounce the Cross and hold the Sword. The Lord was tempted to bow down before Satan to receive the kingdoms of the world. The church is constantly tempted to sit on Satan’s throne and govern with him. This became more concrete starting with Constantine. To sit on Satan’s throne, the church needs to hold

⁵⁶ Davi Lago, *Brasil Polifônico: os Evangélicos e as Estruturas de Poder* (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 2018), 38.

⁵⁷ An example is the Cidadania AD Brasil, put forth from the major branch of the Assemblies of God in 2002. Davi Lago reports that this political project had three objectives: to allow the Assemblies of God to have political influence in the legislative and executive spheres; to elect candidates engaged with the Christian faith that might be instruments of the denomination; to fight so that “the unchangeable principles of the Word of God” would be the reference of those in power. See Lago, *Brasil Polifônico*, 39.

⁵⁸ Clara Mafra, “Jesus Cristo Senhor e Salvador da Cidade – Imaginário Crente e Utopia Política,” *Revista de Ciências Sociais* 49, no. 3 (2006): 583.

⁵⁹ Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 53.

the sword and assume functions that are contrary to the vocation of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. In a Kuyperian expression, the spheres of sovereignty must be held separately. To aim for power, as if it was a shortcut to change the world and usher in the Kingdom of God, is to bow before Satan.

Boyd describes that since the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine, the church discovered a way to avoid the Cross at the same time as it embraced violence and militarism as a method to gain glory and became the Church Militant and Triumphant. Because of this, the church has betrayed its purpose and expended its efforts to enhance the kingdom of the world. Boyd writes:

Tragically, the history of the Church has been largely a history of believers refusing to trust the way of the crucified Nazarene and instead of giving in to the very temptation he resisted. It's the history of an institution that has frequently traded its holy mission for what it thought was a good mission. It is the history of an organization that has frequently forsaken the slow, discrete, nonviolent, sacrificial way of transforming the world for the immediate, obvious, practical, and less costly way of improving the world. It is a history of a people who too often identified the kingdom of God with a "Christian" version of the kingdom of the world.⁶⁰

Trying to be effective and do good, the church surrenders to what Caio Fábio called in my interview with him the "anti-Gospel," running away from the Cross and unsheathing the sword, engaging in persecuting heretics and (in the best scenarios) forcing people into conversion. This is what Nascimento claims to be the shift from pre-Christendom to Christendom in the Constantinian era, hence the movement of Christians from the margins to the center, from spiritual power to human power, from a voluntary engagement to a mandatory engagement, from pilgrimage to settlement, from tension with culture to conformity to a hybrid culture. Christianity became a synonym of power, as followers carried the emblem of the Empire, the banner of the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 22.

mighty army. This juxtaposition caused the missionary movement to take several steps behind.

A similar situation has happened in the last electoral process in Brazil. The alliance between the Evangelical Church and this candidate was a discredit to the Brazilian Christian movement throughout the country as well as a scandal for many. However, many in the Evangelical Church viewed it as a victory. The candidate supported by the Evangelicals, who formerly served in the military, defends among other things “to loosen gun laws so that more Brazilians can arm themselves. He favors giving police carte blanche to kill suspected criminals.”⁶¹ His slogan is: “Brazil over everything. God over everyone.”

Finally, one expression that resonates with this alliance between the church and power and reveals this stance of cultural hegemony can be seen in a speech of an evangelical politician, recently nominated Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights. The minister Damaris Alves is a lawyer and pastor of a Baptist Church of Pentecostal influence. In her inaugural address, she announced: “The State is secular, but this minister is awfully Christian.” A few months later, the president used a similar expression to indicate that an evangelical would be nominated to the Supreme Court. He said that, although the State is secular, “we are Christians” and that the next judge to be nominated would be “awfully evangelical.”⁶²

The question, therefore, is what to do with the sword, the power, the cultural influence, ultimately, the authority. How do we exert authority without coercion?

⁶¹ Anthony Boadle, “Brazil's Evangelicals Say Far-right Presidential Candidate is Answer to Their Prayers,” *Reuters*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-election-Evangelicals/brazils-Evangelicals-say-far-right-presidential-candidate-is-answer-to-their-prayers-idUSKCN1M70D9>.

⁶² Naiara Galarraga Gortázar, “Um Ministro ‘Terrivelmente Evangélico’ a Caminho do Supremo Tribunal Federal,” *El País*, July 10, 2019, https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2019/07/10/politica/1562786946_406680.html.

How do we lead (hēgoumenos) as a servant (diakonōn)? How can we stand in a posture of love and not a posture of religious fear? The kind of relationship the church needs to build with culture needs to resemble the kind of relationship God built with a rebellious world. That is why we will look into this particular kind of relationship that we call a “covenantal” relationship, which is always better explained with a table.

CHAPTER 2:
THE AUTHORITY OF SUFFERING COMPASSION

It was at the table that Jesus made the shift from Judaism’s particular covenant with a chosen people to a universal brotherhood reborn of the Spirit and naturalized as citizens of a New Jerusalem. The church has a seat at the table for everyone. There is no one who doesn’t belong, no matter how different you are.¹

— Leonard Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*

The Beginning

The thesis of this dissertation asserts that Jesus calls his church to have a covenantal kind of posture towards society, which we can only learn around the Lord’s table. The church is called to use its weapons with Eucharistic imagination, to heal and not to hurt. This claim has several implications that I will analyze going forward. Let us start at the beginning.

In the beginning, *Elohim*² created the heavens and the earth. *Elohim* called them into existence, and they responded obediently by coming into existence.³ At some point, *Elohim* said, “Let us make humans, from the ground, in our image, after our resemblance. They will have dominion, authority, regarding creation.” So, *Elohim* created those from the ground in the image of *Elohim*. In the image of *Elohim*, he

¹ Leonard Sweet, *From Tablet to Table: Where Community is Found and Identity is Formed* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015), 129.

² André Chouraqui’s translation for *Elohim* includes a final “s” to emphasize the plural nature of the term. The Jewish-French author also preserves the etymology of Adam, which he renders as “Glébeux”, which in French means “from the land, ground.” He renders Genesis 1.26-27 as: “Elohîms dit: «Nous ferons Adâm le Glébeux à notre réplique, selon notre ressemblance. Ils assujettiront le poisson de la mer, le volatile des ciels, la bête, toute la terre, tout reptile qui rampe sur la terre.» Elohîms crée le glébeux à sa réplique, à la réplique d’Elohîms, il le crée, mâle et femelle, il les crée.” Accessed November 2020, <http://nachouraqui.tripod.com/id83.htm>

³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: in Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 2010), 18.

created them, male and female. With plurality and otherness he created them. Robert Alter in his translation notes:

The term 'adam, afterward consistently with a definite article, which is used both here and in the second account of the origins of humankind, is a generic term for human beings, not a proper noun. It also does not automatically suggest maleness, especially not without the prefix ben, "son of," and so the traditional rendering "man" is misleading, and an exclusively male 'adam would make nonsense of the last clause of verse 27.⁴

God (*Elohim*) is plural from the beginning. It is not clear (and it could not possibly be since we are talking about God) if this plurality we note in the creation points to the trinity, as Orthodox theology sustains, or to the divine council, as some theologians sustain.⁵ But despite that, we can still assert that God is a community. The Hebrew text points to the unity of this creator, while the process of creation and the project (image) of the creation is of a unite community. Brueggemann summarizes the first 11 chapters of Genesis with the question: "Will God bring his creation to the unity he intends?" Referring to Ephesians 1, the author argues that "the creator intends the creation to embody an obedient unity."⁶

Brazilian theologian, Ariovaldo Ramos, suggests that Adam could be the name of the couple, not of the man.⁷ The woman is only named by the man, as he also names the animals, after the fall. When he first meets the woman, he (*ish*) poetically exalts her existence and calls her woman (*ishah*). That is, the unite community

⁴ Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible—A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), 58.

⁵ Heiser argues that in the creation, the plural unity that creates humanity is not to be confused with the trinity but should be better interpreted as the "divine council." See Michael S. Heiser. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015).

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 12.

⁷ Ariovaldo Ramos, *Igreja: e eu Com Isso?* (São Paulo: Editora Reflexão, 2013), 67.

intended in the beginning comprehended otherness. Another example is a tradition in Judaism that sustains that God made Adam from dust from the land where the sanctuary was to be settled, along with dust from the four corners of the earth (of four different colors)⁸ and “a mixture from all the waters of the world.”⁹

When *Elohim* breathed the breath of life into Adam, a new category of being appeared, who received a *naphach*, and became a living being in a different manner than the animals. Since *nephesh* means both soul and throat, in the Midrash this attribute is associated with the ability to speak. Some Targums, then, translate *nephesh chay* as a living soul, which in the Septuagint became *psyche zōsan*. In the Targum Onkelos, for example, it is said that the breath of life “became in Adam a speaking spirit.”¹⁰ Communication is one of the attributes that differentiates humanity from the rest of creation. Not only the ability to transmit messages, as animals and machines also possess, but the ability to create a common existence, to be one, to be *echad*.¹¹

Echad is another element that Ramos suggests supports this anthropology of unity. The word *echad* describes both *Elohim* and the first couple.¹² This word is used to state that husband and wife become one flesh and is also used in the Shema: “Hear,

⁸ Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten and George van Kooten, eds., *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7) - The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 157-59.

⁹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁰ Ibid., 162.

¹¹ “The first human is given reported speech for the first time only when there is another human to whom to respond. The speech takes the form of verse, a naming-poem.” Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, 82.

¹² In Hebrew, two different words are commonly used to mean “one” or “single.” The first is “*yachid*.” The second is “*echad*.” The former means a single unity. The latter means a plural, or collective, unity. “*Echad*” is used to describe the unity between husband and wife, “one flesh.”

O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one,”¹³ that is, *YHWH Eloheinu YHWH Echad*. Our plural God, our *Elohim*, YHWH, is a unite community. Sonderegger, in the first volume of her Systematic Theology, dedicated to the oneness of God, writes that: “Nothing, we say, is so close to the heart of Scripture as is the Oneness of God.”¹⁴ She also states that: “The Christian doctrine of God begins, is governed by, and finds its rest in the call to the One God, the One Lord of Israel.”¹⁵

This Oneness, Ramos argues, is one of the most important attributes of the *imago Dei*, to become *echad*, just as *Elohim*. It also resonates with what Heiser argues about the function of being an image. He writes: “The image is not an ability we have, but a status. We are God’s representatives on earth. To be human is to image God.”¹⁶ Albeit Heiser suggests that *Elohim* is not the God *YHWH* but his divine council, he describes that humanity is supposed to be a single family to image this plural divinity, this heavenly family.¹⁷ Hence, to image a communitarian God, humanity needs to be somehow united. However, we rarely experience this in our existence because of our state of brokenness.

The Catholic Church also emphasizes the “relational” nature of humanity as a distinctive attribute that relates to the image of God. In the document “Communion and Stewardship,” the Vatican states that: “The fundamentally relational character of the *imago Dei* itself constitutes its ontological structure and the basis for its exercise

¹³ Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV).

¹⁴ Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, The Doctrine of God. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), XIV.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 42.

¹⁷ “Language describing believers as sons or children of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1–3) or as “adopted” into God’s family (Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5) is neither accidental nor pragmatic. It reflects the original vision of Genesis. And once we are glorified, the two council-families will be one—in a new Eden. We’ll discover more about all those themes as we proceed.” Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 42.

of freedom and responsibility.”¹⁸ The document follows this argument to affirm that “man is not an isolated individual but a person, an essentially relational being.” This relationality is described as four-fold, which is the relation with others, with God, with Creation, and with oneself. The Church affirms that all these instances are impacted by the fall. Finally, the document summarizes its position:

The triune God has revealed his plan to share the communion of Trinitarian life with persons created in his image. Indeed, it is for the sake of this Trinitarian communion that human persons are created in the divine image. It is precisely this radical likeness to the triune God that is the basis for the possibility of the communion of creaturely beings with the uncreated persons of the Blessed Trinity. Created in the image of God, human beings are by nature bodily and spiritual, men and women made for one another, persons oriented towards communion with God and with one another, wounded by sin and in need of salvation, and destined to be conformed to Christ, the perfect image of the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹

The wounded *imago Dei*, affected by sin, needs to be saved and be conformed to Christ, the *imago Christi*, “the perfect image of the Father.” For the Catholic Church, this happens through the Sacraments, in the power of the Holy Spirit. While rejecting the Platonic and Cartesian dualistic anthropologies, the Catholic doctrine affirms the unity of body and soul of humanity, designed for personal communion with one another, with Creation, and with God. This design is what is supposed to be recovered by the Sacraments.

¹⁸ International Theological Commission, “Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God,” Vatican, 2000-2002, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html.

¹⁹ International Theological Commission, Chapter 2.

After the Fall

“God commanded the Man, You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. Don’t eat from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you’re dead.”²⁰

To eat with God, at the table of his fellowship, was the primordial condition that was broken by disobedience. This fall affected the four-fold relationships of humanity. After the fall, our relationship with God needed mediation; we could neither walk with him through the garden in the cool of the day nor eat in his presence. Our relationship with ourselves and inevitably with one another has been impacted. We don’t feel comfortable to present ourselves as we are—in our nakedness—and we search for cover-ups. Man is split within himself.²¹ As Leonard Sweet says, we have become hiders. Our relationship with creation has become one of abuse when we should use our domain to image God as co-creators and keepers.

The fall broke us into pieces. Cavanaugh calls the fall a process of atomization. “Humankind was created for communion, but is everywhere divided,” wrote Cavanaugh to describe Genesis 1-11 in an intentional parallel with Rousseau’s “Man was born free but is everywhere in bondage.”²² After the expulsion of humanity from the Garden of Eden, the first episode presented is of the rivalry between

²⁰ Genesis 2:16-17 (The Message).

²¹ Pope Paul VI, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium Et Spes*,” Vatican: Second Vatican Council, December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

²² William T. Cavanaugh, “The Body of Christ: The Eucharist and Politics,” *Word & World* 22, no. 2 (2002): 170-177, https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/22-2_Body_of_Christ/22-2_Cavanaugh.pdf.

brothers. Cain is the first son of the couple, named as a “maker,” a “smith,” who was a worker of the ground. His brother Abel was a keeper of sheep.

After some time, Cain brought the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell, an idea of resentment not only against his brother but also his God.²³ The Lord, then, questioned Cain about why he was angry and upset. God also instructed Cain about his offering and his desire. His mission should be to “govern his passion,” in Chouraqui’s translation.²⁴ Robert Alter’s translation of God’s instruction is also quite illuminating. He notes that the elliptic construction imposes a challenge for the translation, but in maintaining the poetic form, he offers the following translation:

And the LORD said to Cain.
 “Why are you incensed,
 and why is your face fallen?
 For whether you offer well,
 or whether you do not,
 at the tent flap sin crouches
 and for you is its longing
 but you will rule over it.”

Alter offers this “whether or not” clause for the single commandment. It does not matter if the offer is accepted or not. Cain is still commanded to rule over this sin that crouches at the tent flap, whose longing is for Cain as if the sin had a desire external to Cain.²⁵ In this translation, God speaks in such a manner as to be obeyed

²³ Genesis 4:3-5 (ESV).

²⁴ Most translations render the verb *mashal* as “to rule over” or “to master.” The ISV renders it as “to dominate,” remembering the mandate God gave humanity. Chouraqui renders Genesis 4.7 as: “*N’est-ce pas, que tu t’améliores à porter ou que tu ne t’améliores pas, à l’ouverture, la faute est tapie ; à toi, sa passion. Toi, gouverne-la.*” Available at <http://nachouraqui.tripod.com/id83.htm>

²⁵ The ESV renders more precisely: “Its desire is contrary to you.” But I prefer the ambiguity of an external force that wants to rule over the internal. This resonates with the mimetic hypothesis.

with the grateful acceptance of his evocative²⁶ word—you will rule over it—or disobeyed with the suspicion of the rebellious who has his own point of view. When Cain didn't dominate his desire, he was dominated by it and finally dominated over his brother's desire, which he envied, by destroying it.

The question concerning why Abel's offer was "regarded," and Cain's was not, raises several hypotheses. One is God's preference for the smaller, the younger brother,²⁷ which would be counterintuitive and countercultural and can be noticed throughout the book of Genesis. Another hypothesis links the episode with the Passover and Abel's offer as appropriate because it is a sacrificial, blood-shedding offer, and because the blood goes "downward"²⁸ as if it would make atonement (make one) for humanity, creation, and God. This apotropaic act, this ritual, would prevent sin from "couching at the door," according to John Dunnill.

René Girard studied the violent nature of religion and offered some very practical implications on sacrifice. He states that both Cain and Abel had the potential to become assassins. The difference is that Abel had an "outlet" for his envy and violence, which was the cultic sacrifice – he already sheds blood, so he doesn't need to shed his brother's blood. Girard writes:

One of the brothers kills the other, and the murderer is the one who does not have the violence-outlet of animal sacrifice at his disposal. This difference between sacrificial and nonsacrificial cults determines, in effect, God's judgement in favor of Abel. To say that God accedes to Abel's sacrificial offerings but rejects the offerings of Cain is simply another way of saying—

²⁶ Brueggemann commenting on God's command to Cain writes: "If that statement is taken optatively, it is a promise, a hope, and a permit: "You may." That promise is an appropriate counterpart to God's persistent, evocative speech. God will be sovereign. Creation may be whole." See Genesis 19.

²⁷ John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 36.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

from the viewpoint of the divinity—that Cain is a murderer, whereas his brother is not.²⁹

For Girard, the jealousy of Cain dominates him because he does not have a sacrificial outlet. The story goes on, and God inquires Cain about what he had done. While Adam tried to hide (his personhood) his sin, now Cain tries to hide his deed behind his words (his narrative). He learned that from his father, who tried to tell the story in such a way to blame the woman. It is almost an attempt to change reality by the way it is described. It worked for Joseph's brothers for some time. To control the narrative is a temptation with which we always have to deal, the temptation of covering up our own sins with words that create a universe in which we are not guilty.

Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." Then the Lord said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.³⁰

The blood of Abel produced a call, a voice, from the ground. There is a cry calling for justice from this figure of "Christ," who is both sacrificer and victim.

There is still a cry for every brother that is killed.³¹ If we affirm that humanity

²⁹ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 4.

³⁰ Genesis 4:8-17 (ESV).

³¹ Numbers 35:33 (ESV).

descends of this primary couple, every murder is a fratricide. Dunnill registers that the fragment Targum comments on Genesis 4.16 “that the earth was fruitful like Eden until Cain killed his brother, but then because he turned about and killed his brother Abel, it turned about to produce for him thorns and thistles.” In this fratricide case, we can notice clearly how sacrifices are attributed to change culture since antiquity.

Cain became marked, differentiated. A mark, a sign, we think, would make him even more vulnerable to be identified and killed. However, the violent background behind this mark operates as an orbit, gravitationally organizing the powers around it over the memory of a tragedy and the promise of escalating violence (that the text never attributes to God). Like gravity, this narrative (mark) establishes a trajectory, a tendency, and organizes desires and future decisions. Sacrifice is what originates a new culture or a culture change, according to the anthropologist René Girard, whose theory of the origin of cultures I employ here. It is around a violent episode that culture emerges.³² A corpse, writes Girard, is the starting point of what will become a new culture: “Cultural differentiation develops on the basis of the founding murder. The murder tends to efface itself behind the directly sacrificial rituals [...] behind the post-ritual institutions, such as judicial and political systems or the forms of culture.”³³

In Cain, we see that our ungoverned desire results in violence that, when met by God’s suffering sovereignty, receives a mark “signifying both shame and

³² Girard writes that culture “always develops as a tomb. The tomb is nothing but the first human monument to be raised over the surrogate victim, the first, most elemental and fundamental matrix of meaning. There is no culture without a tomb, and no tomb without a culture; in the end, the tomb is the first and only cultural symbol.” René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 164–65.

³³ Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 164-65.

security.”³⁴ God’s grace covers disgrace in such a way that scatters evil because it amplifies the territory to the land of Nod while amplifying its known boundaries. Where sin increased, grace increased all the more (Rom. 5:20). Cain anticipates a death sentence, but in the form of grace he receives life insurance. He is covered by a narrative that asserts his judgment and also the gift of life and family.

Around Cain’s narrative (mark), a group is organized in a civilized manner, originating a city named after his son, Enoch. This group (Cain’s seven-generation family) births the first artists, smiths, and musicians, and also shepherds.

Brueggemann asserts that, although the origin of this culture should not be confused with the actual history of culture, the appearance of art in human history “is linked to the vitality of the murderer, or at least to the one willing to engage in self-assertion.”³⁵

He, then, presents a link that is parallel to Girard’s theory:

But another more substantive link may be suggested in the relation between the "desire" (v. 7) and arts and city (vv. 17, 21-22). Freud has fully explored the relation between desire and culture. He has seen that on the one hand there would be no culture without desire. On the other hand, there will be no culture unless desire is channeled and controlled. Thus behind the arts and city of verses 17, 21-22 is the desire of verse 7. Perhaps the narrative suggests that the family of Cain has now begun to "master" (cf. v. 7). The "mastery" leading to culture is never an untainted one; it brings together desire and control. Together they make arts, city, and culture possible.³⁶

In the same city where desire might be mastered and art flourishes, violence becomes part of the culture. Lamech escalates, on his own, the threats once made by God to safeguard Cain. Violence always tends to escalate, because humanity is mimetic, reciprocal, imitative. By all means, this family is still dead and cultivating a death culture. This family, writes Brueggemann, is not yet able to handle the question

³⁴ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 63.

³⁵ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 65.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

of the brother, and without resolving this issue, no city will be peaceful. He asserts: “Culture depends on desire, but the city of culture is perennially troubled by the unresolved issue of the brother.”³⁷ Cain’s genealogy ends in Lamech.

In Girardian terms, desire, which is mimetic in nature, results in rivalry among men that escalates for a war of all against all. The group in crisis, before coming to a collapse, tries to find peace in the expulsion of a “scapegoat.” Or the group can reenact the previous crisis solution through rituals that remember the scapegoat that brought peace before. That is, an atonement (at-onement) is necessary, a sacrificial act. This sacrificial rhythm might have been the practice of the other part of Adam’s family. Eve had another son, called Seth, to take the place of Abel and begin a new line of descendants. It is after his son is born that the people began to call upon the name of the Lord again. From Seth came Noah in the tenth generation.

Covenantal Relationship

The kind of relationship that God establishes with humanity offers creative tension. On one side, we have a sovereign God. On the other side, we have a disobedient people. In the middle, we have the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing a new creation into existence by the creative Word of God. The steps by each side are covenantal, because God’s character is covenantal. These covenants are evocative calls that invite humanity to respond in obedience.

The affirmations of Israel are dialectical. They affirm two realities in tension with each other, neither of which is true by itself. We have no adequate word for this dialectical affirmation about creation which is peculiarly Israelite. It is probably best to use the word "covenantal," as Barth has urged. That word

³⁷ Ibid., 66.

affirms that the creator and the creation have to do with each other decisively. And neither can be understood apart from the other.³⁸

Brueggemann writes that “language is decisive for the being of the world.”³⁹

In this relationship, he writes, “it is by speaking and hearing that the interaction of the creator and creation takes place.” It is very significant that God “calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom. 4.17). The universe responded by coming into existence. God commanded to Adam his purpose, his sphere of domain, and what to do so the humans would not die, and Adam responded with disobedience. Adam and the woman didn’t listen. God commands Cain what to do, so he will not be dominated by external desire, but Cain did not listen or obey. After him comes Noah, who listens, differently from his perverse and violent generation. About this narrative, Brueggemann writes that God differs from every other god due to his deep grief. It is this grief, claims Brueggemann, that enables God “to move past his own interest and to embrace his creaturepartner in new ways. In the self-abandoning of God (cf. Phil. 2:5-11) comes the basis for a new world called now into being.” The *kenosis*, the self-abandoning of God, the disposition to endure humanity’s evil, meets Noah’s hearing and invites him to obedience in hope of a new humanity. This new humanity is built upon a pact, a covenant, which is represented by a (rain)bow. Brueggemann describes that this bow is a promise to creation, “a reminder to God of a vow he will honor” and also a specific symbol of war, a weapon. This bow, however, is an undrawn bow.

...an undrawn bow, that is, the creator has won his victory, over the chaos and perhaps also over his inclination to punish... God is no longer in pursuit of an enemy. The promise of God is that he will not again be provoked to use his weapon, no matter how provocative his creation becomes. The bow at rest thus forms a parallel to the sabbath in 2:1-4a at the resolve of creation. The first creation (1:1-2:4a) ends with the serene rest of God. The recreation

³⁸ Ibid., 13.

³⁹ Ibid., 18.

(8:20-9:17) ends with God resting his weapon. God's creation is for all time protected from God's impatience.⁴⁰

After this re-creation, Noah builds an altar and offers a sacrifice to the Lord. A feast most likely took place after that. Peter Leithart writes that “all worship in the Bible takes place at a table... worship without a meal isn’t worship at all.”⁴¹ The aroma of this burnt offering pleased God (8:21), who, then, repeated the anthropological statement he had proclaimed as a sentence for the flood. He now added a promise to mankind, a promise to all living creatures and a promise to the earth. The anthropological statement is that mankind’s desire is ill. The inclinations of our heart are evil, and because of that, God will not destroy all living creatures as he has done before. This causal link becomes clearer with the covenantal perspective. Instead of destroying the wicked, since man is corrupted from his youth, God decides to establish a covenant, a pact, with this wicked humanity. We could say that the covenantal relationship displays God’s willingness to “sacrifice hegemony,” a peculiar kind of sovereignty, the authority of suffering compassion.

After going through the waters, humanity, then, receives a re-creation covenant that takes place with resonances from Eden. It starts with a blessing (9:1), followed by the granting of authority (9:2), a new food pattern (9:3), an ethics of eating (9:4), linked with the constraint of violence (9:5), due to the fact that man was made in God’s image (9:6). Finally it ends where it began, with a blessing (9:7).

¹And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ²The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁴¹ Peter Leithart, *Theopolitan Liturgy* (West Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2019), 058.

⁶“Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.
⁷And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and
multiply in it.”⁴²

This new food pattern includes the respectful, purposeful, killing of animals to eat their meat. However, God does not seem only interested in changing dietary habits, since the bloodshedding of the animals is linked with the bloodshedding of men. After that covenant, humanity could shed the blood of animals but not shed the blood of men. This humanity, evil from its youth, was receiving permission to kill, in a purposeful and directed manner.

God’s posture toward creation, Brueggemann writes, goes “from judgment to assurance, from destructive anger to promissory vow, from law-suit speech to salvation oracle.” The question that remains is: how is it that this move happened? The author argues that it happened when God remembered Noah. The surprising reality is that God remembers. The sign in the sky, hence, is for God to remember. All creation can rest when there is a rainbow in the sky, only because it guarantees that God is remembering his covenant with creation. The covenantal relationship is based on remembrance; which implies the process of “re-membering,” recovering unity with a specific reality. God promises to re-member his covenant whenever he forms clouds and rainbows appear upon the earth. The covenantal relationship should be constantly (or ritually) remembered; by God and creation.

The last movements of this re-creation are the “kingship,” the “sabbath” of Noah in this new earth, celebrated with wine; and finally a new fall, enacted by “Ham, the father of Canaan.” Peter Leithart writes that “Wine is the drink of new creation,

⁴² Genesis 9:1-7 (ESV).

enjoyed in a world cleansed by the flood.”⁴³ Ham’s offense, however, is an accusation to Noah’s vulnerability, his lack of a coverage. He needed to be *kaphar* (covered). Ham’s accusation brings the echoes of God’s question in the Eden: “Who told you that you were naked?” Noah, then, “curses” Ham’s descendance with servitude. One of his descendants, Nimrod, became known as the exact opposite of a servant: a mighty hunter, a warrior. He was the founder of Babel and Nineveh, among other cities. Babel, as we will see, sets the paragon of the attempt to escape servitude.

“Pseudocovenantal” Relationship – False Atonement

Babel is the embryo of Babylon,⁴⁴ which is called in John’s Revelation, the “mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.”⁴⁵ Babel is the antithesis of Noah’s Ark (God’s protection through chaos), a step back to Cain’s violent origin of building cities for protection (cover-up). It is curious how the word *bakopher*, pitch, used by God to instruct how the ark should be covered, and *kaphar*, to cover, has its roots in *kopher*. This word means “ransom,” “cover,” “head,” and “atonement.” From it comes *kippur*, and the *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement (at-onement),⁴⁶ or the day in which the people are covered and brought under the Head. While in Babel, the

⁴³ Peter Leithart, Taste and See That the Lord’s Supper Is Good, *Christianity Today* (March 28, 2018), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/march-web-only/taste-and-see-lords-supper-maundy-thursday-eucharist.html>.

⁴⁴ “Babylon is one of the dreaded images of the Bible, stretching from OT history to the apocalyptic vision of Revelation. Like its equally famous counterpart Nineveh, the origins of Babylon (=Babel) lie with Nimrod, ‘the first on earth to be a mighty man’ (Gen 10:8-10). Certainly Babylon herself is portrayed throughout the Bible as the mightiest of cities, often used by God to bring crushing judgment on other nations (e.g., Jer 21:2-10; 25:8-11).” See *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Ryken, Leland, Wilhoit, James C, and Longman III, Tremper, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 68.

⁴⁵ Revelation 17:5 (ESV).

⁴⁶ “The word “atonement” is unique among theological terms, being a derivation, not from Greek or Latin, but from Middle English, namely, the phrase ‘at onement,’ designating a state of harmony.” See William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4.

tower is built with *lebenah*, bricks, as stones, and *chomer*, cement, as pitch. These are the same words that report the oppression of the Pharaoh over the Hebrew people in Exodus 1.14.

Rejecting the covenantal relationship that father Noah had experienced, a *kippur* from God that atones and organizes creation, safely transporting it into a new creation, Nimrod's project is the same of every emperor or modern state. The civilization endeavor attempts to conquer the heavens with coercion, a pseudocovenantal relationship within a hegemonic project. As we will see further, Augustine typifies war as a simulacrum of the unity experienced in the Kingdom of God; this is the kind of pseudocovenantal relationship we face in Babel. There is no mention of consulting God; on the contrary, Babel goes in the very opposite direction. Babel means bricks and cement going up, instead of wood and pitch going horizontally through. Brueggemann highlights that in the final narrative of Babel, "the last state of pre-Israelite humanity is *lo'-shema'*, 'they did not listen' (Gen. 11:7)." Babel is the opposite of the Shema: it is the collective of individuals who do not listen and end up confused and dismantled. Here is why we could call it a pseudocovenantal relationship, or a false atonement, an agreement between brethren to annihilate their father's curse, resembling Freud's theory of the founding murder, or René Girard's theory that culture has violent origins. We should never forget the violent context of the Babel project and the potential for destruction that was at stake with this atonement simulacrum.

And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go

down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."⁴⁷

They refused to scatter and fill the earth, which was God's commandment from the beginning (Genesis 1:28; 8:17; 9:1). They did not listen to God and ended up unable to listen to one another, to atone, and to attune to one another. In the following chapter of Genesis, we see the call of Abraham, in which he listens and obeys, leaving the city and walking into the wilderness. With Abraham, God advances his covenantal language and celebrates a covenantal ceremony (Gen. 15) in which God is the only one committed to the possible penalties. Abraham listens to the point of not sacrificing Isaac, which would be culturally expected, as it is even today in virtually every culture.

Wilfred Owen, a poet who died as a soldier in the First World War, wrote in his journal "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young." In the poem, Owen describes the journey of Abraham and Isaac going to Mount Moriah and the dialogue between them. The expressions resemble the young who goes to war, sent by the old man. At the moment of the sacrifice, he detours from the Biblical story:

Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
and builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretched forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Genesis 11:6-7 (ESV).

⁴⁸ Wilfred Owen. The Parable of the Old Man and the Young. Public Domain. Accessed November 18, 2020 at <https://poets.org/poem/parable-old-man-and-young>.

The Biblical Abraham listened and saw the “substitutionary” ram. A few centuries later, Moses also listens and invites the Hebrew people to a broader and deeper covenant with God. Finally, in the *Shema*, there is an emblematic call to listen to God, who is one, even being plural, and to respond to his call by loving him with entireness, wholeness, or holiness. As Brueggemann writes, God intends “this unity to be aesthetic as well as ethical. The world is to be ‘beautiful’ as well as ‘obedient.’”⁴⁹ God is constantly calling humanity into covenant. This word, covenant, represents the kind of tension that is held between a sovereign God and his rebellious creation.

The nature of this call is, in Brueggemann's words, a “peculiar kind of sovereignty,” because the sovereign God is the one who is calling. His call is not “subject to debate.” Yet, the Biblical narratives demonstrate that he is unheeded. Therefore, Brueggemann writes, “this sovereign speech is not coercive but evocative.” It calls realities into existence, but not as human authorities (hegemon). “His word has the authority of suffering compassion.”⁵⁰ This difference between coercive and evocative speech is of uttermost importance for this thesis. God is constantly making his call heard, inviting humanity to respond in obedience toward the unity he intended from the beginning. The church needs to display, as the Body of Christ, this same authority of suffering compassion. The disciples, however, only have eyes for temporal power.

⁴⁹ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 18.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Fire from Heaven

God's mission is to bring creation to unity with itself and with himself. God's mission is to atone (at-one) the whole universe in Christ.⁵¹ His tactic is to present to the world the viability of that unity through one particular people, a prophetic and priestly people, an alternative community. This covenantal people is God's partner to bring to history one man, a man who existed from the beginning, the eternal Word. This Word that tabernacled among us was the very presence of *Elohim*; he was his anointed, his Messiah. Jesus is Lord over everything. However, his Lordship is as sovereign as the compassionate and suffering sovereignty of the God of the Hebrew Bible. That is, it was challenging for people to recognize in him the supreme authority they expected the Messiah to have. They projected God in their own image – violent, vengeful, and retributive; while also absent, omitted, ignoring the sins of the powerful.

The mission of the Messiah and how he will accomplish God's mission becomes the theme of the Gospels. I will focus more on the study of the Gospel of Luke due to the scope of this thesis. "Luke is very much interested in matters of power — those who have it and those who do not — and how the gospel relates to them,"⁵² writes González. Luke tracks the story of Jesus concerning humankind within its social, political, and religious context. Luke also traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam and finally to God. This supports the theology of Jesus as the new Adam, the beginning of a new creation, a covenantal creation.

⁵¹ Ephesians 1:9-10; 1John 1:1-2.

⁵² Justo González, *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 6.

Luke's writings, considering both the gospels and Acts, are also peculiar for presenting an unfinished narrative. González highlights that the narrative is chronologically unfinished, because the story of Acts ends without explanation concerning the fate of the apostles, and also geographically because the narrative keeps expanding to the ends of the earth. That is why Luke's story is of a particular characteristic, González writes: "a story that gives us information but still goes on as an invitation: an invitation to join it, to continue it."⁵³ As the evocative character of the covenant, Luke's accounts are an invitation to the covenant. González argues that this narrative is so well written to convey its message that any systematization of its thought would contradict the text itself. So, I will present some aspects of the text and the exegesis of a specific episode.

Regarding Salvation, the Gospel of Luke is rather different in its presentation of the theme of the Atonement. Matthew and Mark, probable sources for Luke's narrative, register one of Jesus' saying that clearly relates his death with a vicarious suffering, found in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."⁵⁴ Luke uses a different language to describe this atonement. Bock writes that Luke prefers to present Jesus as a Servant with words about suffering, instead of substitutionary imagery.⁵⁵

From the beginning of the Gospel, Luke presents the theme of salvation and registers that the angels announced Jesus as a "savior" (Luke 2.11). González points to the fact that among all the Gospels, "the words redemption and to redeem appear only in Luke — the same Gospel that is noted for its use of the title 'Savior' and the

⁵³ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁴ Mark 10:45 (ESV).

⁵⁵ Darrell Bock, *Luke: IVP New Testament Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 353.

word salvation.”⁵⁶ The theme of Passover is also presented in the beginning, with the presentation of Jesus as a firstborn in the Temple, to be redeemed by sacrificing two birds, and follows until Acts 12:4. The Passover is also present in all Jesus' life until the Last Supper. There is a type of *Shema* in the Mountain of Transfiguration, that resembles the experience of the Sinai, where the disciples hear a voice saying: "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"⁵⁷ Above all, the title “Lord,” *kyrios*, in Luke⁵⁸ represents one of his strongest claims for the continuity of the *Elohim* plan⁵⁹ to unite humanity. The episodes that I will further analyze present the relationship that Jesus’ disciples are called to have with culture when in mission. The most emblematic sign of this happens with the institution of the Eucharist. I will present a deeper analysis of the Eucharist in the next chapters. In this chapter, I will focus on the instructions around the Eucharist. If Jesus is Lord, how does he exert authority and how are the disciples to follow him? Joel Green writes that, for Luke, “the theology of the cross is rooted not so much in a theory of the atonement, but in a narrative portrayal of the life of faithful discipleship as the way of the cross.”⁶⁰

While Luke describes the lordship of Jesus since the womb, his lordship over diseases, demons, the Sabbath, Gentiles, and the authority to forgive sins; Luke also portrays the disciples disputing for greatness and measuring their own authority.

⁵⁶ González, *The Story Luke Tells*, 63.

⁵⁷ Luke 9:35b (ESV).

⁵⁸ “Luke positions *kyrios* within the movement of the narrative in such a way as to narrate the relationship between God and Jesus as one of inseparability to the point that they are bound together in a shared identity as *kyrios*.” See C. Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Washington, DC: Baker Academic, 2009), 27.

⁵⁹ For a comprehensive account of this notion of God’s plan in Luke, see John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁶⁰ Joel Green, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament—The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 410.

These parallel narratives seem to contrast on one hand Jesus' disposition to serve, and on the other, the disciples' dispute for leadership, *hegemon*. When a Samaritan village rejected Jesus, James and John questioned him: "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"⁶¹ The title "Lord" alongside that question demonstrates the perception of authority the disciples had. Jesus rebuked them. They had not yet understood what Lordship and authority meant to Jesus.

After that episode, Jesus calls his twelve disciples for a mission for the first time. It is the first mission of "the twelve." The verbs are important here: he called together; he gave; he sent. He calls them together (*synkalesamenos*), configuring the first experience of this group without his presence. He literally empowers them with a gift. His gift is power (*dynamis*) and authority-over (*exousian epi*) all the other powers (*daimonia*), which in practice would mean to bring any power to an alignment with the legitimate power. The second part of the gift, which might be considered the natural outcome of this first empowerment, is a therapeutic agency (*therapeuein*) over chronic, persisting, diseases (*nosos*). The second clause of the verse seems to unpack what this means in the mission, as they are sent: to proclaim (*kēryssein*) the Kingdom of God bringing supernatural strength to those without strength (*asthenés*). This is at the same time a declaration of the illegitimacy of any power that is not aligned with God's power, and also an invitation to join the covenantal relationship of God with creation, a covenant of peace.

After that experience, Jesus appoints new ambassadors to go ahead of him into the cities. Jesus sends the seventy-two,⁶² two by two, and instructs them to pray

⁶¹ Luke 9.54 (ESV).

⁶² "According to Genesis 10 in the LXX, the number of the world's nations is seventy-two. Seventy-two is also reckoned in 3 Enoch 17:8; 18:2-3; 30:2 as the number of princes and languages in the world. According to legend, seventy-two elders were commissioned to translate the law from

to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers. In this assertion, his and God's identity are in juxtaposition in the title of the Lord.⁶³ Jesus repeats and expands the conditions for this mission, as he had said to the twelve. There should be total dependence on adversity. Jesus sends the disciples as lambs among wolves. They are to expect some hostility as if they were going to be devoured, without weapons to defend themselves. They are sent without moneybag, knapsack, sandals, and are not supposed to interact in the way with other travelers. They are supposed to convey the covenant of peace, subject to acceptance or rejection.

The peace offered by the disciples was not only a greeting. It was an evocation/invitation that would imply practical effects. Peace would rest upon the sons of peace or would go back to the disciples. This resonates with Jesus' mission of restoring the covenant of peace, described in the Old Testament. Margaret Baker, writes that: "The binding and healing that the Servant effected by his sacrifice was the restoration of the covenant of peace, which was the ancient covenant of the high priesthood" (Num. 25.10–12).⁶⁴ Ron Clark analyzes Luke's Gospel and states that Luke's narrative describes Jesus bringing "peace (shalom), salvation, unity, and power, like accomplishments credited to Caesar as he sought to maintain peace in a world subservient to chaos." For Clark, "Luke introduced Jesus against the backdrop of a nation returning from captivity,"⁶⁵ without the violent *Pax Romana* of the emperor, but as a liberating and inclusive kingdom.

Hebrew to Greek, a project undertaken in order to win renown throughout the whole world for the Jews and their God." See Joel Green, *The New International Commentary*, 412.

⁶³ Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 133-34.

⁶⁴ Margaret Baker, *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2014), 733.

⁶⁵ Ron Clark. *Jesus Unleashed: Luke's Gospel for Emerging Christians*. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013). Kindle edition, 27.

Finally, the disciples in their mission would have to enter into a relationship with the house they visited and manifest the signs of the covenant of peace, the nearness of the Kingdom. If a town would completely reject the disciples, they should publically demonstrate their grievance and make a public sign that the Kingdom had come and was rejected. After instructing about that, Jesus makes a promise of judgment for the impenitent cities; that is to say, that any possible indictment would be God's business. Jesus seems to be training them into this kind of authority of suffering compassion, which God has with his people, and that often looks weak to us. Finally, Jesus says that this authority is transmitted from the Father to Jesus and from Jesus to the disciples. "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."⁶⁶

They go to the mission field and come back exalting Jesus as Lord and celebrating how "even the demons" were subject to the name of Jesus. After that excitement over authority, Jesus immediately refers to Satan in his fall and explains the nature of their authority. Their authority is to tread on "snakes," "scorpions," and all the power of the enemy. It is unknown if these seventy-two received the same instruction about authority that the first twelve received. However, a similar content is in this saying of Jesus. As Joel Green suggests, Jesus identifies Satan as the real enemy to be overcome, not Rome or its partners.⁶⁷

The authority they received was over Satan and his demonic forces, and Jesus alerts them that even this was not a reason for them to rejoice. They should rejoice in the fact that their names were written in heaven. "In the same hour," Luke registers, Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and exalted the Lord for the subversion he

⁶⁶ Luke 10:16 (ESV).

⁶⁷ Green, *The New International Commentary*, 419.

had made by hiding these things from the wise and revealing them to the little children. This is a different kind of authority that will become even clearer after the Last Supper, the authority of suffering compassion.

The Two Swords

After identifying himself with the broken bread and a poured out cup and establishing a new covenant, the disciples started a dispute over who was to be regarded as the greatest. Significantly, Jesus begins the meal by revealing that his betrayer is sharing the bread with them, revealing an impressively open table. The reminiscences of the conversation about who is the betrayer shifts to the quest for who is the greatest. Perhaps we could say that betrayers in denial dispute about greatness. Bock writes that the text speaks of a “rivalry” breaking out among them.⁶⁸

And he said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

‘You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’⁶⁹

Jesus reassures the disciples that they will inherit the kingdom, but that “lordship over” and “authority over” are not to be their practice. He is in strict contrast to the Roman Empire. The subversive order is affirmed; the greatest is to become as the youngest and the leader as the one who serves. Jesus, then, offers himself as the paragon of this subversion. Jesus’ authority is exercised from under, not from above. That is the difference described by Boyd in his expressions “power

⁶⁸ Bock, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 351.

⁶⁹ Luke 22:25-30 (ESV).

over,” associated with the sword, and “power under,”⁷⁰ associated with the cross, which perfectly revealed the way of God even in the Hebrew Scriptures. Now, what follows challenges this very notion. Jesus asks them to remember the experience of going on mission depending on his word and God’s providence. They were still around the table when Jesus said:

When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."⁷¹

How can someone think that the same Jesus who said “love your enemies, and do good”⁷² could have meant that his disciples should carry swords to do harm and kill enemies? Peter believed this as well as a major population of the Christians throughout millennia. Jesus' instruction was followed by the use of a sword. This episode might help to clarify Jesus’ intention with the instruction.

While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”⁷³

⁷⁰ Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 55.

⁷¹ Luke 22:35-38 (ESV).

⁷² Luke 6:35 (ESV).

⁷³ Luke 22:47-53 (ESV).

For some reason, Luke decided not to name the disciple who uses the sword. He holds them all accountable when he writes that “they said,” the question about striking with the sword. Perhaps that might be the same literary resource he used to imply that they all could betray Jesus in the last supper.⁷⁴ We know that Peter used the sword, because John registers it in his Gospel. Matthew even reports the following saying of Jesus: “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”⁷⁵ This statement also illuminates that Jesus was not talking about his defense and the reference to “legions” reinforces the contrast to the Roman way of protecting hegemony. Jesus was nothing like Caesar, and the way to which he was inviting his disciples was nothing like the Roman army. What was Jesus talking about when he asks the disciples to carry swords? Let us consider a few points of view over the exegesis of the meaning of the two swords.

Ancient Christian Views

St. Cyril of Alexandria regarded Jesus’ instructions as directed to the Jews and not to the disciples; “let the one who has.” Due to the persecution that they would endure some decades later, he believes the instruction intended to prevent the Jews from the forthcoming war. He writes that swords were elements to preserve the lives of the Jews.⁷⁶ This is the single commentary I could find that clearly supports the interpretation of a physical use for the weapon.

⁷⁴ “Luke leaves the apostles to discuss among themselves who it [the betrayer] might be; this is troubling, since it suggests that any one of them is capable of breaking faith with Jesus.” Green, *The New International Commentary*, 764.

⁷⁵ Mathew 26:52b-54 (ESV).

⁷⁶ Arthur Just Jr. *Luke*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 471.

St. Ambrose offers inventive solutions that are worthy of note. He writes that, although it seems wicked to use a weapon, “the Lord is not wicked, he who when he could take revenge chose to be sacrificed.” The weapon, hence, should have other uses that are closer to Jesus’ sacrifice instead of revenge. “Perhaps he may command this so that a defense may be prepared, not as a necessary revenge, but that you may be seen to have been able to be avenged but to be unwilling to take revenge.”⁷⁷ He goes on to state that the sword can be spiritual. “There is also a spiritual sword, so that you may sell your inheritance and purchase the Word, which clothes the innermost parts of the mind... [and] the sword of suffering, so that you may lay aside the body.” Finally, he compares the two spiritual weapons with the Old and New Testaments. St. Ephren, the Syrian, wrote that Jesus responded to violence with healing. “He whose word was a sword did not need a sword.”

Two Realms of Authority Subjected to One Church

Pope Boniface VIII issued a Bull called *Unum Sanctum*, in which he claims that it is clear by the Gospel that the church holds two swords which suffice, one is temporal, the other is spiritual. The Pope writes that both are in the power of the church, the spiritual to be administered by the church and the temporal to be administered by the State but for the church; “the former in the hands of the priest; the latter by the hands of kings and soldiers, but at the will and sufferance of the priest.”⁷⁸

An Alert for Imminent Persecution

Since Jesus’ identification with the sinners (transgressors) would be completed in the cross, the disciples should anticipate a similar and dangerous

⁷⁷ Just, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 472.

⁷⁸ Pope Boniface VIII, “Unam Sanctam: One God, One Faith, One Spiritual Authority,” promulgated November 18, 1302, accessed October 12, 2020 at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Bon08/B8unam.htm>.

identification. For Leon Morris, Jesus is figuratively alerting his disciples for the danger ahead, and they should not give up the struggle, even at the cost of their last possessions.⁷⁹ For the author, when Jesus said “It is enough” (22:38) he was dismissing his disciples’ talk about the world’s physical weapons. Morris writes that, although someone asked Jesus about whether or not to use the sword, on the Mount of Olives. Peter did not wait for the answer. He says that stopping this fight allowed Jesus to later tell Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, since his disciples were not fighting for him (John 18:36). Hence, Morris’ position is that the sword is a figurative expression to alert about upcoming persecution, but it was never Jesus’ intention to authorize hostilities against anyone, nor to fight for his kingdom, which is not of this world. Jesus, writes Morris, has a concern for peace.

Johnson follows the same interpretation and comments about the commandment to buy a sword. He writes that “the hyperbole of the statement should be obvious.” It was not Jesus’ intention to imply that someone should sell one’s outer garment for a sword. The meaning, instead, is that “they are entering a state of testing in which they will be without external resources and in danger.”⁸⁰ The lack of “external resources” I find less likely to be the case, considering Jesus preached about a Father who knows our needs and takes care of the birds and the lilies.

A Spiritual Weapon

Bock has a similar position as Morris, arguing that the swords Jesus referred to are spiritual swords. The disciples are about to face a cosmic struggle, and they are supposed to fight with spiritual resources and gifts. He adds that while Jesus noticed

⁷⁹ Leon Morris, “Luke,” in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 339.

⁸⁰ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 347.

that the disciples had not understood his figurative speech, it was “too late to discuss it,”⁸¹ which I find unlikely considering that Jesus would still have the whole night praying in the Gethsemane. Gethsemane, for Bock, is a preparation for battle, and the disciples fail to prepare for it. Robert Stein, following this interpretation, writes that “the desperate need to be “armed” for these future events is evident by the command to sell one’s mantle, for this garment was essential to keep warm at night.”⁸²

How To Use A Sword For Peace?

In an exercise of negative theology, we could say that the only thing we know better is how not to use a sword, which would leave us room for imagination. The exegetic commentaries have trouble imagining what a sword could be used for if not to defend or to attack, and end up assuming a spiritual sword. However, we should not forget that Jesus' instruction about the sword is still part of the Passover meal. Green writes that “Luke signals no break in Jesus’ instruction, but continues to recount Jesus’ table talk following the meal,” which has a pivotal role in Luke’s gospel. Luke uses the meal scene often in his narrative, more than any other Gospel.⁸³ This whole chapter is oriented around a meal, and not any meal, a Passover meal in which Jesus presents himself as the Lamb. Jesus says “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”⁸⁴ Luke, writes Green, is describing a “farewell discourse” associating the Passover and the kingdom, in which the meal would characterize a reversal of normal concerns and conventions.

⁸¹ Bock, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, 353.

⁸² Robert Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol. 24 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 555.

⁸³ Green, *The International Commentary*, 98.

⁸⁴ Luke 22:15 (ESV).

We would expect Luke's narrative of Jesus' farewell discourse to draw together important threads of his teaching. This is exactly what happens, as Jesus interprets his death within the purpose of God, within Israel's history, within the context of hostility and betrayal, and with respect to his disciples as he actualizes a new covenant and exemplifies his servant role among them in his death.⁸⁵

Green writes that the instruction for buying the sword is closely connected to Jesus' instructions regarding the transformation of the times from hospitality to hostility, and the fulfillment of the Scriptures. He writes: "the opening clause, 'for I tell you,' advances a causal relationship. Times are changing because 'this scripture' is being fulfilled in Jesus." This fulfillment will result in a hostile reality that can only be dealt with by a moneybag, a knapsack, and swords. How to use these things, then, becomes a question for the prophetic imagination that needs to take into account the covenantal context given by this meal.

Within the context of eating, we have even other references that could help us link the problem of the swords to the Last Supper. Images like "fire from heaven," and "the sword" can be types of eating and drinking. Yaweh's sword devours the flesh of his enemies and his arrows are drunk on their blood in Deuteronomy 32:42.

The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery indicates that:

When we turn to metaphoric uses of eating, we find a wide range of life's activities pictured as eating. Judgment and destruction are a leading cluster. A conquering army is a metaphoric sword that devours flesh (Deut 32:42; cf. 2 Sam 18:8). Eating becomes symbolic of divine judgment when the *fire of God "devoured" offending persons (Lev 10:2) and when God is said to have "swallowed up" his enemies in anger (Ps 21:9). James warns wealthy and self-indulgent people that the rust of gold and silver "will eat your flesh like fire" (Jas 5:3). From time immemorial death or the grave has been a personified eater that devours its prey (Prov 1:12).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Green, *The International Commentary*, 98.

⁸⁶ *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, "Eating."

Luke presents us this King, son of Adam, son of God, establishing a new covenant through his blood, engaging his disciples in the same kind of authority of suffering compassion. There is a change in the food pattern. There is a new sabbath into which they should enter. There is a new pact to redeem and to atone the rebels. There is an undrawn bow in the sky, better than the one before. The disciples were not completely aware of what was happening there. This meal, however, was supposed to be reenacted to remember. As they reenacted, its significance would be deepened, its semiotic potential would produce new meanings, new applications, new solutions. They were partaking of a royal banquet, unworthily, eating the broken body of the Holy One, becoming friends, legitimate members of the family, being invited to enter into a covenant with someone they would all betray. They were being so perfectly covered by the blood of the Lamb that they would be covered even without an outer garment. They were being atoned and attuned with the Servant, who shared his kingdom with them, so they all could serve with him. They were also in a subversive meal, drinking not in the honor of Caesar. Streett writes, “Jesus was issuing anti-imperial orders and encouraging anti-imperial action on their part in the future.”⁸⁷

In light of that, is there any use for a moneybag except for carrying my money? Is there any use for a knapsack except for carrying things for my own interest? Is there any use for a sword except for harming or threatening another? I believe the answer is yes to all these questions. St. Ambrose’s hypothesis is an ingenious example. The sword can put us in a position of advantage (or equivalence) and then be used to disarm the enemy. For that purpose, two swords are even better,

⁸⁷ R. Alan Streett. *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord's Supper under Roman Domination during the First Century*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013). Kindle edition, 186.

because the first puts down its weapon, while the second becomes the first follower of a contagious (mimetic) movement.

Armed Healers

God's purpose from the beginning was to create a unite community to image him, who is one and a community. Also from the beginning, we did not listen and we preferred to cover ourselves with a narrative that attempts to unite, trying to prevent us from being scattered and vulnerable to violence. We become violent ourselves, united under violent banners. Humanity, that was supposed to be the unity of the otherness, the image of the *Elohim echad*, is broken and divided. However, God always preserved a remnant for himself, to deliver his anointed into history. Jesus displayed perfectly the character of God, who was previously obfuscated by our projections of vengeance and self-righteousness. We believed God wanted sacrifices; Jesus, on the contrary, presents a God willing to forgive and to absorb violence instead of engaging in retaliation. Jesus reveals that we are thirsty for violence, not God. Jesus reveals that the Kingdom of God is indeed a Kingdom of Heaven, in strict contrast to the Roman Empire and any other imperialist venture.

Jesus prepares his disciples for what we today call a mission. There is a posture, an ethics, a way to serve in this mission. He first trains them without resources to announce a subversive message of peace, inviting the people back to the covenantal relationship with God. When he is about to departure from this world, he celebrates a feast with his disciples. This subversive meal epitomizes his teachings and serves as the setting for the preparation of the disciples for a new phase of the mission. From that moment on, this meal would become a central ritual in the life and journey of the disciples.

Without Jesus' physical presence to face people's violence with love, they should be as he is. They should go to mission as armed healers. The disciples were called to carry moneybag, knapsack, and hold a sword proclaiming the covenant of peace therapeutically, as Jesus taught: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either."⁸⁸ Jesus offered a countercyclical movement to face hostility with hospitality. The disciples are left with the challenge to imagine how a sword can heal. How can two swords unite? How can two swords atone, or attune? How can my resources, my power, my authority, my influence, serve to embrace and to bring humanity closer to its purpose? What I will try to present in the next chapter is a link between how the church has historically understood the atoning work of Christ and the images that different branches of the church use to describe it. The way we understand the altar will shape the way we are in the field.

⁸⁸ Luke 6:27-29 (ESV).

CHAPTER 3:
IMAGES OF ATONEMENT AND COMMUNION IN CHURCH HISTORY

Just as God gave us bread to build the body and wine to gladden our hearts, John Calvin wrote, Jesus gave us the blood of Christ in sacrament to “exhilarate” our souls. The language sounds shocking, and it should: No other religion talks about God like this —God present in bread becomes flesh, God present in wine becomes blood. Our salvation is not through rules, rites, rituals, or religious principles. Our salvation comes through a God who comes to eat with us at table and to feed us with his very presence.¹

— Leonard Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*

My thesis is that the Evangelical Church in Brazil, in general, does not know how to use a sword to heal because it has an ill understanding and an ill practice of the Lord’s Table. The church understands its prophetic role as having corrective work to be done in the world to “establish” the Kingdom of God. The church however seeks to fulfill its mission often applying mechanisms of power that result in symbolic violence. The church exercises authority as a power over society instead of a power under, or a compassionate suffering way of authority. While trying to find a root, a genealogy (or archeology) of this violence, I came across René Girard’s theory of “sacred violence,” which I will analyze in the next chapter. For Girard, a primal sacrifice produces a culture around it with rituals and institutions that reaffirm an overarching myth connecting everything. It appeared to me that the sacrifice of Jesus was not being fully contemplated and reenacted in our churches. This lapse left the atoning effect that every group needs (false atonement) in charge of the many myths the Brazilian culture cultivates. I decided to study the Eucharist as the sacrificial foundation of a new culture that Jesus inaugurates. Later I came to understand that the atonement theories are a key field to highlight or to obscure the meaning of the

¹ Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*, 112.

Eucharist. Our atonement theories, which are attempts to describe the redemptive work of Christ, should connect the Church to what the Eucharist is aiming to communicate. “Atonement *theology* cannot be separated from *ethics*,”² and the Eucharist encapsulates this ethics. As Cyprian wrote, “the hand that has held the Eucharist will not be sullied by the blood stained sword.”³

The Eucharist could lead the Church to contemplate Christ’s work fulfilling God’s purpose for his creation; because in the Eucharist is clear that we are the ones who are hungry and thirsty, not an angry God. Without this connection, our story becomes confuse. Did Jesus have to die to appease a wrathful God? If so, when Jesus was establishing the new covenant through his blood on the Eucharist, was he teaching us a ritual to protect us from God’s wrath? Did Jesus die to save us from God? If Jesus saved us from the wrath of God, and God is now on our side, how are we supposed to live in this violent world, of disputing narratives and powers? The way we understand our narrative will shape our actions in the world and our relationship with culture, education, justice, work, art, and so on. “As the biography of Cain shows, when humanity fails at the altar, it fails in the field,” wrote Bruce Waltke.⁴ The way we understand the “table” shapes the way we use our swords. As Cavanaugh writes:

Linking the Eucharist to peacemaking is not by any means a new theme. It has been stressed from the earliest days of the Christian church that the Eucharist replaces bloody sacrifices with an unbloody sacrifice. If, as Cyril of Jerusalem says, we become partakers of the divine nature in the Eucharist, and the divine nature is one of peace, then the Eucharist can only be the

² Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 113.

³ See Saint Cyprian, *De Bono Patientiae*, in Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016) 29.

⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Dance Between God and Humanity : Reading the Bible Today as the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 245.

practice of the reconciliation of creatures to God and to one another. Saint Ignatius of Antioch advocated frequent gathering for the Eucharist, for he says, 'It puts an end to every war waged by heavenly and earthly enemies.'⁵

In this chapter, I will try to describe briefly the connection Atonement-Eucharist through church history.⁶ This connection is not always clear, rarely explicit. The Church often avoids the banality of the Table and uses sophisticated, economic or military narraphors to describe the atoning work of Christ. Certainly we can only use narraphors to touch this subject since "algebraic"⁷ concepts usually become vague and abstract when describing such a mysterious reality. In the New Testament's theology of atonement, these narraphors are not exclusive, and the authors use them in conjugation. It is a polyphony, communicating the scandalous love of God to different groups in different narraphors. According to Joel Green and Mark Baker:

Within the pages of the New Testament, the saving significance of the death of Jesus is represented chiefly (though not exclusively) via five constellations of images. These are each borrowed from significant spheres of public life in ancient Palestine and the larger Greco-Roman world: the court of law (e.g., justification), commercial dealings (e.g., redemption), personal relationships (whether among individuals or groups - e.g., reconciliation), worship (e.g., sacrifice), and the battleground (e.g., triumph over evil). Each of these examples provides a window into a cluster of terms and concepts that relate to that particular sphere of public life.⁸

However, what we find in church history is one sequence of images becoming prevalent to the detriment of other possible images. Irenaeus carries one image, then Anselm, then Abelard, and so on, each affirming the preference of one

⁵ William Cavanaugh, "A World Without Enemies: The Eucharist and the Work of Peace," *ABC Religion & Ethics*, September 18, 2012, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/a-world-without-enemies-the-eucharist-and-the-work-of-peace/10100300>.

⁶ For a more comprehensive study of the atonement-sacrament relationship, see Robert S. Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments: The Relation of the Atonement to the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960).

⁷ This metaphor of algebraic language as a failed attempt to describe transcendental realities was coined by Jacques Ellul in *The Humiliation of the Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985).

⁸ Green and Baker. *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 97.

image over the others. Anselm writes in his *Cur Deus Homo* that “whatever a human being may say on this subject [about why did God become human], there remain deeper reasons, as yet hidden from us, for a reality of such supreme importance.”⁹ Each image reinforces one theology, one way to approach the altar, one way to see God and humanity, one ethics. I believe that the Eucharist, while constantly reenacted, becomes both a placeholder for this “mélange of voices,” as Green and Baker write, and also an open-source for new images to address the current realities of each epoch.

Conflict, Victory, War, Conquest, Slaves, Bondage

In the early church, the Roman Empire was still the most concrete reality over which language was built. The images used to describe what Jesus had accomplished would also be appropriated from within that reality. Ideas concerning the atonement in this period orbited around military metaphors. Irenaeus (ca. 130-202), bishop of Lyon, wrote that Adam led humanity toward disobedience while Jesus leads humanity into inaugurating a new redeemed creation. The concept of military leadership (my contextualization of his idea) was built using the metaphor of “recapitulation,” from the Latin *re*, back or again, and *caput*, head, or even *capitulare*, a treat upon terms. In his theory, writes Green and Baker, “the entire human race is represented in Jesus. Just as all humans were somehow present in Adam, so they can be present in the second Adam.”¹⁰ Irenaeus develops the idea that Christ came to restore the *imago Dei* in humanity.¹¹

⁹ Brian Davies and Gillian Evans, eds, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 268.

¹⁰ Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 119.

¹¹ Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments*, 58.

Origen and Gregory of Nissa also described Jesus as a ransom, a payment to set prisoners free during war. Slavery and freedom were important images for the Christians in that political context. In the case of a ransom, the demand for payment did not come from a wrathful God, but an accusing Satan. Craig writes:

Such an interpretation naturally raised the question as to whom the ransom was paid. The obvious answer was the devil, since it was he who held men in bondage (II Tim 2.26; I Jn 5.19). God agreed to give His Son over to Satan's power in exchange for the human beings he held captive.¹²

The enemy was deceived by the Incarnation, hidden under the veil of nature, according to Gregory of Nissa. Not everyone agreed with that ransom image due to the importance it would give to Satan and the implications of a “deceitful” God. The expression that agglutinates the ideas of this epoch is a concept called *Christus Victor* that, according to Craig, “persisted for about 900 years, from Irenaeus and Origen until the time of Anselm.”¹³ Disagreeing with Nissa's proposition, Gregory Nazianzus and Augustine developed a political model of *Christus Victor*. They argued that Satan had authority over the sinners and overreached his authority by killing Jesus, shedding innocent blood. Augustine writes that Satan lost man, “whom he was possessing as by an absolute right,”¹⁴ because “the devil thought himself superior to the Lord Himself.”¹⁵ Still, what dominates Augustine's thought is the image of Christ victorious over the powers of evil and death, conquering humanity for God. Augustine argues that the atonement has two sides, one objective and another subjective. On the objective side, Jesus accomplishes an effective redemption setting us free. On the subjective side, Jesus gives us the supreme example of obedience. Both sides should

¹² William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 29.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity*, 2nd ed., trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991).

¹⁵ Augustine, *The Trinity*.

not be opposed but seen as two sides of God's initiative to which we should respond by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

Although the Gnostic heresies were on their minds when the church fathers proposed the *Christus Victor* model, they stated that God did not need the incarnation and the cross to redeem humanity. God could have chosen another way. They were more concerned with the question of death than with moral issues. So, "the right of the devil" (the mediator of death, as Augustine writes) is the primary concern instead of "appeasing a wrathful God".

Irenaeus' writings became seminal to reform Catholic doctrine by the influence of Hans Urs von Balthasar, especially in his anti-Platonic emphasis that invites for contemplating the creation. Irenaeus does not mention transubstantiation, the belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, used by Luther to defend the non-propitiatory nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the mass.¹⁷ Origen believes in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and that the church joins in unity with Christ through the sacrament. Boersma writes that both scripture and Eucharist "were thus meant to lead to spiritual eating of the eternal Word and so to bring about the fullness of Christ in the Church."¹⁸ The purpose of unity, the oneness of the atonement, becomes evident in this view.

For Augustine, the Eucharist contained the true presence of Christ, but that did not mean a physical presence in the elements, as believed by the Manicheans. Augustine believed that the church is a Eucharistic community in the mystical (not

¹⁶ Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments*, 60.

¹⁷ Ken Parry, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

¹⁸ Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163.

visible) sense. Although Tertullian was the first to use the Latin “*sacramentum*” to translate the Greek “*mysterion*” as an oath or a military commitment, Augustine is the first to describe the idea of the sacraments as a visible sign of an invisible grace, leading “from visible to invisible, from corporeal to spiritual, from temporal to eternal things.”¹⁹ For Augustine, religious signs had a unifying nature, and in the sacraments, Christ was “binding together the society of the new people.”²⁰ Augustine also held a bold position regarding the unity of Christians with Christ, which is expressed in the Eucharist as well. In one of his sermons, he writes:

So if you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the apostle telling the faithful, You, though, are the body of Christ and its members (1 Cor 12: 27). So if it’s you that are the body of Christ and its members, it’s the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord’s table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply Amen, and by so replying you express your assent. What you hear, you see, is the body of Christ, and you answer, Amen. So be a member of the body of Christ, in order to make that Amen true.²¹

Even though Augustine wrote about the church as an offering to God in the mass, as Jesus offered his body on the cross and still does in every mass, Augustine started the concept and tradition of the “just war,” blessing the use of violence by one side of a war on which the other side is “sinning.” Some theologians, like John Milbank, consider the Father to have created an “ontology of punishment.” But other theologians like Hans Boersma believe this does not give justice to Augustine’s theology.²² William Caveunaugh, defending Augustine’s position, clarifies that

¹⁹ Hans Boersma, Matthew Levering, and R. W. L. Moberly, *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²⁰ See Augustine, “Against Faustus” in Boersma, Levering, and Moberly, 210.

²¹ See Augustine, Sermon 272 in Boersma, Levering, and Moberly, 297.

²² See John Sanders, *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006).

Augustine typifies war as a simulacrum that the unity the Kingdom of God provides and that for one to trust an earthly city's project of union is idolatry.

According to Augustine, real unity can only be the product of participation in God's life - human unity is not for its own sake, but for restoring unity with God. Unity among people in the earthly city is only the product of communal self-love. We see today in liberal secular social orders how, in the absence of anything else to unite us, the nation itself can become the object of devotion, and people kill - and try to avoid dying - for the flag.²³

The Eucharist for Augustine, argues Cavanaugh, is the antidote to war. His just war theory, then, might be a partial appropriation of Augustine's ideas, as a way to legitimize the idolatry of the state and the use of violence. The *Christus Victor* model, as well, needs to be considered within the framework of the Roman Empire and the military context in which it was conceived. It was efficient to describe Christ's victory over the power of evil and death within a militarized society, balanced with the view of the Eucharist as an antidote to war, a sacred unifying element. However, that balance was not enough to prevent Augustinian theology to be interpreted by centuries as justifying violent domination. The question is: how should we relate to those outside of the table of the Lord? How do we use the sword? Bosch affirms that Augustine had no idea a war against non-Christians could be a possibility. So, his ideas on "just war" (*bellum justum*) and "war sanctioned by God" (*bellum Deo auctore*), although peripheral to his work, became a founding stone for the European theory of war.²⁴ Another critique is the importance given to the devil, making him accountable for the death of Christ. The atonement imagery of that time is belligerent, obliterating the images related to the table. A similar contextualization is helpful to understand each model and epoch.

²³ Cavanaugh, *A World Without Enemies*.

²⁴ David Bosch, *Missão Transformadora* (São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 2002), 276.

Deification, Cosmological Unity, Incarnation

The concept of “atonement” is foreign to the Eastern Christian tradition. Developed after the patriarchs and separated from the western theology after the Great Schism of the 11th century, Orthodox theology has had precious contributions in this matter, although not described as atonement. The Orthodox motif that better describes what we understand as atonement is the motif of deification. In Orthodox theology, the main goal of the divine plan is “union with God, in all freedom, of personal beings who have themselves fully become hypostases...”²⁵ Vladimir Lossky describes the Orthodox view of redemption as thus:

Divine love always pursues the same end: the deification of men, and by them, of the whole universe. But the Fall demands a change, not in God’s goal, but in His means, in the divine ‘pedagogy.’ Sin has destroyed the primitive plan, that of a direct climb of man to God. A catastrophic fracture has opened in the cosmos; this wound must be healed and the abortive history of man redeemed for a new beginning: such are the aims of redemption.

For Lossky, neither redemption nor atonement are goals in themselves, but the means toward the only real goal, which is deification. The opposite of deification in Lossky’s terms is “estrangement,” which Jesus completely experienced on the cross. Within the movements of this redemption, there is a demolition of the obstacles that separate us from God followed by a restoration of our nature, making us able to receive grace and go from glory to glory as far as transfiguring the whole cosmos. This immense work, incomprehensible to the angels, writes Lossky, cannot be enclosed in a single metaphor or explanation. However, for the Orthodox church, what makes deification a possibility is incarnation.

²⁵ Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimirs Seminary Press, 2001), 110.

For Orthodox theology it was not Christ's death, but Christ's innocence and complete obedience that opened the way for our redemption. This obedience, in its turn, was only possible because of the incarnation, that created "as it were a 'void' between the Father and Son, an open space that allows for the free submission of the Word made flesh".²⁶ Lossky argues that no metaphor should be hardened, under penalty of creating unbiblical situations, such as a relationship of rights between God and humanity. "Rather must we relocate them among the almost infinite number of other images, each like a facet of an event ineffable in itself."²⁷ He goes on to mention a few of the images that Orthodoxy cultivates, such as the victorious warrior, the purifying fire, the doctor who heals the wounds of the people, and the Good Samaritan.

Orthodoxy has been declared a non-violent alternative to western Christianity's atonement theology because of its incarnational soteriology and because there is no just war theology in the Orthodox tradition.²⁸ However, the substitutionary and economic exchange imagery are present. Lossky writes that the images of a debt paid to God and a debt to the devil have value only together. He states that a rationalization of this apparent paradox will impoverish the theology of the church fathers. Lossky finally quotes Gregory Nazianzus, who questions: "Why should the blood of the Son be pleasing to the Father who did not even want to accept Isaac offered up in a burnt-offering by Abraham but replaced this human sacrifice by that of a ram?"²⁹

²⁶ Ibid., 110.

²⁷ Ibid., 111.

²⁸ Emmanuel Clapsis. (ed.) *Violence and Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Conversation*. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2007).

²⁹ Ibid., 115.

The Orthodox God is a God of mercy through and through, not a God whose justice predominates. Christ suffered not to pay a debt to justice; rather, Christ voluntarily suffered in order that the divine nature might encounter suffering and attain the victory over death.³⁰

Zizoulas articulates the ideas of various Orthodox thinkers in stating that theosis, deification, happens within the church through the mysteries (sacraments). The church can only be seen in the Eucharist. Between the church and the Eucharist there is not an “analogy of likeness,” but an “identity of reality.” The Eucharist reveals the church’s communion and its nature as an eschatological community. For Zizoulas, the Eucharist is an image of the Kingdom, an image of the last times and, as such, provides the structure of the church and all of its ministries.³¹ Therefore, the Eucharist has a unifying (atoning) mystical effect. He writes:

The Eucharist as a gathering of the people around the bishop and the presbyters preserves and expresses in history the image of a world which will have transcended its death-bringing fragmentation and corruption thanks to its union and incorporation into Him who, according to the testimony of His apostles, has by His Cross and Resurrection united what was sundered, gathered His world ‘into one’ and thus established His Kingdom. This is the image which the Church ought to show, both to itself and to the world, as it celebrates the Eucharist and composes its institutions. This is the greatest vision and the most important proclamation that the Church has to offer; a vision and proclamation of faith, hope and love. This is why it should guard this image ‘like the apple of its eye’ against any deviation or distortion.³²

Honor, Offense, Satisfaction, Payment, Debt, Example

In the Middle Ages, Anselm wrote from a world of chivalry, feudalism, lords, and vassals. “It was a society of a carefully managed series of reciprocal

³⁰ McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 186.

³¹ John D Zizioulas, and Luke Ben Tallon. *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*. (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 68.

³² *Ibid.*, 73.

obligations,³³” writes Green and Baker. Offenses and satisfactions were common signs of the dynamic of the relationship between the classes. The authors go on to state that Anselm’s age was “consumed by the seriousness of sin and fear of divine wrath,”³⁴ Anselm articulated the idea that Jesus’ death satisfied the offended honor of God, and wrote that “love does not arise out of fear of the wrath of God but in response to God's goodness.”³⁵ He writes of covenant and honor, but in medieval terms, which contain a high degree of potential violence and revenge. The payment and just penitence images were also present in Anselm’s writings, even considering the possibility of accumulating payment and transferring it to cover others’ debt.

In this honorary system, Anselm also wants to deliver God from the accusation of forcing his innocent son to die. He argues that “God commanded Christ to die, willed him to die, but did not make Christ die. The Son obeyed the command but did not have to obey,” writes Green and Baker. For Anselm, Jesus sets an example to be followed. By following Jesus’ moral standard, the sinner would give back some of the honor robbed from God. Anselm’s major concern with the *Christus Victor* model was its emphasis on the deception of the devil in theories that centered on understanding Christ as in ransom to the devil. He writes: “God owed the devil nothing but punishment, and man owed him nothing but retaliation, reconquering him by whom he had been conquered; but whatever was required from man was due to God, not to the devil.”³⁶

³³ Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 127.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 128.

³⁶ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* (II, XIX) in George Huntston Williams and St. Anselm of Canterbury, *The Sacramental Presuppositions of Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo"*, Church History, Vol. 26, no. 3 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, September, 1957).

There is no obvious connection between Atonement and Eucharist in Anselm's work, the *Cur Deus Homo*, which casts the foundation for his theory of atonement. Nonetheless, it was written during an epoch in which the Eucharist was gaining prominence as a chief sacrament of redemption, to the point that one scholar calls Anselm's work "a penitential-eucharistic or simply a Eucharistic theory."³⁷ This connection, however, becomes obfuscated behind arguments for most of the readers. Anselm witnessed the development of theories and formulas regarding the Eucharist. Anselm's predecessor, the Archbishopric of Canterbury, had been a principal on the formulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Anselm's follower in the Archbishopric was an explicit supporter of the idea of three bodies of Christ (the historical that is at the right hand of God, the one immolated at the altar in Eucharist, and the Church nourished by the Bread of the altar).

Since the Eucharist at that time was considered to contain the substance of Jesus, it became the principal means of redemption. By Anselm's time, the eleventh century, the prayer of the Centurion, *Non sum dignus*, was entering the liturgy, but Anselm writes his liturgies turning that prayer into a petition for being worthy through the merits of Mary, to whom Jesus is indebted. His language of debt and satisfaction permeates his whole theology, including the Eucharist, and it has impacted the following centuries, consolidating an economical grammar of soteriology probably beyond what Anselm could anticipate.

Anselm taught that by means of the Eucharist, the believer is progressively part of the triumphant church, the heavenly body. He incentivized the *imitatio Christi* in connection with Christ's death and believed the Eucharist was the only way one

³⁷ George Huntston Williams and St. Anselm of Canterbury, *The Sacramental Presuppositions of Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo"*, Church History, Vol. 26, no. 3 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, September, 1957).

could enter into a new humanity. Anselm's doctrine of atonement and Eucharist is often described as an individualistic search for accountability of merits and glorification; but in his defense, David Bentley Hart, orthodox theologian, writes that Anselm's work has not been read as it should have been. For Hart, Anselm displays "Christ's act as an infinite motion towards the Father, belonging to the mystery of the Trinity, simply surpassing all the arrangements of debt and violence by which a sinful humanity seeks to calculate its 'justice.'"³⁸ This way, the only "necessity" demonstrated by Anselm in the drama of salvation is "an inward intelligibility to the mind grasped by faith."³⁹ As Hart emphatically states, this is not the mainline interpretation of Anselm's work.

The mercy of God, which seemed to you to be lost when we were considering God's justice and humanity's sin, we find now to be so great and so in accord with justice, that neither a greater nor a more just can be thought. For what possibly could be understood to be more merciful than that God the Father should say to the sinner — damned to eternal torment and having no means whereby to redeem himself—"Take my Only-begotten and offer him for yourself"; and that the Son himself should say, "Take me and redeem yourself"? For thus they speak, when they call us and lead us to Christian faith. What indeed were more just, than that he—to whom is given a price exceeding every debt, if only given with the love which he is truly owed — should put aside every debt?⁴⁰

In the twelfth century, exaggerating Anselm's rejection of *Christus Victor*, Peter Abelard formulated what would be labeled the "moral influence" model of atonement. Abelard believed that God did not want the innocent death of his Son but allowed it to ignite a flame of love in our hearts and set an example of how to live. He writes: "How very cruel and unjust it seems that someone should require the blood of an innocent person as a ransom, or that in any way it might please him that an

³⁸ David Bentley Hart. "A Gift Exceeding Every Debt: An Eastern Orthodox Appreciation of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*." *Pro Ecclesia* (Northfield, Minn.) 7, no. 3 (1998): 333-49, 347.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 348.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 349.

innocent person be slain, still less that God should have so accepted the death of his Son that through it he was reconciled to the whole world!”⁴¹

Craig writes that modern moral influence theorists after Abelard believe that “God does not need to be reconciled to sinners, since he forgives; the entire obstacle lies on our side.” This theory affirms that our hearts need to be changed, and this happens through Jesus’ Passion, so that we embrace the love of God and gradually become more righteous. Abelard also writes about the penal substitution role of Jesus in the Cross, paying the price of his death for our sins. Modern theorists of moral influence use this quotation to defend Abelard’s orthodoxy, but the notion of a penalty and an exchange for the payment of sins was more precisely described a few centuries later.

Danny Weaver writes that Anselm deleted the devil from the salvation equation, making human beings, instead of captive of the devil, directly responsible to God. “By deleting the devil from the equation, Anselm shifted the target of the death of Jesus away from the devil and toward God. Later Protestantism then shifted the target from God’s honor to God’s law.”⁴² Another form of describing the equation is: who or what needs the death of Jesus? For the ransom model of the *Christus Victor*, it was the devil. For the satisfaction model, it was the offended honor of God. Hart, as an orthodox reading Anselm, understands that it is our mind grasped by faith that needs Jesus death. The Reformers followed in slightly different direction, claiming that it is the violated law of God that requires the death of Jesus. For them, we are also indebted, but it is to the law.

⁴¹ Peter Abelard, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, Bk. 2, in Craig, *The Atonement*, 36.

⁴² Danny Weaver, “Narrative Christus Victor: The Answer To Anselmian Atonement Violence” in John Sanders, *Atonement and Violence*, 20.

Law, Justice, Penalty, Economy, Exchange

Images of law and justice are abundant not only in the Bible but also in the ancient world. These images gained a major role in the description of the atonement from the Reformation forward. The context is a society that was experiencing the birth of the notion of state and optimistic over the promises of what law could produce in society. Robert S. Paul writes that, although the concept of the penal substitution cannot be totally attributed to the reformers, it was generally accepted that they were responsible for “turning the ‘satisfaction theory’ of Anselm into a theory of penal substitution, i.e., they had changed the idea of satisfaction paid to God’s honor for a theory of satisfaction paid to God’s wrath with its penal sentence against sin.”⁴³

Luther was vehemently opposed to the idea of the performing of a sacrifice in the mass, which for him was a diabolical and obscene horror. He saw the Eucharist as a testament, a promise of the forgiveness of sins: not as a sacrifice with atoning effects but as a promise that should be received in faith and with gratitude. The once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus, the *ephapax*, meant for Luther that Jesus’ sacrifice is unrepeatable. For him, Jesus achieved victory on the cross, but the benefits of it are distributed in the Eucharist. He presents this substitutionary atonement thus:

We treat of the forgiveness of sins in two ways. First how it is achieved and won. Second, how it is distributed and given to us. Christ has achieved it on the cross, it is true. But he has not distributed or given it on the cross. He has not won it in the supper of sacrament. There he has distributed and given it through the Word, as also in the gospel, where it is preached. . . . I find in the sacrament or gospel the word which presents, offers, distributes and gives to me that forgiveness which was won on the cross.⁴⁴

⁴³ Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments*, 91.

⁴⁴ Martin Luther, *Against the Heavenly Prophets*, trans. Conrad Bergendoff, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 40, ed. Conrad Bergendoff (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 213–14. In William

Luther distinguishes an *officium* (a work), completed at the cross by Jesus, and a *beneficium* (a benefit) that can only be received (not performed or offered) by the believer. However, a sacrificial life in faith, in terms of ethics, is the appropriate response of a believer after such a gift. Cavanaugh argues that Luther established a bridge between medieval and the modern thought by the idea of the corporative body that dominated medieval thought. The body of Christ had an emphasis on the mass, on feasts like the *Corpus Christi*, and social relations were described as a body. Political projects had in mind a God-ordained body, with functions and hierarchical order. Eucharistic services, although incorporated every believer as bloody brethren, also had the possibility of reinforcing exclusionary boundaries. For example, the ritual of the kiss of peace changed in the high Middle Ages to a pax-board that passed from hand to hand to be kissed, from the most prominent members to the lowliest.⁴⁵

Luther disagrees with Zwingli over the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. While Zwingli described the presence of Jesus as the interior remembrance of the believer, Luther argued that Christ's natural body was corporeally present in the elements of the Eucharist, although they maintained their properties. That is not the doctrine of transubstantiation, held by the Catholic Church, which believes in a transformation of the elements into the Body of Christ. Luther also defended that the remembrance should be exercised outside of the church in acts of mercy. Cavanaugh analyzes, following De Lubac, that a tendency to confine the Body of Christ to the altar in the church had left public space open to the authority of a sovereign state. Luther tried to go in the other direction, emphasizing the Body of Christ in the church

Cavanaugh, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Social Imagination in Early Modern Europe* *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 2001, 590.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 595.

and its acts of faith. However, according to Cavanaugh, probably due to the spirit of his time, he did not accomplish the communality he intended. Luther's caution with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the transfers of benefits reinforced the importance of an individual relationship with God and finally the notion of individuality itself. The most notable mark Luther left for modernity, writes Cavanaugh, after setting the parameters for private property and the individual, is the clear distinction between exchange and gift. For Luther, the gift received from God should not be returned but passed on in acts of mercy. The benefits from Calvary, nonetheless, could only be received by each individual directly from God.

Luther's concern that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper be understood only in terms of passive human receptivity reflects some of this modern anxiety to quarantine the gift from the logic of exchange. For Luther the same gift cannot be both given and received at the same time by the same subject. To imply a human return given to God in the form of sacrifice would annul the gift by proffering a human work in exchange for it. Luther does allow for a return to God outside the Mass itself, but he must protect the fundamental asymmetry produced by God's justification of miserable sinners.⁴⁶

Luther wrote that the law kills Christ as he bears the sin of the world. From then on, the debate over the atonement circled around the law, except for a few less orthodox critics, such as Socinus. It was John Calvin, a lawyer, who better continued Luther's tradition and formulated a penal substitutionary system. Calvin had a specific way to describe this theory, going even further away from the Roman Catholic tradition. He writes that "the only end which the Scripture uniformly assigns for the Son of God voluntarily assuming our nature, and even receiving it as a command from the Father, is, that he might propitiate the Father to us by becoming a victim."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., 597.

⁴⁷ John Calvin. Institutes 11. xii. 4. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1845), E. T. of Henry Beveridge. In Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments*, 98.

Calvin uses other metaphors, such as the recapitulation of Adam. His structure describes covenantal dispensations, but his words are generally more forensic, and his followers expanded his thought on the same direction. Boersma writes that “Calvinist covenant theology has tended to view our relationship with God too exclusively through a legal grid.”⁴⁸ The atonement, for Calvin, was the whole purpose of the incarnation and the whole plan of God, but only for the elected. He also leaves no doubt as to the fury or wrath of God; that is what was expressed on the cross. Although it is hard to see an emphasis on the love of God in Calvin’s work, Robert S. Paul, argues that there is a background of God’s love, inspired by Augustine, in Calvin’s theology. Calvin paraphrases Augustine to say that the love of God is prior to our sin and prior to our atoned status:

Therefore he had this love towards us even when, exercising enmity towards him, we were workers of iniquity. Accordingly, in a manner wondrous and divine, he loved even when he hated us. For he hated us when we were such as he had not made us, and yet because our iniquity had not destroyed his work in every respect, he knew in regard to each one of us, both to hate what we had made, and love what he had made.⁴⁹

Jerry L. Walls, writing for the Assemblies of God in Brazil,⁵⁰ tries to address the influence of the Calvinists over these traditionally Arminian pastors and affirms that Calvin does not mention that God is love in his Institutes, not even once. For him to neglect such a key affirmation about who God is cannot be interpreted as a lapse, but an astounding omission. This structure of thought that Calvin presented led

⁴⁸ Hans Boersma, “Violence, the Cross and Divine Intentionality: a modified Reformed view” in Sanders, *Atonement and Violence*, 49.

⁴⁹ John Calvin, Institutes 11. XVI. 3, in Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments*, 105.

⁵⁰ Jerry L. Walls, *Qual o caminho das Assembleias de Deus? Amor para todos ou somente alguns? O cerne do que está errado com o Calvinismo*, (São Paulo: Editora Reflexão, 2016).

his followers to radicalize his ideas, resulting in positions such as A. W. Pink, who wrote that God does not love everybody, which implies that the God hates some.⁵¹

Boersma, analyzing the relationship between the penal substitutionary system and the accusations of violence it receives, describes the understanding of this theory thus:

This covenantal framework implied a substitutionary punishment that was thoroughly juridical in character. Moreover, since vicarious substitution meant that Christ took the place of certain (elect) individuals, Christ was seen as bearing the penalty of my particular sins that I had committed. There is no denying that there is a tendency here toward an economic exchange model of the atonement: my sins are transferred or imputed to Christ while his righteousness is directly transferred or imputed to me.⁵²

Boersma, himself a Reformed theologian, considers another problem: the lack of connection between Calvinist theology and the history of Israel. This dehistoricizing, alongside juridicizing and the individualizing, have been major criticisms for Calvinist atonement. The doctrine of limited atonement (that Jesus only died for those who were predestined from eternity) is accused of portraying God as excluding and violent. For Paul Dafydd Jones, Calvin offers more than a model. He offers a detailed, complex description of Jesus as king, prophet, and priest, performing obedience, victory, legal substitution, sacrifice, merit, and example. Calvin's "accent" provides enough emphasis to identify "substitution" as his central theme. For Jones, a God whose righteous and lawful hostility toward sin is matched by Jesus' vicarious substitution "enables a relationship between God and God's children that is defined by intimacy, assurance, and freedom."⁵³

⁵¹ Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, 3. Ed (Pensacola: Chapel Library, 1999), 17. In *Ibid*, 21.

⁵² Boersma, in Sanders, *Atonement and Violence*, 49.

⁵³ Paul Dafydd Jones. *The Fury of Love: Calvin on the Atonement*. In *T&T Clark Companion To Atonement*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2017), 227-229.

The Eucharist was one of the major themes of Calvin's life, especially in opposition to Roman Catholicism. For him, there was a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist by his presence in the believers; but the elements were to be taken symbolically. Following Augustine and Luther's tradition, for Calvin, the words of the Institution of the Eucharist had to accompany the elements to make them a sacrament.⁵⁴ The Word has preeminence over the elements. For Calvin, the only communication that happened during the Eucharist was between the communicant and Christ, not between the elements and Christ. "They have not merely intellectual effect, but relational force inasmuch as they bring about genuine covenantal commitment and integral covenantal communion,"⁵⁵ he writes.

Although his language is covenantal, his theology is more related to the unity with the heavenly Christ than with the body of Christ as the church. Perhaps this emphasis, aiming to debunk the Catholic paradigms, lacks the communitarian notions of the Eucharist. Calvin's preoccupation is with what we achieve in Christ, instead of what we become with one another. Even when Calvin declares the union of a single body, the emphasis is in the exchange:

Pious souls can derive great confidence and delight from this sacrament, as being a testimony that they form one body with Christ, so that everything which is his they may call their own. (...) This is the wondrous exchange made by his boundless goodness.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ That is not the case in churches like the Eastern Orthodox, for example, according to Boersma, Levering, and Moberly, "The East has not articulated this connection, perhaps because the Orthodox tradition concentrates more on the incarnate over the written/ spoken Word. Yet the Eastern liturgy behaves in such a manner that it shows consent: its mysteries, whether Baptism or Eucharist (or other sacramental acts), are interpreted by an accompanying narrative." *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, 294.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁵⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846), 4.17.2, November, 20, 2020, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.vi.xviii.html>

Calvin is concerned with the unity of Christians within the Church: "We must be incorporated in Christ so that we are all bound together."⁵⁷ However, this subject is obfuscated by the fact that there is more emphasis to advocate against the participation of the unworthy, against the doctrine of transubstantiation, against the veneration of the Eucharist, and several other causes. The concern about the unity is present, only nuanced by the tonic of the election, and presupposes an ethics of holiness of life.

[T]he Lord there communicates his body so that he may become altogether one with us, and we with him. Moreover, since he has only one body of which he makes us all to be partakers, we must necessarily, by this participation, all become one body. (...) We shall have profited admirably in the sacrament, if the thought shall have been impressed and engraven on our minds, that none of our brethren is hurt, despised, rejected, injured, or in any way offended, without our, at the same time, hurting, despising, and injuring Christ; (...) that as no part of our body suffers pain without extending to the other parts, so every evil which our brother suffers ought to excite our compassion. Wherefore Augustine not inappropriately often terms this sacrament the bond of charity. What stronger stimulus could be employed to excite mutual charity, than when Christ, presenting himself to us, not only invites us by his example to give and devote ourselves mutually to each other, but inasmuch as he makes himself common to all, also makes us all to be one in him.

Nonetheless, Calvin circumscribed the body to the elected, and he blessed the state, providing a dangerous combination. Calvin led a campaign against a theologian, Servetus, that resulted in his death. He was burned for heresy. Bradstock writes that "the struggle against the entrenchment of royalty in France in the latter half of the sixteenth century – the so-called Wars of Religion – was spearheaded by a Calvinist movement."⁵⁸ Calvin saw the State as a separate authority, authorized by God, who is a wrathful judge and is angry with us except for those who partake in the

⁵⁷ John Calvin, *Corpus Reformatorum, Joannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*, eds. G. Baum et al., 59 vols., Braunschweig, 1893-1900. In Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church and the Eucharist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 193.

⁵⁸ Andrew Bradstock, "The Reformation." In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 77.

merits of Christ.⁵⁹ This view allowed him to accommodate in his ethics the use of the sword against enemies of the church, although he heavily criticized the disciples picking up swords in his commentary of Luke 22: “It was truly shameful and stupid ignorance, that the disciples, after having been so often informed about bearing the cross, imagine that they must fight with swords of iron.”⁶⁰

Finally, any summarizing of Calvin’s vast and complex work would fall short of explaining its intricacies. For the benefit of this study, it will suffice to state that Calvin has a preoccupation to advocate against the causes he disagrees with in Roman Catholicism and that his language has a penal substitution accent that strongly influenced his followers. His writings, if not read with the lens of the love of God that offered Christ to rescue us, might appear unbalanced towards the wrath of a God who needs to be appeased. These emphases have raised several criticisms, as I will present going forward.

John Wesley, in *strictu sensu*, understood atonement in terms of penal satisfaction, as affirms Kenneth J. Collins,⁶¹ but he followed the Grotius’ governmental theory, which emphasized more the sacrifice than the satisfaction of wrath. Like Calvin, there is much more in Wesley’s theology than this mere metaphor, such as his vision of the three-in-one God as relational in nature, a communion of holy love, and the root of all sin as unbelief and alienation.⁶² According to Collins, salvation for Wesley was received through faith and humility as

⁵⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.15.6.

⁶⁰ Calvin, Commentary on Luke 22, available in <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/luke/22.htm>.

⁶¹ Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley : Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007).

⁶² Kenneth Collins, *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Vol. 33, no. 1 (Spring, 1998), 172.

a redemptive grace from Jesus. In the work of full salvation, there are “means of grace,” practices that communicate grace of which Wesley considered the Eucharist to be the chief means. Wesley’s emphases on the “believer's response of faith and the life of sanctification and the universal nature of Christ's work differ greatly from any consistent form of a penal substitution theory as developed by Reformed and Lutheran theology,” writes Larry Shelton. His detachment from the Reformers is due particularly because of his position that God does not hold wrath toward humanity which needs to be appeased, although there is a need for reconciliation, as he writes to Mary Bishop:

But it is certain, had God never been angry, he could never have been reconciled... I do not term God... "a wrathful Being," which conveys a wrong idea; yet I firmly believe he was angry with all mankind, and that he was reconciled to them by the death of his Son. And I know he was angry with me, till I believed in the Son of his love; and yet this is no impeachment to his mercy. But he is just, as well as merciful.⁶³

Wesley's eclectic view of atonement represents the struggle he had with the penal substitution model. He was frustrated with forensic atonement’s inadequacy within his own theology. These models, writes Shelton, fall short of Wesley’s soteriology, because the “forensic models seek to remove guilt and restore the order of justice, not to transform the relationship and restore the moral likeness to God.”⁶⁴ Catherine Booth, the mother of the Salvation Army was influenced by Charles Finney, John Wesley, and especially Richard Watson. She insisted that the purpose of the atonement was not only to justify, but also to “restore us to harmony with

⁶³ John Wesley, *Works of John Wesley, Letters*, vol. XIII, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 34-35. In R. Larry Shelton. *Cross & Covenant: Interpreting the Atonement for 21st Century Mission* (Tyrone, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 191.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

ourselves, harmony with the moral law, and harmony with God.”⁶⁵ Wesley’s atonement theology might be clearer in his sacramental theology.

Maddox suggests that Wesley’s sacramental understanding was not only formed by the Church of England, but also by the eastern church. Wesley understood the sacraments, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as offering a therapeutic recovery of the holiness of God, since the Holy Spirit communicated God’s attributes to the communicant. “While affirming the dynamic gift of the Spirit through the sacraments, the question ceases to be ‘whether we are worthy to receive this gracious empowerment,’ and instead centers on whether ‘we co-operantly receive—or squander—its healing potential.’”⁶⁶ Wesley also accepted an understanding of the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist, which was more than a remembrance. In some mysterious way, for Wesley, the “person” of Jesus Christ is also active in the Eucharist. ⁶⁷

Wesley expected the Methodists to communicate every week, according to Karen Tucker, and Wesley himself, “sometimes also received the sacrament each day during the eight days (octave) after Easter and the twelve days after Christmas.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Catherine Booth, “Life & Death.” In John Read, *Catherine Booth: Laying the Foundations of a Radical Movement* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 39.

⁶⁶ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 196. In Peterson, *Eucharist: The Church’s Political Response To Suffering*; *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. 43, no.1 (Spring, 2008).

⁶⁷ Dean G. Blevins, “The Trinity And The Means Of Grace: A Sacramental Interrelationship.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 231-255.
https://wtsociety.com/files/wts_journal/2001-wtj-36-1.pdf

⁶⁸ Karen Tucker, “Wesley’s emphases on worship and the means of grace.” In Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers. *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 230.

John Wesley and his brother Charles published hymns on the Lord's Supper, at least 166 hymns, divided into six sections:

1. as a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ.
2. as a sign and a means of grace.
3. as a sacrament, a pledge of heaven.
4. as implication of a sacrifice.
5. as a sacrifice of our personhood.
6. as a song for after the sacrament.

Worship had a very important role in the Methodist revival but, “equally central, though sometimes less recognized, is the emphasis of the Wesley brothers on frequent reception of the Lord's Supper.”⁶⁹ Their Eucharistic hymn collection is likely “the largest single collection in Christian history of hymns devoted specifically to this focus.”⁷⁰ It is certainly an unpaired source of language and metaphors to describe this seminal sacrament. Karen Tucker argues that “the singing of hymns in conjunction with the Lord's Supper was an innovation, for hymns were not permitted in the Church of England's liturgy, though they might be sung before or after the service.”⁷¹

The elderly Wesley explains that he did not want Methodism “to be a distinct party, but to stir up all parties, Christians or heathens, to worship God in spirit and in truth.”⁷² Although some argue that, when Wesley writes, he has in mind a world of

⁶⁹ John & Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (Bristol: Farley, 1745), https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cswt/27_Hymns_on_the_Lord%27s_Supper_%281745%29_mod.pdf.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Tucker, 231.

⁷² Wesley, Works, 24:128. In Tucker, 225.

people baptized in their infancy, according to Sarah Lancaster,⁷³ still, the emphasis on the “Lord’s Table” wants to assure us that it was not a “Methodist table” and also to affirm that humans do not decide who belongs there. Although Wesley makes use of penal satisfaction images, his emphasis on evangelism seems to result in a different image of communion and a different ethics.

Modern Approaches

Modern and post-modern theologians suggest several alternatives to articulate the models. Among the post-modern examples is Boersma,⁷⁴ who proposes a modified reformed view, still considering some violence (which for him preserves the ability to be hospitable), but less forensic, less penal and more associated with Israel’s narrative. Denny Weaver, trying to find a non-violent alternative to the atonement, offers the narrative *Christus Victor* model, restoring “the devil to the equation.”⁷⁵ Thomas Finger, an Anabaptist like Weaver, tries to offer a non-violent Eastern Orthodox view of the *Christus Victor*, closer to that of Irenaeus. T. Scott Daniels defends substitutionary atonement as revealing the mimetic scapegoat mechanism in Girardian terms. R. Larry Shelton offers a covenantal atonement with creative love theism. Derek Flood calls for a more relational understanding of Atonement, referring to Jürgen Moltmann’s concept of “the crucified God,” which

⁷³ Sarah Lancaster, “Current debates over Wesley’s legacy among his progeny.” In Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers. *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 308.

⁷⁴ Boersma, Weaver, Finger and Daniels debate their position in John Sanders, *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

⁷⁵ J. Denny Weaver, “Narrative *Christus Victor*: The Answer To Anselmian Atonement Violence.” In John Sanders, *Atonement and Violence*.

undoes triumphalistic theologies⁷⁶. The current debate is to accommodate the consecrated theories into a framework that respects our post-modern understanding of violence, victim, and sacrifices.

As Joel Green and Mark Baker write in their *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, “one image or model is simply inadequate to communicate all that God has done and continues to do through the cross.”⁷⁷ In the west, where the concept of sacrifice is distant and diffuse, other images might be clearer to describe such a God as ours. If the church chooses to maintain four views of the gospels in the canon, we also need a plurality of images to describe the unfathomable and humility to articulate them in harmony, knowing how tainted our view is by our culture. At the same time, we need to dialogue with our time and culture.

The mere contemplation of so many different concepts challenges our cultural presuppositions and categories. To try to define the economy of these exchanges, this kind of unity and redemption, should not be an algebraic task. Poetry might be more effective, the language of reconciliation. Similarly, we should embrace the full kaleidoscope of images, instead of a single one. I tried to present in these short analyses how culture around these historic theologians influenced their view on the atonement and the Eucharist, as well as the other way around. Their views of the atonement and the Eucharist directly influenced the ethics of their communities (and the way they understood the use of the sword).

Most of all, atonement theology should always be approximated to the Eucharist. If the causal link is not always clear even for theology, what can we expect

⁷⁶ Derek Flood, “A Relational Understanding of Atonement.” In *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction*. Point Loma Press Series. (Eugene, Oregon: San Diego, California: Wipf & Stock; Point Loma Press, 2012), 40-2.

⁷⁷ Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 198.

from church members? Atonement theology, a soteriology investigation, should find its best expression in sacramental theology—one that relies on the nature of the Church and the ethics of its presence in the world. The table should serve as a hermeneutical reference to every possible explanation about what Jesus achieved for us. Finally, it is my thesis that there is a relationship between how one participates in the Eucharist and how one approaches the culture. To quote Waltke again about Cain, “when humanity fails at the altar, it fails in the field.” The way I partake in the table shapes the way I use my sword. For that reason, I believe images like deification, cosmological unity, incarnation, and the scapegoat are closer to the table and can approximate “swords” in the authority of suffering compassion I believe was Jesus’ intention with his teaching. In the next chapter I will try to demonstrate how the Eucharist, in a Girardian understanding, can contribute to orient and improve the church’s posture towards culture, not seeking hegemony, but inviting everyone to the table.

CHAPTER 4

MIMETISM AND THE ORIGIN OF CULTURE

That's the power of the table: We lower our guard as we break bread together; we become ourselves, and we become open to one another. We cease being rivals, enemies; and we begin to experience companionship, friendship.¹

— Leonard Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*

The atonement resides in the very center of the gospel message.² It has been mutating from the beginning of the church, and any simplification can only serve us to illustrate how complex and inexhaustible the subject is. J. I. Packer writes that “a gospel without propitiation at its heart is another gospel than that which Paul preached,” because “expiation” does not convey that the wrath of God was pacified.³ But what does “expiation” and “propitiation” mean to our post-modern ears? In Portuguese, it does not mean much for the general audience. This is also the claim of Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker in their *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*.

However, there is still the problem of the violent image of God, to which some theologians have responded, as I mentioned in the chapter before. My claim is that the Eucharist contains all of these images and more, while it is not limited by any of them if practiced with openness. My claim is that the sacramental practice of the Eucharist, along a non-dualistic⁴ stance, should be central to the communitarian

¹ Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*, 141.

² R. Albert Mohler Jr, in *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*, ed. James I. Packer and Mark E. Dever (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 15.

³ J.I. Packer, in *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴ I make reference here to a contemplative Christianity that will be further explained. Richard Rohr writes about the non-dualistic thinking and explains that: “Binary thinking is not wrong or bad in itself — in fact, it is necessary in many if not most situations. But it is completely inadequate for the

Christian life, that is to say, to the church. It is my claim that the Eucharist corrects and expands our notions of the atonement, challenges and redeems our presence in the world as culture-makers, connects us with God, and with the body of Christ, and teaches us the proper stance that we were called to adopt. To go back to our metaphor, the quality and our definition of the Eucharist will determine the purpose of our sword. An ill practice and understanding of the Eucharist will result in an ill stance concerning God and the public sphere.

My thesis also relies on a mimetic hypothesis, which claims that sacrifices are central and seminal to shape a group's culture. Sacrifice in the covenantal sphere, especially in the Old Testament, has been studied by several theologians, from Augustine to Meredith G. Kline. However, since their study is focused on the biblical world, another resourceful scholar will provide us a reference, René Girard. His mimetic and scapegoat mechanism theories describe the anthropological processes that result in sacrifice. Girard's theory has influenced many fields of knowledge as I will present going forward. I will briefly introduce his theory with an emphasis on what concerns this study and the implications for my thesis.

A Brief Biographical Background

Born in Avignon, France, on Christmas day of 1923, René Noël Théophile Girard was the son of a father who "suffered from the Jesuits." Because of that, he was educated in secular schools and influenced by the anti-clericalism of his father. Although Girard was baptized and confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church, he became an agnostic until his conversion thirty-six years later. He studied Medieval

major questions and dilemmas of life." Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2009).

history and paleography in France, and went to the United States for his doctorate in history.

In 1957, Girard was a young scholar teaching French Literature at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore when he noticed some patterns in the works of Cervantes, Flaubert, Stendhal, Proust, and Dostoyevsky. There were patterns of religious language, of a transformation of consciousness from their earlier work to the more mature. When he noticed this, he became interested in Christianity again. Girard wanted to experience what these novelists experienced. He describes this desire already working to burst into flames. However, his agnostic and scholarly position was an obstacle for him to align his life with this kind of intellectual conversion. In 1959, he was diagnosed with a cancerous growth on his forehead. After an unsuccessful treatment, Girard was shaken and scared. It was the season of Lent. Girard meditated deeply about his life and his condition before God. It was the Wednesday of Holy Week when the doctor gave him the all-clear. He writes to a Jesuit priest, who later became his friend and fellow researcher:

Never before had I experienced a feast to compare with this liberation. I saw myself as dead, and suddenly I was risen. [sic] The most wonderful aspect of this whole story was for me the fact that my new intellectual and spiritual awakening, my real conversion, had occurred before my huge scare during Lent. If it were down to that, I wouldn't have really believed. As I am a sceptic [sic] by nature I would have remained convinced that my faith was due solely to my fear. The scare for its part could not be the result of faith... God had brought me again to awareness, and had thereby allowed a small joke which basically in view of the mediocrity of my case was fully justified.⁵

The contemplation of Jesus' atonement became a hermeneutical key for Girard to interpret literature. He had found in the novelists a pattern of life transformation, from the repudiation of an untruthful life of illusions and deceitful

⁵ René Girard, in Michael Kirwan. *Girard and Theology*. (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 2.

desires to repentance and resurrection. Girard affirms that “all novelistic conclusions are conversions”⁶ from an illusory sense of autonomy to the realization that desire drove the characters to a mimicry of someone else’s desire. Soon after in 1969, Girard published his first book, *Desire, Deceit, and the Novel*, and his work began to take a mildly different route.

Girard found in Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, and later in Plato, Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Gabriel Tarde, and Eric Auerbach confirmations for his intuition regarding the human mechanism of mimicry and scapegoating. In the 1970s, Girard found in Raymund Schwager, a Swiss Jesuit priest, both a friend and a theological guide. Supported by his knowledge and insights, Girard developed his hermeneutics that, according to Williams, shows that “the Bible is not antiquated mythology but is witness to the unveiling of the God of love beyond conflict and violence, a revelation fulfilled in the passion and resurrection of Christ.”⁷ Schwager’s friendship is not minor to Girard’s work. Perhaps, it was this friendship that maintained Girard’s hope that mimetic desire could be overcome. He writes about Schwager:

I must say on a personal level Raymund Schwager was totally alien to mimetic desire. There never was any spirit of rivalry between us, any race to the finish. He was totally selfless, the most selfless man I have encountered perhaps. The spirit of research was in him, but totally pure and totally dedicated to the truth of Christianity and to the enhancement of that truth.⁸

⁶ René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel; Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 290.

⁷ James G. Williams, "Dialogue on Sacrifice and Orthodoxy: Reflections on the Schwager-Girard Correspondence." *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 21 (2014), 47-54.

⁸ René Girard, "Reading the Bible with René Girard: Conversations with Steven E. Berry" (unpublished manuscript), 70–71. In James G. Williams, "Dialogue on Sacrifice and Orthodoxy: Reflections on the Schwager-Girard Correspondence." *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 21 (2014), 47-54.

Schwager was very important in the development of Girard's concept of sacrifice. In his early works, such as *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, Girard had a negative view on sacrifice, attributing it only to the archaic and destructive mechanisms of human violence. This is the first time Girard argues that the gospels reveal the structure of human violence in a unique way. Schwager's critique of his analyses of the letter of Hebrews helped him develop a different view of Jesus' sacrifice, which later became his insight regarding the revelation of the mechanism that I will present in this dissertation.

In 1990, a group of scholars began the *Colloquim on Violence and Religion* to assess the implications of Girard's thought within different areas of study, such as the economy, sociology, theology, law, and so on. In 1994 this group also started the journal *Contagion* to publish their research. In 2005, Girard was elected to the *L'Academie Française*. In 2007, an institution called *Imitatio* was founded in Paris to support the integration of human sciences and to finance research on mimetic theory. In 2008, Girard received the highest prize of the Modern Language Association. He died in 2015 at Stanford University, where he taught from 1980 until his retirement. To the end, he was convinced that his theory had a truth greater than what he alone could discover. He once said:

“People are against my theory because it is at the same time an avant-garde and a Christian theory... Theories are expendable. They should be criticized. When people tell me my work is too systematic, I say, ‘I make it as systematic as possible for you to be able to prove it wrong.’”⁹

⁹ Michael Kirwan, “René Noël Girard RIP”, *Thinking Faith*, November 6, 2015, London, <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/ren%C3%A9-no%C3%ABl-girard-rip>.

Mimetic Desire

Michael Kirwan, a British Jesuit priest, friend and disciple of Girard, summarizes mimetic theory as the quest to answer three simple questions: “What causes social groups and societies to come together and cohere successfully? What causes those groups to disintegrate? What is the function of religion in these two processes?”¹⁰

Girard’s theory begins by describing that human beings lack something.¹¹ Like Augustine, Girard believes that the human heart has an infinite desire or a desire for the infinite. This desire is objectless; it does not have a specific object toward which to direct its energy. Therefore, this objectless desiring heart needs to imitate someone else’s desire. Girard calls this someone a “model” that models our desire. Mimicry, or imitation, is an innate attribute of our brain,¹² a fundamental feature that allows us to learn, to establish communication through language, and to establish a common culture. However, the model, the one whose desire is imitated, is also a desiring being with no specific object modeled by someone else. When this relationship is distant, as a fan whose model is a celebrity, or an intellectual whose model is an author, there is no conflict possible. When the relationship is close, though, and the model and the one being modeled live in the same space-time horizon, then imitation becomes rivalry, which might turn into an escalating violence.

A classic example is a room full of toys when two children come in. The first picks up a toy and starts to play. The second, even if he or she pretends indifference

¹⁰ Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 20.

¹¹ René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 23.

¹² The Mirror neurons were discovered in the 1990s. See Jean-Michel Oughourlian, *The Mimetic Brain* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016).

or delays any action, looks to the first child playing and begin to covet that toy. Desire leads to dissatisfaction, and the second child believes that the first child is satisfied with that toy and that if he or she can get that toy, he or she will also be satisfied. The first child, an objectless desiring being, notices how the second child looks at her toy and starts to believe that her toy might be the best in the room, because the second child is modeling her desire. One desire models the other, forming a gravitational field in which one attracts the other, forming what Girard calls a “double bind.”¹³ If the second child tries to get the toy from the first, this rivalry will easily turn into violence. If any violence occurs, the same mimetic brain that produced the imitated desire will produce a retributive behavior that will cause violence to escalate. This dispute happens in the adult world in a myriad of different ways.

Rivalry and Escalating Violence

Girard affirms that mass production can maintain this system operating, since objects can be produced in such a way that many people can purchase the same object of desire. At the same time, capitalism provides a myth of meritocracy and opportunity so that everyone can model their desire to be minimally achievable. However, since the structure of desire is objectless, the objects over which disputes occur become increasingly symbolical, each time more detached from a concrete object. Once a rivalry is settled, the duel becomes more important than the object itself. When violence escalates, the object is obliterated in this double relationship, in which one’s desire inspires the other’s desire in a mutual binding. If this rivalry spreads throughout society (and mimetic desire is, by its own *modus operandi*,

¹³ Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 147.

contagious), the cycle of violence will escalate to a war of all against all, in Hobbes' sense.

Girard uses Hobbes' concept of war of all against all to describe his concept of mimetic crisis. The word "crisis" comes from the same Greek root that originated the words "crime" and "judgment." The crisis could be initiated by a catastrophe, a natural phenomenon that was always attributed to the gods as a sort of punishment. What categorizes a mimetic crisis is a situation of undifferentiation between individuals. These equally desperate individuals morph into a crowd, as Kierkegaard described.¹⁴ In such a crisis, all of their differences disappear, social, familiar, and individual. Pierpaolo Antonello, explains that mimetically driven chaos "arise[s] through an exasperation of the violence and conflict that, for natural or systemic reasons, periodically emerged within primitive societies, above all when the number of individuals composing human groupings increased above a certain critical level."¹⁵ This chaos is the force contrary to that of creation. It is diabolical in the sense that divides.¹⁶

This chaotic situation is only overcome when a crowd is united in a common goal, which Girard identifies in the archaic religions and myths, generally in the

¹⁴ "When human beings are in rebellion against God and in flight from their own true selfhood, they form what Kierkegaard calls at various times a false 'alliance,' a crowd, a mob, or a wolf pack." Charles K. Bellinger, *The Trinitarian Self: The Key to the Puzzle of Violence*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series; 88 (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 22-3.

¹⁵ Pierpaolo Antonello and Paul Gifford, *Can We Survive Our Origins?: Readings in René Girard's Theory of Violence and the Sacred*. Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2015), 30.

¹⁶ Although Girard does not make use of this parallel, I use the term diabolos (devil) as the opposite force of symbol. Diabolos, *diá* (in two) + *bolon* (to cast) is something that casts divisively, that throws one against the other, while symbol, symbolon, *syn* (together) + *bolon* (to cast) is something that unites, a token. *Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "Symbol", accessed January 11, 2020, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/symbol>.

figure of an animal or a human being. The Greeks called this figure a *pharmakon*.¹⁷

This kind of mechanism can transform a war of all against all into a war of all against one. This one will be guilty of all the rivalry and the crisis that has taken over that group, and then the one is punished or expelled as a scapegoat.

This archaic mechanism of social order needs to remain hidden, partially unknown, in order to function to create social cohesion. Girard calls “*méconnaissance*” the state of being unaware of the foundational murders performed at the beginning of a culture. It is indispensable for the participants to believe in the guilt of the scapegoat so the “purge,” the pharmacological transaction, can happen. That is why this process easily goes unrecognized, as Caiaphas demonstrates: “But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’”¹⁸

The Scapegoat Mechanism

The scapegoat can be anyone and is chosen unconsciously by the mimetic group, which generally chooses someone that is both ordinary and distinguishable in the group, usually an alien, a foreigner, a disabled, marginalized, or ordinary person, who committed a notorious fault. It is someone odd,¹⁹ who distinguishes him or

¹⁷ René Girard, “Generative Scapegoating”, in *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard & Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987), 76.

¹⁸ John 11:49-50 (ESV).

¹⁹ The Merriam-Webster dictionary explains that the word “Odd” was at first solidly complimentary. If you were odd in a 15th or 16th century kind of way, you were ‘outstanding, illustrious.’ It wasn’t until the 17th century that the modern sense of odd meaning ‘peculiar, eccentric’ became widely used.” It is not hard to imagine that outstanding people became an easy target for the social scapegoating and the adjective gained different meanings. Merriam Webster, “The Odd History of ‘Odd’”, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/the-odd-history-of-odd>.

herself from the crowd by a mark or attribute, good or ill. It is someone exhibiting too much “otherness.” The scapegoat is criminalized, declared guilty in the apex of the mimetic crisis. The same mimetic mechanism, which conducted people to the crisis, now produces an identification between the crowd and the scapegoat, who is now seen as a monstrous double. The scapegoat is as gigantic, as guilty, as detestable, as monstrous as the crowd itself. In the scapegoat’s murder, this evil is going to be terminated. That is what motivates its sacrifice. Hence, the scapegoat is murdered, receiving all the energy that was produced from the rivalry during the crisis. Bellinger describes the process thus:

Channeling violence toward a scapegoat is society’s solution to the problem of chaos, according to Girard’s theory. Killing a scapegoat, or attacking a minority group within society, provides an outlet valve for the build up [sic] of hatreds, resentments, and violent impulses that are generated by mimetic desire. Killing the scapegoat is a cathartic event that creates a new sense of social unanimity that did not exist before. Sacrifice becomes salvific for the society, and it becomes the cornerstone of both religion and culture.²⁰

When the crisis is finally purged, then relative peace is experienced. For Girard, Satan casts out Satan.²¹ By casting out himself, or the crisis, Satan produces the plausibility for the myth that will emerge out of that murder. The salvific effect over society and the need to cover up the violence perpetrated against the victim usually produces a divinization of the victim. The narrative describing the mechanism is also crystalized in terms that hide the violence and organize future rivalries and

²⁰ Charles K. Bellinger, *The Trinitarian Self : The Key to the Puzzle of Violence*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series; 88. (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 40.

²¹ A reference to Jesus question: "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end." Mark 3:22-26 (ESV). His question suggests an impossibility, but his affirmation that if his question has a positive answer, than Satan is coming to an end, implies that the correct answer for his question is a positive one. Satan casts out Satan. For Girard’s exposition, see René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Ottawa: Leominster, Herefordshire: Orbis Books; Novalis; Gracewing, 2001), 172.

crises. Hence, from that founding murder, culture and religion emerge. The episode is later retold in a mythical way to establish prohibitions and duties that function as cultural values to that group, while reestablishing the differences organized around the murder that is now a “sacrifice” or even some magical disappearance. Girard summarizes thus:

The mechanism that reintroduces difference into a situation in which everyone has come to resemble everyone else is sacrifice. Humanity results from sacrifice; we are thus the children of religion. What I call after Freud the founding murder, in other words, the immolation of a sacrificial victim that is both guilty of disorder and able to restore order, is constantly re-enacted in the rituals at the origin of our institutions. Since the dawn of humanity, millions of innocent victims have been killed in this way in order to enable their fellow humans to live together, or at least not to destroy one another.²²

Several cities, buildings, and cultures can still be traced back to its foundational murder. Rome, for example, has in its foundation the myth of Remus murdered by his twin brother (the double in its best manifestation). In Brazil, a sociologist describes that in the 19th century, a landlord, “anxious for perpetuity,”²³ commanded the sacrifice of two slaves and had them buried in the foundations of his house. Slavery itself is a continuous sacrifice to produce social order more than wealth. It is the outcome of a civil religion that sacrifices human beings.²⁴ All these murders are, for Girard, the origins of culture.

²² René Girard and Benoît Chantre, *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre. Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010), 14.

²³ My translation. Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (São Paulo: Global Editora, 1993), 38.

²⁴ See Jon Pahl, *Empire of Sacrifice: The Religious Origins of American Violence* (New York, NY: University Press, 2010), 272.

The Origins of Culture and Its Rituals

Culture, for Girard, is born out of violence; this origin is covered by a veil of a myth that connects the rationale of its institutions, its religion, and its cultural rituals. This original violence, transmuted as a beautiful myth, is ritually re-enacted in a pharmacological use of controlled chaos, to mitigate possible uncontrolled chaos like the one that led to the original violence. These rituals offer a simulacrum of the undifferentiating war of all against all but end with the reinforcement of collective pacts around the divinized victim. The rituals tend to authorize the exact things that culture prohibits as if in a suspension of norms, simulating the mimetic crisis.

For example, Brazil is one of the countries with the highest levels of income inequality in the world.²⁵ The country faces severe problems with violence from the favelas that reach wealthy neighborhoods. Nonetheless, Carnival, a feast that combines European tradition to Afro-Brazilian musicality, represents a suspension of the social classes (everyone dresses in costumes or undresses), genders (men dresses as women and vice versa), and many other undifferentiations. Dupuy writes that Carnival is a ritualized panic, where social differences are blurred and confused.²⁶ During Carnival, individuals feel they are participating in the integration of the whole community, while at the same time, they are radically engaged in their own interests.

²⁵ Valentina Espacio, "Brazil is Latin America's most unequal country in terms of income distribution", *Brazil Reports*, January 21, 2019, <https://brazilreports.com/brazil-is-latin-americas-most-unequal-country-in-terms-of-income-distribution/2307/>.

²⁶ Dupuy compares the Elections with the Carnival as a ritual that reestablishes order. Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Panic and The Paradoxes of The Social Order*, COV&R, Innsbruck, June 2003, https://www.academia.edu/6181866/DUPUY_Jean-Pierre._Panic_and_Paradoxes_of_Social_Order.

That is what Roberto DaMatta called a “process of violent individualization.”²⁷ It is the simulacrum of the crowd. Dupuy writes, echoing DaMatta:

Carnival is one of those times when Brazilians feel the weight and power of the social totality most profoundly: Carnival is a ceremony in which everyone communes, melting together in a single crucible. It is as though all the celebrants wished to relinquish their individuality and to fuse with the carnivalistic crowd.

After the ritual, though, normal life begins again. There is a saying in Brazil that the year only begins after Carnival. Regular life, in the monastic/Agamben sense of following a rule, is embraced without opposition after the feast. As a Brazilian poet writes:

Happiness, to the poor folk, seems
As that grand illusion: Carnival
People spend the whole year working
For just one moment to dream
Dressed in costumes:
Of a pirate, a gardener or a king
To see it all in ashes on Wednesday²⁸

A violent culture such as Brazilian culture, with its horrific origins, being the last country to abolish slavery in the western world, still the most unequal of Latin American countries (especially for descendants of slaves), suspends all its differences to celebrate its origins together. This celebration is ritualistic, reinforcing the differences it temporarily suspends. Although the “corpse” is the primordial sign of a culture, it is around its “tomb” that the culture develops and is maintained.²⁹

Veliyannoor, a Claretian friar and researcher of mimetic theory, wrote that “when

²⁷ Roberto DaMatta, “Carnivals, bandits and heroes.” In Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Panic and The Paradoxes of The Social Order*, COV&R, Innsbruck, June 2003, https://www.academia.edu/6181866/DUPUY_Jean-Pierre_Panic_and_Paradoxes_of_Social_Order.

²⁸ My translation for part of the song Happiness (A Felicidade) by Tom Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes.

²⁹ René Girard, Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 86.

culture develops as a tomb, rituals serve a preservative embalming function on the body of the victims, ensuring peace as only the world can give.”³⁰ The differences that are gained or reinforced after the scapegoating produce relative tranquility, because rivalry is diminished. The differences turn immediate modeling into mediated modeling, mediated by the differences of class, age, social group, hierarchical position, and so forth. What maintains these differences are myths sustained by systematic rituals, ritually reenacted. Along with those kinds of differences also emerge institutions to protect them, such as the state, the juridical system, the market, and the church. Girard is emphatic in affirming the violent origin of these institutions. He states: “We have to show that it is at the root of all institutions, which are based on the scapegoat mechanism.”³¹ The modern mind has been trained to think of religion as the cause of violence, and secular institutions as the solution to the disorder that religion produced. Girard, on the contrary, affirms that religion comes to channelize human violence, while secular institutions were founded by that violence. For Girard, “violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred.” However, the efficacy of this mechanism, according to Girard, is gradually disappearing because of Christian revelation.

Christianity demystifies religion. Demystification, which is good in the absolute, has proven bad in the relative, for we were not prepared to shoulder its consequences. We are not Christian enough. The paradox can be put in a different way: Christianity is the only religion that has foreseen its own failure. This prescience is known as the apocalypse. Indeed, it is in the apocalyptic texts that the word of God is most forceful, repudiating mistakes that are entirely the fault of humans, who are less and less inclined to acknowledge the mechanisms of their violence. The longer we persist in our error, the stronger God’s voice will emerge from the devastation. This is why no one wants to read the apocalyptic texts that abound in the Synoptic Gospels and Pauline Epistles. This is also why no one wants to recognize that

³⁰ Paulson V. Veliyanoor, *Morphing Crowd into Community: Eucharist as Ritual and Anti-ritual*, Paper Presented at COV&R Annual Conference on Transforming Violence: Cult, Culture, and Acculturation University of Notre (Dame, Indiana, June 30 – July 4, 2010), 16.

³¹ Girard and Chantre, *Battling to the End*, chapter 1.

these texts rise up before us because we have disregarded Revelation. Once in our history the truth about the identity of all humans was spoken, and no one wanted to hear it; instead we hang ever more frantically onto our false differences.³²

No one wants to hear this. Our scapegoating mechanism still has strength, and the tomb is the metaphor for the rituals that emerge around the mechanism. These rituals allow us to forget the violence produced and to experience a sense of peace (as good as the world can give), a sense of control, with differences contouring the way our lives should take. Rituals are in all we do, from waking up to getting to bed, even if we are not aware of their spiritual meanings. This is the outcome of the current Christian narrative, one that demythologizes the world.

The Christian Demythologizing Narrative

Girard describes biblical literature as being very different from myths. While myths try to hide violence and transmute its victims into heroes or gods, the Bible reveals violence and does not hide the humanity of its characters. On the contrary, the Bible gives voice to victims, even while the myths are narratives sustained by the crowds. Girard points to how Abel's blood cries out from the beginning, how Job becomes a potential scapegoat and resists guilt regarding himself. Christ's death as relayed by the Bible reveals how the crowd is wrong in demanding Jesus' crucifixion. This contradicts myths that sustain a majority's sense of reason.

For Girard, Christ's crucifixion is God revealing to humanity our own violent mechanism. In the cross, Jesus embraced our violence and absorbed it in himself. Regarding salvation, Girard is commonly associated with the moral influence model of atonement, first, because of the influence of Raymund Schwager, who was inclined

³² Ibid., 10.

to Abelard's position, but mostly because of his emphasis on the revelatory implications of Jesus' death. For him, the cross was the triumph of Jesus over Satan because of the total exposure of what should remain hidden. Girard describes Satan as a power that runs the very process of scapegoating, one that keeps producing victims. However, if the mechanism is revealed, it loses its capacity to purge, to reestablish social order. Christianity debilitates the mechanism that was vital for archaic societies and releases possibilities for a new humanity. At the same time, though, Christianity declares that it will fail at the end. The world will reject this revelation, because it is unbearable. We prefer the illusion of scapegoating. That is why, affirms Girard, Christianity must not and cannot lose its eschatological perspective.

Even well-meaning readers still fail to follow me in my conviction that Judeo-Christianity and the prophetic tradition are the only things that can explain the world in which we live. There is a mimetic wisdom, which I do not claim to embody, and it is in Christianity that we have to look for it. It doesn't matter whether we know it or not. The Crucifixion is what highlights the victimary mechanism and explains history. Today, the "signs of the times" are converging and so we can no longer persevere in the madness of mimetic rivalries that we find on the national, ideological and religious level. Christ said that the Kingdom was not of this world. This explains why the first Christians were waiting for the end of the world, as we find in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. We thus have to accept the idea that history is essentially finite. Only this eschatological perspective can give time back its true value.(..) People thus have to be immersed in untruth in order to have a little peace. This relationship between falsehood and peace is fundamental. The Passion brings war because it tells the truth about humanity, and deprives it of any sacrificial mechanism. Normal religion, which creates gods, is the one with scapegoats. As soon as the Passion teaches people that the victims are innocent, they fight. This is precisely what scapegoat victims used to prevent them from doing. *When sacrifice disappears, all that remains is mimetic rivalry, and it escalates to extremes.*³³

Girard affirms that the scapegoat mechanism allowed science to flourish and societies to produce complex structures and institutions, all the best and the worst of our culture. At the same time, the end of archaic religion left us fragile and threatened

³³ Ibid., 198, italicization of the author.

without the mechanism that systematically produced cohesion. Gradually, Christian thought, which radically taken is universal and recognizes no borders or enemies, demythologized the world and unveiled our schemes.

Humanity cannot face its own truth without falsehood: this is the implacable truth of Christianity. The truth is now coming, and it is destroying everything by depriving us of our enemies. There will no longer be any good quarrels. There will no longer be any bad Germans. Total loss of sacrifice will necessarily provoke an explosion because sacrifice is the political-religious framework that sustains us. Without this elementary peace and all the ensuing justifications, humanity will be led to the apocalypse.³⁴

Girard's solution for violence is to find a way out of this violent system. The problem is that we need a model to imitate, and every model available, while each model searches its own interest, is being modeled by an Other (with capital O, in Lacanian terms). The only way to escape the system is to find someone, who does not serve one's own interest. For Girard, this one is clearly Jesus, who never did his own will, but only the Father's will. Therefore, the way out is for each converted self to imitate Christ, to renounce the illusion of autonomy and be dominated by the Spirit of God, the Paraclete, the lawyer for the defense. "What is this power that triumphs over mimetic violence?" Girard asks and immediately answers: "The Gospels respond that it is the Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit takes charge of everything. It would be false, for example, to say the disciples 'regained possession of themselves': it is the Spirit of God that possesses them and does not let them go."³⁵

Instead of a myth of autonomy, Girard challenges us to think of personhood in terms of interdividuality. According to him, no one can think of oneself as a single

³⁴ Ibid., 199.

³⁵ René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning* (Maryknoll, N.Y. : Ottawa : Leominster, Herefordshire: Orbis Books ; Novalis ; Gracewing, 2001), 189.

unity but a person dependent on models and therefore an “interindividual.” The only choice someone has is to choose a model. Bellinger offers us three questions to better understand Girard’s claim. “Girard presents his reader with the profound question: who is your model? Are you mimicking models provided by your (violent) culture? Or are you allowing God to transform you by taking Christ as your model?”³⁶

Scapegoat Mechanism and Epistemology

Girard received critics from virtually every area he, or his followers, touched. While he was alive, he tried to respond to the critics, and his theory evolved with these debates. In the theological field, he received a respectful critique in 1980 from Hans Urs von Balthasar in his *Theo-drama*.³⁷ William Schweiker, Methodist minister and professor of Ethics, wrote in 1990 a book applying Girard’s insight to hermeneutics, called “*Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology and Ethics*.”³⁸ Many criticized his claim for a general theory of religion and the universality of his hypothesis.³⁹ Some theologians, influenced by Girard, tried to offer new theories of atonement, those such as Raymund Schwager, Marlin Miller, Mark Heim, Michael Kirwan, James Alison, Anthony Bartlett and many others.⁴⁰ John Millbank and his movement of neo-orthodoxy also articulated similar theories.

³⁶ Bellinger, *The Trinitarian Self*, 45.

³⁷ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988.)

³⁸ William Schweiker, *Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology, and Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990).

³⁹ See René Girard and James G. Williams, *The Girard Reader*. A Crossroad Herder Book (New York: Crossroad, 1996).

⁴⁰ Atonement and Mimetic Theory, “The Anthropology of René Girard and Traditional Doctrines of Atonement.” Girardian Lectionary, Last Modified, January 6, 2020, <http://girardianlectionary.net/learn/atonement-and-mimetic-theory/>.

Robin Collins⁴¹ describes the atonement theories following Girard to be of two kinds: imitation theory and unmasking theory. Imitation theory is close to the moral influence theory, only described with a Girardian theodicy. Unmasking theories are those that emphasize Christ's work as an unveiling of the mechanism that transforms the scapegoating mechanism into an obsolete practice. Still, he offers a third: his incarnational theory, which consists of...

mimetically participating in Christ's subjectivity as expressed in his life, death and resurrection, a participation in which our own subjectivity is redemptively transformed as the intentional states in Christ are creatively individualized and integrated into our own.⁴²

The basic idea of incarnational theory is a transformation of our subjectivity, our self, through an identification with Christ by several means (sacraments). T. Scott Daniels offers a model of "nonsubstitutionary convictions." Daniels claims that a Christian community should participate in Jesus' cross, more than to observe at a distance. This participation through engaged worship molds the community ethically. He insists on the sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, as the two most important formative practices. Several other theories, or models, emerged. However, a mélange of voices, as the four gospels are, is preferable when trying to describe the unfathomable. Our cartesian logical discourse claims to offer what nothing can. As Girard wrote:

We absolutely need Pascal. He saw and immediately understood the "abysses" of foundation. He considered Descartes to be "useless and uncertain" precisely because he thought he could base something on the cogito and "deduce" the heavens and stars. Yet no one ever begins anything,

⁴¹ Robin Collins, "Girard and Atonement: An Incarnational Theory of Mimetic Participation," in *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*, ed. Willard Swartley (Telford: Cascadia Publishing House, 2000), 63.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

except by grace. To sin means to think that one can begin something oneself. We never start anything; we always respond.⁴³

Logic is the last topic influenced by Girard that I would like to present.

Girard suggested that the scapegoat mechanism could happen also symbolically. He analyzes the birth of the word “epidemy” to describe a disease that could spread out of control. Girard affirms that the Black Death that spread over Europe in the 14th century was, despite its natural causes, a mimetic crisis, causing undifferentiation. No one knew its causes. The governments had no solution, so the people started to persecute various groups, especially the Jews. In Strasbourg in 1349 more than two thousand Jews were murdered, accused of being the cause of the plague. After failed attempts to control the disease, there was a terror of even using the word “plague,” which indicated this dyscontrol. That is when the Greek word started to be used, *epydemie* in French. Girard affirms that the name is a linguistic scapegoat. “A disease with a name seems on the way to a cure, so uncontrollable phenomena are frequently renamed to create the impression of control. Such verbal exorcisms continue to appeal wherever science remains illusory or ineffective.”⁴⁴ Girard states that this kind of linguistic sacrifice is still used whenever science is ineffective and that this is preferable over the sacrifice of people, but holds the same mechanism.

After this insight, the Portuguese semiotician António Machuco Rosa proposed that the scapegoat mechanism was behind the very concept of formal logic (the confrontation of opposite hypotheses and the exclusion of the illogical).⁴⁵ Logic is a system that is consistent in itself, which implies the elimination of any

⁴³ Girard, *Battling to the End*, 22.

⁴⁴ Girard. *Violent Origins*, 4.

⁴⁵ António Machuco Rosa, “*Spencer-Brown, Peirce, Girard, and the Origin of Logic.*” In *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, Vol. 22 (Spring 2015), 65-88.

inconsistency. Rosa used the theories of Spencer-Brown and particularly the system of existential graphs of Charles S. Peirce to describe that “logic is based on an original act of expulsion, the expulsion of the opposite of logic, which we will call the illogical.”⁴⁶ This position is contrary to the general philosophical presumption that logic is an *a priori* discipline, after which come all the others. Peirce denied the validity of a logical system based on the laws of duality, calling it “an aconicity,” since it was unable to represent the thing it should describe by analogy as an icon should.

Peirce’s system of existential graphs suggests the beginning of a logical statement as the expulsion of the undifferentiated (illogical). The question is: “How did every difference come into being?” Peirce suggests that there was a primordial state of total undifferentiation, he calls the *absurdum*, the juxtaposition of contradictory claims or “nothing,” the presence of God before anything was created, the absolute Other. A second movement is the negation of undifferentiation, or God, which Peirce calls “death,” that is the obliteration of otherness, the expulsion that creates differentiated logic.⁴⁷

Rosa, then, traces logic back to ancient Greece. “The birth of logic is to be found in lawsuits and discussions in public places,”⁴⁸ he writes. Judiciary practices, however, have followed religious practices. Therefore, after several religious/juridical procedures to identify a criminal, a system of thinking emerged. Logic, “became, according to Aristotle, a completely ritualistic process — that is, a uniform method to draw conclusions from premises.” Rosa concludes that because logic works through

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 83.

the expulsion of the undifferentiated, it is a formal system that cannot analyze undifferentiated realities.

Pharmacological or Therapeutical Sword

After all that was presented about this relevant hypothesis that emerged after Girard's contemplation of the crucified Christ, we can come closer to understand the link between the altar and the field. If violence is in the root of every culture, how can the non-violent Eucharist transform the violent stance of the Brazilian Evangelical Church? Can a sword be used to heal and unite, therapeutically, instead of pharmacologically scapegoating enemy after enemy? What happens to make a Christian church become a crowd, a mob, scapegoating minority groups, cultural artifacts, and even theological positions? Could this cultural religion be a pharmacological version of Christianity designed to produce witch hunts, crusades, and scapegoating in order to perpetuate its power?

What I want to stress is that cartesian logic, dualistic reason, is ill-equipped to describe a reality such as the atonement, because it is itself in need of attunement. As Dorothy Sayers suggested, after Aquinas, God's attributes are experienced *a priori* and named or explained *a posteriori*; and yet the explanation is neither univocal, nor equivocal, but always analogical. "The fact is, that all language about everything is analogical; we think in a series of metaphors. We can explain nothing in terms of itself, but only in terms of other things."⁴⁹ Her book *Mind of the Maker* is meant to be "an examination of metaphors about God." In it she advocates that language is always

⁴⁹ Dorothy L. Sayers. *The Mind of the Maker* (London: Mowbray, 1994) Kindle loc. 319-320.

metaphorical and experience-based; one can only understand the meaning of something already experienced or after the experience.

The words of creeds come before our eyes and ears as pictures; we do not apprehend them as statements of experience; it is only when our own experience is brought into relation with the experience of the men who framed the creeds that we are able to say: "I recognise that for a statement of experience; I know now what the words mean."⁵⁰

That is why the problem of the violent stance of the Brazilian Evangelical Church cannot be addressed in a theoretical way, but only in an experiential way, an EPIC⁵¹ way which should derive from the Eucharist. Crystal Downing, in talking about different views of the Eucharist, writes that rather than condemning the different views of the Lord's Supper, "we should communicate that different Christians read signs of the same truth differently. Resigned to the truth of Christ's atoning sacrifice, Christians re-sign truth in diverse ways."⁵² In a sense exposed by Rosa, logic is hostile to the otherness that threatens a differentiated system. A non-dualistic thinking (or a trinitarian thinking, or the third for Peirce) is open to interpretation, and this is fundamental "to keep the semiosis rolling," as Downing writes.⁵³ She also suggests that Christians should seek "co-inherence" rather than "coherence." That means that, instead of expelling the incoherent pharmacologically, we should embrace the co-inherence therapeutically.

Downing argues that communication (communion) happens not when we send a message, but when we are open to the other and we welcome a "change of the

⁵⁰ Ibid., Kindle loc. 363-364.

⁵¹ Leonard Sweet offers the acronym EPIC to represent the characteristics of anything culturally relevant in post-modernity: Experiential, Participatory, Image Rich, and Connected. See Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000).

⁵² Downing, *Changing Signs of Truth*, 218.

⁵³ Ibid., 230.

self as well as of the other. And, of course, change is the whole point of Eucharist: changing ourselves in response to the good gift of salvation.”⁵⁴ She argues, following Peirce, that the very concept of trinity has been developed as a semiosis during the several ecumenical councils by a community that embraced the co-inherence.

God’s ‘progressive revelation,’ we might say, occurs at moments when a COMMUNITY is drawn away from dyadic, dualistic thinking to embrace the co-inherence of three-in-one that pervades the very universe—as happened at the first several ecumenical councils.⁵⁵

If cultures emerge around sacrifices, the reenactment of Jesus’ sacrifice through the Eucharist, practiced in a co-inherent (non-dualistic) way, can have a creative power to continue the semiosis and transform a community. Srtreett states that the Eucharist in the first century was an anti-imperial praxis. “Whenever early Christians met for a communal meal they saw themselves as participating in subversive non-violent acts against the Roman Empire.”⁵⁶

The way that the church approaches the Eucharist can produce a different community. It is my claim that the co-inherent stance on the Eucharist can produce a prophetic-faith community open to the other, instead of a violent cultural-religion institution. Out of a contemplative non-dualistic Eucharist, a community of interdividuals can arise in creative ways, always in the process of becoming. What I will try to make more tangible in the next chapters is how this rite, the Eucharist, can transform our subjectivity.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 220.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 242.

⁵⁶ R. Alan Streett, *Subversive Meals*, 1.

CHAPTER 5:

REMEMBER THE EARTH THAT NOURISHES

In Christianity eating is a serious business. So serious is eating that Christianity insists you can “taste” God.¹

— Leonard Sweet, *Nudge*

Since the body of Christ is formed as a body at the table, the whole Bible is about this meal.²

— Peter Leithart, *Blessed are the Hungry*

Cannibal Hospitality

In 1557, Jean de Léry, a French shoemaker aspiring to the pastoral ministry, arrived in Brazil with other thirteen Calvinist missionaries, sent by Calvin himself. The following year, Jean went back to France, starving, aboard a pirate’s ship, with a book containing his recollections from Brazil. He published his memoirs in 1578 in a book that reached considerable success, called *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Also Called America*. That book influenced Montaigne’s myth of the good savage and inspired Claude Lévi-Strauss to decide to live in Brazil.

Léry and the other Calvinists had come to Brazil after Villegaignon, the leader of the French colony in Brazil, wrote to Calvin asking for the presence of Reformed ministers. However, after a few months among Villegaignon, the controversy over the Eucharist escalated to extremes. The military leader then banned

¹ Leonard I. Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who’s Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), Kindle, loc. 3042.

² Peter Leithart, *Blessed Are The Hungry: meditations on the Lord’s Supper*. (Moscow: Canon Press, 2000), 14.

the missionaries from the island he had fortified. The missionaries had to go to the continent. There they were received by an indigenous people, the Tupinambás, known for their cannibalism. Scott Juall writes that, when Léry writes his recollection, after several years back in Europe,

Léry draws on the power of cannibalism to create a strong tension in his work between Brazilian anthropophagy and European perspectives on the Eucharist. While this sacrament is intended to unite all Christians, it proves to be the greatest source of Christian discord and disunity — not only in Europe but also in America. Indeed, it is the controversy over the Eucharist — and its association with cannibalism — that compromises the establishment of the Calvinist refuge in the New World. Resulting from confusion over the exact meaning of Christ's words "Hoc est corpus meum," these observations demonstrate the degree to which the deep divisions over the nature of the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist were unbridgeable.³

The dualistic dispute that marked the Reformation and the Enlightenment was present in Brazil from the beginning. In the book, Léry describes being better received among the indigenous than among the French. He registers how even their nudity is more modest than the immodesty he saw in the way the French dress, in their superfluity and excesses. Also, despite their lack of knowledge of God, he writes, they seemed less interested in worldly matters than the French. An interesting episode summarizes this surprising encounter. The indigenous leader asks the missionary why would they come from so far for wood to warm themselves. The missionary answers that they wanted brazilwood to make dye.

He immediately came back at me: "Very well, but do you need so much of it?" "Yes," I said (trying to make him see the good of it), "for there is a merchant in our country who has more frieze and red cloth, and even" (and here I was choosing things that were familiar to him) "more knives, scissors, mirrors, and other merchandise than you have ever seen over here; one such merchant alone will buy all the wood that several ships bring back from your country." "Ha, ha!" said my savage, "you are telling me of wonders." Then, having thought over what I had said to him, he questioned me further, and

³ Scott D. Juall, "Of Cannibals, Credo, and Custom: Jean de Léry's Calvinist View of Civilization in *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Bresil*" (1578) (*FLS*, Volume XXXIII, 2006), 51-69.

said, "But this man of whom you speak, who is so rich, does he never die?" "Certainly he does," I said, "just as others do." At that (since they are great discourses, and pursue a subject out to the end) he asked me, "And when he is dead, to whom belong all the goods that he leaves behind?" "To his children, if he has any, and if there are none, to his brothers, sisters, or nearest kinsmen." "Truly," said my elder (who, as you will judge, was no dullard), "I see now that you *Mairs* (that is, Frenchmen) are great fools; must you labor so hard to cross the sea, on which (as you told us) you endured so many hardships, just to amass riches for your children or for those who will survive you? Will not the earth that nourishes you suffice to nourish them? We have kinsmen and children, whom, as you see, we love and cherish; but because we are certain that after our death the earth which has nourished us will nourish them, we rest easy and do not trouble ourselves further about it."

Léry learned that openness to the cannibals could improve his faith while questioning his presuppositions. This encounter revealed to him the false sense of modesty and the idolatrous sense of scarcity that characterized the French. If the Calvinist world had understood this back then, maybe our planet would be in a better situation today. Léry writes about the "savages" in such an admirable way that the reader feels inclined to give control of the land to the indigenous, not the Europeans. Juall writes that by "exploring difference and inverting hierarchies in a notably digressive and transgressive text, Léry implicitly calls into question the possibility of cultural homogeneity and the conventional paradigms of a dominant ideology at the source of empire."⁴ However, the ritual used by this hospitable community to control its violence (and that is the purpose of a ritual, according to Girard) was the exocannibalism. That is why the Tupinambás can also teach us something about the crowd effect, the fake communality sustained by the scapegoat mechanism.

Girard writes about their practice regarding their prisoners. They arrested a prisoner and treated him in a contradictory way. Sometimes he was treated with respect, even veneration, sometimes with abuse and insults. Shortly before his death, a

⁴ Ibid., 55.

“scape” was staged, or he was manipulated to steal or stimulated to violate a law.

Francis Huxley writes about this ritual as follows:

It is the fate of the prisoner to act out a number of contradictory roles and incarnate them in himself. He is an enemy who is adopted; he takes the place of the man in whose honor he will be killed; he is an in-law and an outcast; he is honored and reviled, a scapegoat and a hero; he is intimidated but, if he shows fear, is thought unworthy of the death that awaits him. By acting out these primarily social roles, he becomes a complete human being, exemplifying the contradictions that society creates: an impossible situation, which can only end in his death.⁵

The community pushes the prisoner to incarnate the ambiguities of its own contradictions. Hence, the scandal that culminates in the murder of the prisoner is not his difference, but his similitude that is denied in his condemnation. He is overly human. It is the undifferentiating process that threatens to bring chaos, not the difference. It is the familiarity with the victim that results in a successful symbolic transfer. The prisoner is then directed to become a greater and greater obstacle to the community’s desire each day, a greater scandal. Girard stresses that: “The more detestable the victim was made to appear and the more passion he aroused, the more effectively the machinery functioned.”⁶ Finally, the victim becomes the Barbecue in a cultic feast. This mechanism, for Girard, is what Jesus meant by the “things hidden since the foundation of the world,” which he came to reveal (Matthew 13:35).

This mechanism resembles much of the Brazilian Evangelical Church regarding its relationship with Brazilian culture. The church consumes scandals in the form of news while it pushes the culture to even greater scandals through its prohibitions, just as the Tupinambás do with their victims. After the culture performs the very taboos the Church lifted, the Church crucifies the culture and eats it. The

⁵ Francis Huxley, “Affable Savager.” In René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 275.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

prohibitions of the moralist Church work as a scandal, an obstacle, for the desire of the corrupt world. The Church, lacking the satiety that the great scandal could provide in the Eucharist, eats from the scandals that society produces and, therefore, encourages the society to produce more. Every revitalized taboo, every new prohibition, arises the opposite desire on society, with the same mechanism that Paul described in Romans⁷ regarding the law. Thus the church's moralism is fuel for the fire of the world's passions.

“Hangry” People

“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks (*eucharistēsas*), he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’”⁸ It is we who are hungry and angry (“hangry” in the language of popular culture), not God. In archaic religion, the gods were hangry and needed to be appeased with barbeques, not rarely with human sacrifices. Girard’s insight is that the Bible unveils this reality and presents how we are the ones who are hangry. We are the ones whose hangry needs to be appeased, not rarely with human sacrifice, or to put it even more clearly, always with a human sacrifice at some point. Leonard Sweet wrote that we can only choose in whose blood we will be washed. “Every congregation wants its pound of pure flesh. Every congregation is owed its drop of true blood.”⁹ The God revealed by Jesus Christ has no need to be appeased: “Go and

⁷ “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.” Romans 7:7-8 (ESV).

⁸ Luke 22:19.

⁹ Leonard Sweet. *Giving Blood: A Fresh Paradigm for Preaching*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014). Kindle loc. 270-271.

learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."¹⁰ God calls us to satisfy ourselves in him completely; that includes our need for violence, for blood, for a victim of our deepest rivalry. The great scandal is precisely God's solution to appease our "hanger": to incarnate and serve his own body on a table that reconfigures our existence in this world.

Patrick McCormick, examining the moral implications of the Eucharist, writes that one of the most important features of the Eucharist is the *anamnesis*. He states that "injustice begins with forgetting,"¹¹ and the Eucharist is a feast of remembrance. We forget that we are hungry eaters who do not live by our own resources, but that we are needy. That amnesia turns us into voracious and unthinking consumers, who satisfy our hunger so quickly that we become detached from our humanity and the humanity of others. The Eucharist (thanksgiving) re-members us to God in his gift of nourishment provided continuously, re-members us to creation which becomes food for us, re-members to the bodies involved in the production of the bread and the wine and the culture that derives from that, re-members us to our shared humanity of hunger and calls us to be bread to others. This remembrance, according to McCormick, results in an ethics of eating, from food production and pesticides to logistics to get the food on every table, from eating disorders in wealthy countries to the hunger of the poor.

McCormick states that the Eucharist is a "school for manners" just like the manners we learn from our parents at the table. At the table of the Eucharist, "we

¹⁰ Mathew 9:13 (ESV).

¹¹ Patrick T. McCormick, *A Banqueter's Guide to the All-night Soup Kitchen of the Kingdom of God*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004), xi.

celebrate and learn how to be Christians, how to be the church.” The Eucharist re-members us to the family of God, and this has implications.

When we celebrate the Eucharist we are not just being fed by God’s manna, we are being schooled in Jesus’ manners, and they challenge us to practice an ethic of hospitality, friendship, and service that imitates Christ, anticipates the heavenly banquet, and transforms the world we live in.¹²

Hospitality is the opposite of violence. How to use a sword hospitably? To be hospitable means to give room to the otherness of the other to the best interest of the other. “God destroys the city [of Sodom] for its incredible inhospitality,”¹³ writes McCormick. The Eucharist re-members us to the many friends Jesus has and sends us to invite also our enemies to join the feast, overcoming hierarchies, barriers, and differences in what the author calls “Jesus’ radical table fellowship.” For McCormick, Jesus overcame hierarchy with his “lower-archy,” which dismantles the dichotomies of master and slave, men and women, rich and poor, domestic and foreign. He states that the Eucharist implies that Christians should “get up from their seat, gird themselves as servants, and wait on the table, overturning every hierarchy of power, prestige and advantage.”¹⁴

We forget our bodies, the reality of our embodiment. We forget that we need food, that we need care, that we are needy. As we forget our bodies, we also forget the bodies of the people that make this world function (the “nobodies,” as McCormick calls them). The Eucharist then calls us to solidarity with the bodies of the poor and the nobodies. “Discerning the body means unmasking and removing every structure and practice that dishonors the body by treating some bodies as if they were

¹² Ibid., 41.

¹³ Ibid, 44.

¹⁴ Ibid, 66.

nobodies.”¹⁵ Also, the Eucharist should be the moment when we pray that our own bodies be transformed as we partake of the mystical union with Christ. We pray that our bodies be changed, writes McCormick, “in ways that will enable us to stand with the bodies of the poor... and to face with them the reactive violence that is unleashed whenever the weak and powerless stand up for their rights.” The author notes that “the early Church resisted persecution and torture by training bodies to become martyrs.” This is another way we can use the sword to love. He compares this with the civil rights workers of the 1950s and 1960s, who trained their bodies for nonviolent resistance “and doing so created a living corps of witnesses from which the public could not turn away.” He writes:

The bodies of these young women and men who would not sit or stand as they were told; who would be neither silenced, broken nor hosed down; and who would not be provoked into retaliatory violence or hatred became a leaven in the community that changed the face of history. In the Eucharist we pray to be changed into such bodies...we pray to become the sorts of bodies that can turn our cheek and stand against the face of violence without being formed in its image and likeness. We pray to be changed into the Body of Christ.¹⁶

Finally, McCormick draws on Girard’s mimetic theory to explain how the Eucharist is an “un-sacrifice” in the sense that it is the revelation of the scapegoating mechanism and of a non-violent God who is not interested in sacrifices but in mercy. The author stresses that what Jesus accomplished on the cross and the Eucharist is the opposite of our archaic mechanism of scapegoating. Hence, whenever we fail to take part in this reconciliatory act of love that is the cross, we remain scapegoaters searching for victims to appease our wrath. In order to be effective the mechanism of humanness needs to be forgotten (*méconnaissance*) ignored, so that we can convince

¹⁵ Ibid, 91.

¹⁶ Ibid, 95.

ourselves of our innocence and of the victim's guilt. The practice of scapegoating depends on forgetting the humanity of our victims, which can only happen when we forget our shared humanity. The Eucharist, on the contrary, is the feast of remembrance. In the Lord's table we go from sacrificial amnesia (ignoring and forgetting our divisions and scapegoatings) to anamnesis, reunion, and remembrance. This remembrance is a "dangerous memory" that summons us to identify ourselves with the suffering body of Christ in the bodies of those who live in the underside of history. This is the expected outcome of the Eucharistic ritual.

The Power of a Ritual

Dru Johnson argues that we live in a world of rituals and scripts. "Our world breathes with rituals," he writes.¹⁷ According to Johnson, a ritual could be defined as an ordinary human practice that is changed (exaggerated or improvised) strategically for a purpose that is different from its original purpose. The key question about rituals however is not "what" is a ritual, but "who" changed the ordinary and "why?" The voice we hear, the instructions to which we attend, will shape the kind of life we will live. We are guided by voices, cultural scripts that tell us what to do in every given situation, how to think, what to feel. Rituals are the processes through which we learn and remember our scripts, just as rituals of the Torah were meant for the people *to know* what God had done and said. Claiming an epistemological implication for rituals, the author writes that we get to "know" through rituals.

... Jesus of Nazareth strategically modifies Passover. He takes a ritual dedicated to correctly remembering God's historic actions in Egypt and inaugurates a new version of that ritual: the Lord's Supper. He ritualizes the ritual. Bold move. Like the Feast of Booths, Passover, and many of Israel's

¹⁷ Dru Johnson. *Human Rites: The Power of Rituals, Habits, and Sacraments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 24.

other rituals, the Lord's Supper is focused on knowing and remembering. Jesus instructs his disciples to practice the Lord's Supper in order to correctly understand God's actions on that night in Jerusalem. Comprehension doesn't come from mere mental reflection, although that is also an embodied ritual activity. To know what Jesus wants to show them, the disciples perform the ritual he scripts for them as a community... Scripture affirms throughout that we will know the world according to the voices to whom we listen— for good or for ill.¹⁸

Rituals then are embodied practices that enable us to know something that we would not be able to comprehend through mere mental reflection. Adam and Eve faced a situation that revealed this structure. They could only know God through eating from the fruits of the Garden, or know sin from eating prohibited fruit. It all depended on whose voice they listened to. In the same manner, when we listen to Jesus' instruction and partake in the Eucharist, we get to know a reality he wants to reveal to us, his disciples. Not only the Eucharist, Johnson writes, but all the embodied practices Jesus pre-scripted his disciples, such as clothing the naked, looking after the sick, and visiting the imprisoned.

Rituals can go wrong or be, as Johnson says, inhumane. Rituals that diminish our lives, which are mechanical, empty, or flimsy rituals, are inhumane. Jesus' rituals correct our mundane scripts, challenging a simple meal, or a blouse that keeps us warm, or a visit to a friend, to take on a whole different purpose. The author encourages us to inventory our rituals, to check whose voices are orienting our rituals, and to safely improvise Jesus' rituals to allow them the humane purpose Jesus intended. This improvisation is a creative display of the non-negotiable aspects of rituals, following the rich wisdom of the church throughout history.

Rituals provide us with a sense of control of our situation, a script to put chaos (our scriptless lives) back into an apparent order. We can become unaware of

¹⁸ Ibid, 33.

the injustices and blindspots in this process. We feel innocent and justified in the perspective that there is a wrong that should be put right. We follow our scripts, and the scripts “justify” whatever we do, because we believe it must be the right thing to do. After all, everybody does it. In this way, we morph into a crowd that follows the same scripts passed on from generation to generation.

The Eucharist is a precarious script. There is not much information on how it should be performed, who can participate, how often we should do it. The Eucharist is an open script, inviting creativity, participation, contextualization, that only a living community can produce. At the same time, the Eucharist is built upon the most ordinary human activity, the act of eating a meal.

Peter Leithart, in his *Theopolitan Liturgy*, writes about the importance of sacrifice in the Old Testament tradition and that every sacrifice implied a meal. Some could only be eaten by God, some only by the priests, and some were a feast that included the worshiper, the priest, and Yahweh; this was the case of the peace offering, the *todah*. The *todah*, writes Leithart, “is the closest analogy to the Lord’s Supper: it’s a thanksgiving meal, accompanied by prayers and songs of thanks.”¹⁹ The peace offering, he writes, gives the worshiper a vision of a redeemed world.

Leithart argues that there are true and false sacrifices throughout the Bible from Cain and Abel forward. Yahweh, when instructing Israel to sacrifice, is actually redeeming this practice. The true end of the sacrifice is “glorification, to enter into Eden, covering and communing with the living God.”²⁰ Covering, for him, means to make atonement (*kaphar*), to be covered in such a way that we can enter in communion with God. False sacrifices, however, disregard the irreligious nature of

¹⁹ Leithart, *Theopolitan Liturgy*, 068.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 060.

the God who doesn't want the blood of bulls and goats, but delights in contrite hearts.

The author writes:

The early church entered a world flush with sacrifice, and the modern church is no different. Wherever the church goes, she encounters a world organized by sacrifice, with its own idolatrous gestures, its own false atonements, its own empty promises of glory and life. The church preaches the gospel and calls the nations into union with Jesus' self-sacrifice to the Father. She calls the nations to offer true sacrifice, a sacrifice of witness and praise like the sacrifice of Jesus. She calls the nations into the realm of redeemed sacrifice, that is, into the liturgy. The church's liturgy re-orientes the sacrificial habits of the world toward the true sacrifice of the kingdom. It puts sacrifice back in sync with the sacrificial patterns of God's creation.²¹

Leithart continues to oppose modern liberal societies and totalitarian regimes, which are "sacrificial machines," to the redeeming sacrifice of the Eucharistic liturgy. These ideologies (scripts) that dominate our societies reject death, reject self-sacrifice, and promote self-preservation as its highest good. However, after Jesus "humanized sacrifice," we have only a few choices. He writes.

Sacrifice has been humanized, and societies will either cling to the sacrifice of Jesus enacted in the Eucharistic liturgy or will invent fresh forms of human slaughter and turn history into a charnel house. We face the choice between the peaceful sacrifice at the Lord's table or the violent sacrifices of the secular order. The Eucharist remakes the world because it redeems the perverse sacrifices of the world. Had Idi Amin, Stalin, Pol Pot repented and taken a place at the Lord's table, their lives of brutal slaughter would have been redirected from their idolatries. Joined to the sacrifice of Jesus, their perverse sacrifices would have been corrected and, for the first time, they would have participated in a true human sacrifice.²²

The true atoning experience of the Eucharist gives us a "true human sacrifice" that redirects us from our idolatries, disarms our sacrificial mechanisms, and transforms us from a crowd into a community of praise.

²¹ Ibid., 072-073.

²² Ibid., 073.

The Crowd is Untruth

The Gospel offers a reverse to our scapegoat mechanism by declaring the victim innocent and the crowd guilty. The crowd reveals our ungodly desire to be like God. The mechanism of the crowd has cement to reach its goal: scapegoating. Like Babel, it has used cement to stick bricks together and fortify its tower to go up to the skies; a parody of the *bakopher*²³ that Noah uses to cover the Ark. The cement that the crowd uses as false atonement to produce artificial unity are the figures of a common enemy and a victim in the modern sense. In archaic cultures, the victim and the enemy were the same person, because the victim had some divine reason to be victimized, as in the friends of Job giving voice to a vindicating God. Hence, the community was united around the victim to sentence it. Today, the *zeitgeist* of Modernity celebrates the victims, the minorities, and the “instagrammable” oppressed. “Victims are the heroes of our times.”²⁴ Victims appeal to our religious consciences, like the *homo sacer* who is about to be judged by the gods. They have the power to unite a group for some time in a common cause. This can be put forth by Christians, but is not Christian faith. It may be called cultural religion, or Christendom, but it is not Jesus’ way.

Cavanaugh echoes Augustine as he describes “that evil is often a parody of the good, that vice imitates virtue, and that sin is often committed by those seeking after real goods, even if in the wrong way.” The wrong way is not Jesus’ way. He concludes: “Violence is a misguided and distorted attempt to imitate the true God. But

²³ I am calling a parody of the *bakopher* considering the root of the word that, as explained in Chapter 2, is also root for *kopher* and *kippur* that means ransom, atonement or head.

²⁴ Daniele Giglioli, *Critique De La Victime*, Trans. Marine Aubry-Morici. Collection Echanges Littéraires. (Paris: Hermann, 2019). Introduction.

at the same time, in trying to imitate God, it becomes demonic.”²⁵ This parody, which seems unitive quickly proves to be divisive and serves to scapegoat one victim after another.

This parody is well described by Henri Nouwen in his short book, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*.²⁶ Nouwen describes the temptations that a leader suffers as Jesus suffered in the desert. To use his ideas, I could say that this Babylonian Church wants to be relevant, become an impact, and become a reference in the world. The Babylonian Church wants to influence, to transform the culture, to lead the way in politics and the elite. These are all good things, but as an end in itself, these things become idols and ultimately demand human sacrifice. In other words, the Babylonian Church presents itself as “the court of last resort for the truth.” However, as Kierkegaard writes, the scriptures never commanded us to love the crowd. This is our own mantra:

You shall love the crowd; even less: You shall, ethico-religiously, recognize in the crowd the court of last resort in relation to "the truth." It is clear that to love the neighbor is self-denial, that to love the crowd or to act as if one loved it, to make it the court of last resort for "the truth," that is the way to truly gain power, the way to all sorts of temporal and worldly advantage - yet it is untruth; for the crowd is untruth.²⁷

The Eucharist, on the contrary, according to Veliyanoor, is both a ritual and an anti-ritual that transforms our interdividuality from participation in the sacred (being a crowd) into a participation in the holy (being a community).²⁸ It is the

²⁵ William Cavanaugh. “An End to Every War’: The Politics of the Eucharist and the Work of Peace.” *ABC Religion & Ethics*, January 19, 2016. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/an-end-to-every-war-the-politics-of-the-eucharist-and-the-work-o/10097406>.

²⁶ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

²⁷ Soren Kierkegaard, “On the Dedication to “That Single Individual.” Translated by Charles K. Bellinger, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/kierkegaard/untruth/files/untruth.html>.

²⁸ Paulson V. Veliyanoor, *Morphing Crowd into Community: Eucharist as Ritual and Anti-ritual* (University of Notre Dame, Indiana, June 30 – July 4, 2010).

ultimate (final) ritual, for it points to the table where real presence is undebatable.

After we are satiated by this life-giving food and looking forward to the eschatological banquet, we are ready to serve as incarnations of the Christ. Then, we are ready to have swords in our hands. We must consider every man or woman to be a necessary part of that table, all people, not only those I like to call brothers.

Cavanaugh writes “Chrysostom says, ‘This sacrifice was instituted for the sake of peace with your brother or sister.’ We should, therefore, take seriously the kiss of peace before communion, so that we are truly reconciled and part of one body before we enjoy the ‘table of peace.’”²⁹

Cavanaugh, a Catholic priest, experienced the power of the Eucharist in the military dictatorship in Chile. During Pinochet’s regime, he and his colleagues constantly protested on the streets and were repressed by heavily armed police. When he noticed that the state was capturing protesters and torturing them without a particular interest in obtaining information, he realized that the narrative of the state was threatened by the very presence of the protesters in the streets. The narrative of the state is frail. This “body politic” is regulated by a particular liturgy and ritual actions that reinforce the narrative of the state. However, to maintain this narrative, other political bodies, such as the church, need to be ordained, as if subsidiary to this whole narrative. The goal of the regime was to organize the public space...

...to eliminate all intermediate bodies between the individual and the state that would challenge the power of the state... [and] to atomize the body politic, to create a body of individuals who adhered only to the state and not to one another.³⁰

²⁹ Cavanaugh, *A World Without Enemies*.

³⁰ Cavanaugh, *The Church In the Streets*, 387.

After this insight, Eucharistic theology came into play. The author affirms that the “Eucharist is an authoritative touchstone for configuring bodies in space and time”³¹ against which every configuration can be judged and questioned. The Eucharist is the liturgy of another body with a claim to be more authoritative than any other body political, including the church! It was a mass, a Eucharistic celebration, that united German and British troops for a Christmas truce in 1914 during the First World War. The Eucharist is subversive to all political order or hegemony and without having to fight for it. Cavanaugh writes:

Christ's sacrifice reverses the idea that one must achieve domination over the enemy to achieve unity. Christ instead takes on the role of victim, absorbs the violence of the world instead of deals it out, and thereby offers a world in which reconciliation rather than violence can hold sway... One of the most important aspects of the Eucharist is the way that it helps us to re-imagine the boundaries that separate us from them. War creates unity among us by sharply dividing us from the enemy...³²

During that time, the Catholic Church in Chile was influenced by the idea of the distinction of planes: the temporal and the spiritual planes. This way, the church was responsible for the “soul” of the people, while each individual was responsible for living his or her faith in a temporal plane. This changed when the church discovered many of its own priests and nuns were being killed, tortured, and disappearing. At that point, the church opened works to assist victims, seek humanitarian rights, give visibility to what was happening, and, most importantly, to open spaces for gatherings, public services, and public meals.

Cavanaugh writes that the church hierarchy saw this contest in Eucharistic terms, and excommunicated torturers and those enabling torture. Their public actions were also perceived as the identification of the church with the Body of Christ.

³¹ Ibid., 389.

³² Ibid., 390.

Cavanaugh suggests that the Eucharist is not a “model” of political life; it is the participation in the life of the trinity and its salvation endeavor. The result of this participation is to be led by the Spirit...

...into a new set of relationships with others, relationships shaped by those that Jesus had with people in his earthly life... The Eucharist is the ongoing action of Christ in the Spirit to go out from the altar into the streets and reconcile the world to the Father.³³

The Eucharist, which is often called Holy Communion, transforms crowds into communities – one bread, one body, no divisions, no more condemnation, oneness with God, oneness with one another. In this sense, the Eucharist is a sign of atonement, as it attunes us to a God who sacrificed himself, so that his love can become manifest. We become as he is. Hence, let us examine how the Eucharist can be seen in practice as a sign of reconciliation and why that is not working for the Brazilian Evangelical Church.

³³ Ibid., 392.

CHAPTER 6:
THE MEAL IS THE MESSAGE

First, faithful presence means that we are to be fully present to each other within the community of faith and fully present to those who are not. Whether within the community of believers or among those outside the church, we imitate our creator and redeemer: we pursue each other, identify with each other, and direct our lives toward the flourishing of each other through sacrificial love.¹

— James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*

The 'holy table' could be anywhere: in a homeless shelter, in a cafe, in an online chat room, at a casino--anywhere grace is needed. Jesus didn't keep a moral table, he kept a healing table.²

— Leonard Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*

Food Patterns

The Mayan Civilization in Central America left behind cities, pyramids, and a peculiar kind of science. The Inca Empire in western South America also left behind cities, road systems, and an elaborate culture. The Indigenous that live in the Amazon in Brazil to this day have nothing built with bricks and mortar. The heritage of the Amazonian indigenous in Brazil is the Amazon rainforest.

Receiving the fertilizing dust from the Sahara desert, across the Atlantic Ocean and humidity from its own system and the oceans around it, the Amazon is a miracle within a quite poor soil. Besides its astonishing diversity of flora and fauna, it used to be home to 5 million people, back in 1500. “By 1900 this had fallen to around one million and by the early 1980s there were fewer than 200,000,” reports specialist

¹ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

² Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*, 58.

Chris Park.³ These people were there for thousands of years, constantly being assaulted for the very treasure they cultivated.

There has been much debate over the role of the people of the forest in its cultivation and expansion. Recently, however, several researchers were able to associate the indigenous movements (they are seminomas) with the vegetation pattern in the forest. They argue that the forests closer to archeological sites had a different pattern of trees, predominantly domesticated species, which indicates direct human intervention. “Our analyses indicate that modern tree communities in Amazonia are structured to an important extent by a long history of plant domestication by Amazonian peoples.”⁴

The food pattern may be discreet, but it has relentless results in reality. This becomes evident when we learn that the Amazon is constantly being cut down to give space to monocultures of soy and livestock by civilized white Brazilians. Instead of exploring the richness of the forest, we want hamburgers like everybody else, who follows a globalized cultural script. Scientists end the study with the conclusion:

Detecting the widespread effect of ancient societies in modern forests not only strengthens efforts to conserve domesticated and useful wild-plant populations, which is of critical importance for modern food security but also strongly refutes ideas of Amazonian forests being untouched by man. Domestication shapes Amazonian forests.⁵

The same thing happens with the church. Our food pattern either builds up a diverse ecosystem of life, or it cuts down life under the banner of a standardized way of living. The open table of Christ supports zealots and Pharisees; the false atonement of religion scapegoats anyone that doesn't play by the rules. When we see the food

³ Chris C. Park. *Tropical Rainforests*. (London: Routledge, 1992). p. 108.

⁴ Levis et al., “Persistent effects of pre-Columbian plant domestication on Amazonian forest composition.” *Science* Edition 355, 925–931, 3 March 2017, 925.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 931.

pattern in the Brazilian Evangelical Church, as I will describe further, with rare exceptions, we find a poor monoculture, standardized, full of pesticides to kill anything different from the monoculture. A meal seems almost an embarrassment in churches that overemphasize rationality and the pulpit. Leithart argues that the pattern offered by biblical worship brings us back to the nature of creation. We are called to experience sacrifice in our everyday lives, just as the world does. He writes:

Division to reunion, death to resurrection, grave to glory – that’s the way the world comes to be and the way the world works. It’s the sacrificial movement of creations, life, and history. Sacrificial liturgy doesn’t introduce an alien pattern into the world. It runs along the grain of a sacrificial cosmos.⁶

For Leithart, there is no point in attending a service that doesn’t end with a meal. For him, worship without a meal isn’t worship at all, it misses the table and its liturgical materials, bread and wine. Leonard Sweet argues that the table should be the most sacred object of furniture in every house or church. “Bring back the table!” – he protests. He advocates that every church should have a “minister of food.” The ministry of food, he writes, “bridges the communion table in our sanctuaries with the table of communion in the world. It is our unique offering to a world that has lost sight of the table as a source of quiet, of healing, of wholeness.”⁷

It is around the table that Christianity takes shape, not around a pulpit, inserted only a few centuries ago as the center of the church. “The table is the place where identity is born—the place where the story of our lives is retold, re-minded, and relived.”⁸ Jesus was killed, Sweet writes, “because of his table talk and his table

⁶ Leithart, *Theopolitan Liturgy*, 054.

⁷ Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*, 134.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

manners—the stories he told and the people he ate with.”⁹ Sweet writes that it is at the table that Jesus presented most of his teaching. Sweet also lists the theologies that Jesus presented at the table, the theologies of mission, grace, evangelism, relationship, holiness, Kingdom, discipleship, Scripture, and incarnation.

The Eucharist as a ritual, however, remains an open script, a mystery. Ritual, as Dru Johnson describes, is an ordinary thing exaggerated to emphasize its special condition. Our sacred ritual was originally an ordinary meal that, due to the exaggeration, became so extraordinary that it no longer resembles a meal. What is the food pattern in our church? “The meal is the message,” wrote Leonard Sweet. If that is true, we should be paying attention to that message. Let me briefly present the semiotics of how the Eucharist generally is celebrated in some of the churches in Brazil.

Fast Food with Safety Demonstration

For most of the Evangelical Church in Brazil, the Eucharist (called the Lord’s Supper among this group) follows a quite predictable formula. For me, most of the celebrations, with few exceptions, remind me of the pre-flight safety demonstrations that flight attendants perform. There is a protocol to be followed; some flight attendants are more dedicated and expressive; some are more protocol-oriented. Some passengers are engaged and paying attention to the instructions that they have already received several times; some do not even look. Some believe that it can help in an emergency (both passengers and attendants); some are sure that it does

⁹ Ibid., 6.

not help at all, and the only point of repeating it is to make passengers feel better and keep the companies flying.

Frequently I feel that the Eucharist celebrated in the Evangelical Churches is similar to fast food. It is cheap, it comes ready, and it is usually fast. In some churches, a plastic cup has a cover within which there is a tiny piece of bread. In some churches, it is distributed at the entrance, to facilitate the process. Like fast food, the mechanics are calculated to decrease the obstacles of the experience and to make it brief. It reminds me of fast food, because no one really knows what they are eating, and you can regret later having eaten it. After all, it can shorten your life. Some say that it is the body of Christ; some say it is only bread and juice for remembrance and that only “heretics” believe in a real presence. Some say that if you eat it with unconfessed sins, you will die earlier. “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.”¹⁰

Sweet writes that the gospel is “an invitation to go to Jesus’ house for a meal. The life we live is the journey to that banquet, and we get there not by way of a tablet but by way of a moveable feast. Jesus is not a once-and-done meal-ticket.”¹¹ According to Cavanaugh, the holy table is different from other rituals. The fact that the Eucharist is a meal puts the sacrament (*mysterion*) “in a liminal position with regard to everyday.”¹² This privileged position has the condition to reenchant the everyday. Cavanaugh argues, following Schmemman, that the liturgy of the Eucharist, instead of reinforcing a distinction between profane and sacred, as a foretaste of the

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 (ESV).

¹¹ Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*, 177.

¹² William T. Cavanaugh, “The Church in the Streets: Eucharist and Politics.” *Modern Theology* 30, no. 2 (2014): 384-402, 388.

escathological banquet, “enacts blessing and transform[s] everyday life.” In the Brazilian Evangelical Church, however, this opportunity is not seized. Each church has its practice, but usually, the formula is not far from this:

- a short explanation of who can participate and who cannot
- an invitation for personal examination
- the reading of 1 Corinthians 11 or a Gospel account
- the distribution of the elements
- some prayers here and there
- maybe a song in the end

In a large Pentecostal denomination (Christian Congregation of Brazil), the communicants need to go to the front and kneel to receive the elements. They celebrate it annually! When a member loses the opportunity to commune in his local church, he must try to find another local church, or he will have to wait for the next year. Cavanaugh writes that “Saint Ignatius of Antioch advocated frequent gathering for the Eucharist, for he says, ‘It puts an end to every war waged by heavenly and earthly enemies.’”¹³ This is one of the only denominations in Brazil that uses wine for the Eucharist.

My wife grew up in one of the largest temples of the Assemblies of God. She relays that the church had a moment for “the members who had sinned” to go to the altar and ask the church for forgiveness for their sins before the celebration. After their confession (with no details), the church was questioned whether they would forgive the member or not. My wife recalls that usually, especially regarding sins

¹³ William Cavanaugh, “A world without enemies: The Eucharist and the work of peace”, *ABC Religion & Ethics*, September 12, 2019, Sydney, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/a-world-without-enemies-the-eucharist-and-the-work-of-peace/10100300>.

related to sexuality or some other scandal, this would feed the gossips as “snacks” after the service. It is a good thing to promote confession and reconciliation around the Eucharist, but I doubt that could be done sincerely in a large community where there is no sense of intimacy. It is difficult to know whether the people’s minds were inspired by the scandal of the cross or the scandal of the repented sinner.

Notwithstanding this practice, I praise this denomination for the way they break the bread, which is by the hands of the pastors, during the celebration, in front of the church.

I grew up in a Baptist Church and remember that some churches would only allow Baptist members to participate in the Eucharist. I remember going to a free church once, when I was about ten years old, and the Eucharist was celebrated, but I still had not been baptized. The deacon offered me the elements, and I answered: “I’m not baptized yet. Thank you.” Seeing the mix of expectation and frustration in my eyes, he replied: “There is no problem. Join us.” I was thrilled with the invitation but asked my mother for approval before taking it. She approved. It was a great feeling to be able to join the community in that meal. That was my first communion and I did not understand what I was doing (I still don’t), but I was able to feel part of the Body of Christ. That felt good.

In 2018, I was a minister in a Korean Church for Portuguese speakers. The church had a tradition to celebrate the Eucharist twice a year, on the Passover and on Thanksgiving. The celebration was luxurious. The presbyters that distributed the elements wore white gloves, and the trays and cups were of gilded metal. There was a sense of solemnity, but a deep disconnection with reality. The youth, most of whom were in the service that I celebrated, had little understanding of that rite.

After a couple of months serving there, I requested permission to celebrate it monthly. They authorized it, but they were concerned with the silverware, so they bought a new set, more simple. I told them I did not need any of that. They also bought white gloves, a package I never opened. Our liturgy was different every month. I would buy artisanal bread with remaining flour around it, so everyone's hands would get "dirty." I would break it in front of everyone's eyes and explain the different metaphors of that act. Once a month I would invite everyone to come forward and tear off a piece themselves. Another month I would ask people to come and retrieve a piece for someone else, and so on. I was trying to offer an EPIC¹⁴ service to that community. I served there for a little longer than a year, but in that short time, I could notice how that community was coming to understand, not just the Eucharist, but the gospel.

The Eucharist touches realities that are beyond reason. This worship of praise is one of the most embodied acts we perform in our Christian journey. Mystics and theologians have been saying over the centuries how transformative it is. Most recently, research from various disciplines has proved how therapeutical the Eucharist is, especially for post-traumatic experiences. From the particular to the universal, let me present some examples of the therapeutical power of this ritual.

Therapeutic Eucharist

My wife and I used to work in the same Christian organization. She would often come to my office, so we could see each other. She was almost always happy, but one day she was nervous. She had just argued with a colleague, who is a pastor. I

¹⁴ Experiential, Participatory, Image Rich, and Connected.

was eating melon while she briefly told me what happened. In her anxiety, she took one or two chunks of melon while she was telling me the story. When she was going for the third chunk, I calmly said to her: “This is the body of Christ.” She stood still, deciding if she would eat it, and I said: “Discern the body if you decide to eat it.”

We had discussed some weeks before that to discern the body is not only to understand what we are eating but, most of all, to discern the Body to which we belong. Paul writes this to a divided Church. So, when I asked her to discern the body, she smiled, breathed in relief, and ate the melon. She told me later that this short but meaningful action changed her day.

As Leonard Sweet wrote, “at the table, sitting together, facing each other, talking to each other—good food, good conversation, good laughs, good stories—we learn the good news of the God who eats good food with bad people.”¹⁵ After that experience and my research on the Eucharist, my wife decided to start a business with her mother to sell table sets and to promote “the culture of the table.” The table sets are produced by women in a condition of social vulnerability, who are supported by our church. The newborn company has a website that offers liturgies for different occasions and playlists on Spotify to encourage the experience around the table.

Something new emerges from the contemplation of the Eucharist, while something old dies there. Simone Weil, meditating about the Eucharist, writes that there is an evil in us that grows regardless of what we do to terminate it. The only thing that diminishes it is the Eucharist that absorbs it. She writes:

When a human being turns his eyes and his attention toward the Lamb of God present in the consecrated bread, a part of the evil which he bears within him is directed toward perfect purity, and there suffers destruction. It is a transmutation rather than a destruction. The contact with perfect purity dissociates the suffering and sin which had been mixed together so

¹⁵ Sweet, *From Tablet to Table*, 18-19.

indissolubly. The part of evil in the soul is burned by the fire of this contact and becomes only suffering, and the suffering is impregnated with love.¹⁶

Weil's words are marked by grief and what could become resentment for the life she led, if it weren't for the impregnating love that she describes. This is not far from our daily lives. Kaethe Weingarten, a Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School, coined the term "common shock" to describe "the biological and psychological responses that are triggered when we witness violence."¹⁷ She emphasizes the impact violence has on us as we "witness" it, not only as the victims but as onlookers. She states that "it affects our mind, body, and spirit."¹⁸ Building upon Weingarten's theory, the Presbyterian pastor Rubén Arjona wrote an article defending the Eucharist as a means to address this common shock.

Arjona states that in the Eucharist there are the three fundamental elements that post-traumatic people need to recover. First, a "trustworthy and nourishing relational home," which a Eucharistic community provides. The second element is a space for truth-telling and mourning. The Eucharist is normally preceded by some kind of confession and proclamation of forgiveness. The third element is "a life-sustaining absolutism," which is a kind of normality. About this, he writes: "Most children can rest assured that the time will come when mom or dad will say: 'Time to eat!' Like a loving parent calling her children to eat, in Communion the minister issues an invitation on behalf of Jesus Christ: 'Take, eat; take, drink.'"¹⁹

¹⁶ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 54.

¹⁷ The Witness Project. About Common Shock. <http://www.witnessingproject.org/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Rubén Arjona. "John Calvin on the Lord's Supper: Food, Rest, and Healing for Shivering Souls." *Pastoral Psychology* 66, no. 2 (2017): 177-90, 187.

Weingarten's proposition to deal with the "common shock" we experience after witnessing violence is a "compassionate witnessing." Arjona sustains that the Eucharistic community is this "compassionate witnessing" *par excellence*. To exemplify this, Arjona describes the case of Serene Jones in her book *Trauma and grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*. Jones tells the story of Leah, a woman who suffered violence and violation as she was raped by her father and a supposed friend. In a service, during the institution of the Eucharist, she heard about the broken body of Christ, and that triggered her emotions in such a deep way that she left the church. Jones, aware of the situation, created an opportunity to talk with Leah and listened to her story. Leah's whole self "still held within it the shock waves of the violence she had known for so many years."²⁰ Arjona emphasized that therapeutical elements were present when Jones fostered a safe space for truth-telling. She moved toward, not away from, the source of distress. Finally when she became aware of her own traumatic memories, she was able to translate that into her liturgy. Jones reports:

The next week I arrived at church, late again, and was happy to see Leah already sitting in our usual pew. This morning, however, the routine felt different... I tried to imagine what the songs, prayers, silences, Scripture readings, and sermon might sound like to Leah. I tried to recall what I knew of traumas in my own life, what it felt like in my body to be terrified and confused.²¹

Bessel van der Kolk, a psychiatrist, son of a war veteran, and founder of a trauma center, argues that the damages left by trauma are not only mental but corporeal. In his book *The Body Keeps The Score*, he writes that he came to understand, after working with several types of trauma, that talking about it is not enough. The body needs to be engaged in the process of healing. He believes that "we

²⁰ Ibid., 186.

²¹ Serene Jones. *Trauma and grace: Theology in a ruptured world*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 9. In Arjona, *John Calvin on the Lord's Supper*, 186.

are on the verge of becoming a trauma-conscious society,” and we need to learn how to help each other to deal with our traumas. The paths he offers for healing involve aspects that are intrinsic to the Eucharist, such as body awareness, meditation, theater and spatial organization, truth-telling, rescripting of one’s life, restructuring inner maps, and so on. For example, he writes that the alpha-theta brain waves, which we experience when we meditate, can rewire the brain, so that we don’t see the others as threats.²² We have no idea of the impact that participation in the Eucharist can have on our bodies and our brains. Karen O’Donnell, building mostly upon Bessel van der Kolk’s work, also wrote about the potentiality of the Eucharist to treat people after traumatic experiences. She believes that ancient liturgists had an instinct for post-traumatic remaking.²³ For her, a well-curated Eucharistic liturgy, as contemplation of Jesus’ maximum trauma with hope and expectancy, repeated constantly, might be the best practical way to deal with trauma and to construct a different future.

There are many other studies relating the Eucharist to healing, but the greatest emphasis of this thesis is to treat the Eucharist as a mystery. This mystery atones, attunes, feeds, challenges, teaches, heals, and shapes the way we are in the world. It shapes the way we use our swords. This mystery is something we taste, see, smell, touch, and hear. This mystery is lived within community and always has room for more people. To illustrate how the Eucharist can shape a community, I would like to present a community that has impacted generations with its testimony, the monastic order of Taizé.

²² Bessel van der Kolk. *The Body Keeps the Score : Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. (New York, NY: Viking, 2014). 143.

²³ Karen O’Donnell. Eucharist and trauma: healing in the B/body. In Warner, Megan, Grosch-Miller, Carla, Southgate, Christopher, and Ison, Hilary. *Tragedies and Christian Congregations*. 1st ed. Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology. Routledge, 2020., 189.

Signs of Reconciliation – Signs of Atonement

The mystic tradition of Christianity has been neglected by Protestants. I learned to meditate using the *Lectio Divina* around ten years ago with my mentors Osmar and Isabelle Ludovico. I liked it so much that I asked them where I could better develop this practice. They told me: You need to visit Taizé. Taizé is a small village in Southern France that was revolutionized by a group of monks who started a monastery there.

Roger Louis Schutz-Marsauche²⁴ was born in 1915, the son of a Reformed pastor in Switzerland. When he was thirteen, he had to move to another village to study. His father had two boarding options to host him: a Protestant family and a poor Roman Catholic widow with seven children. The pastor chose the Catholic widow because she needed the money and maybe Roger would be of help. During the years Roger lived there, he questioned his faith and developed a longing for reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics.

When he grew up, attending the request of his father, he enrolled in a Protestant university to study theology. There he became a natural leader and formed a group with his colleagues that would meet every other month and go to retreats of silence, meditation, and confession. The Second World War affected his plans, but a desire grew in his heart to have a house in France for communal living and to assist war fugitives, like the Jews. Only a few years later, he defended his thesis: “The Ideal of the Monastic Life Before Saint Benedict and Its Conformity to the Gospels.”

One agriculture student and a couple of theology students approached Roger to better understand his monastic ideals and decided to start living together as a

²⁴ Jason Brian Santos, *A Community Called Taizé: A Story of Prayer, Worship and Reconciliation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

brotherhood. The group became the first Protestant monastic order of history. The group grew in the small village of Taizé and started to seek more interaction with Catholics. In 1949, the Cardinal of Lyon arranged an audience for Brother Roger with Pope Pius XII. Roger made the following request to the pope: “Leave a little way open, even a very narrow one and define what you consider to be the essential barriers—but leave a way forward. Do not close it altogether.”²⁵ The meeting did not have significant results.

The group continued to develop their monastic life, situating themselves in poor areas of the world. In 1953, Brother Roger wrote a rule, inspired by the other rules that existed, but more simple. In 1958, Pope Pius XII died and his successor, Pope John XXII, was an admirer of the testimony of Taizé. The relationship grew closer after his inauguration. Because of that, Brother Roger and Brother Max were invited as observers to the Second Vatican Council. By that time, the number of young people making a pilgrimage to Taizé had been increasing rapidly and they decided to build the Church of Reconciliation.

The money for the Church came from a German organization called *Sühnezeichen*, which means “sign of atonement/reconciliation,” established to help rebuild communities affected by the war. The German organization chose to invest in Taizé after they came to know that the community had hidden prisoners-of-war. In 1962, the building was inaugurated with great repercussions as a place for “Protestant monks.” In the following years, the community became a reference to ecumenical initiatives, and the group decided to embrace this vocation to inspire youth towards reconciliation.

²⁵ Ibid., 64.

Brother Roger was assassinated in 2005 during an evening prayer service by Luminița Solcana, a mentally ill young woman. At his funeral, Brother Alois, his successor, prayed: “God of goodness, we entrust to your forgiveness Luminița Solcan who, in an act of sickness, put an end to the life of Brother Roger. With Christ on the cross we say to you: Father, forgive her, she does not know what she did.”²⁶ The Church of Reconciliation was full of young people, besides journalists, politicians, and pilgrims from all over the world.

When I went there for the first time, I was shocked by their testimony. During the summer, they receive up to five thousand people per week. The assassination of Brother Roger did not make them less hospitable. Their message of reconciliation, of atonement, resonates even more now than before. Each day, their communal life is more complex and beautiful. Now, Catholic and Orthodox brothers are part of the monastery, as well as sisters from different orders—a legacy from the good relationship Brother Roger had with Mother Theresa.

The Eucharist there is simple. All are invited. On one side, bread is available in the Protestant way; on the other, the host is available in the Catholic way. Nonetheless, everyone is part of the same table. People hardly ask each other for their provenance. There, all are brothers, invited to eat together, to work together, to pray together, and especially, to silence together, to listen. This openness to God and the other is indispensable to the Eucharistic life.

Apart from the service, the meals involve almost everybody. The pilgrims volunteer to cook and to serve. Thousands of people line up to receive the meal and spread around the terrain to eat in groups. It is a feast that begins in the morning service and only ends when everyone goes to sleep.

²⁶ Ibid., 75.

My second time at Taizé, I spent a week in silence. I was in a house with ten other men, also in silence. Our meals started with a song and ended with a simple prayer after everyone had finished. Every day one monk would leave the cloister to come and eat with us. The experience of eating alongside these men in silence for a week was indescribable. The companionship, the commonality, the shared humanity, the rhythm, the perception of the other's needs, are treasures that might easily be missed in the agitation of an ordinary meal. There, the most ordinary meal was at the same time sacramental, as the Eucharist should be.

Taizé, rooted in the most ancient tradition of the church, was ahead of its time and maybe still is. Reconciling Protestantism with the rest of the Christian church, conciliating different traditions in the same life-long commitment, different presentations of the Eucharist in the same service, inviting the stranger to partake of the table, all of this shaped the way this community dealt with the terrible trauma they suffered. The sword was used to heal when, in the funeral of Brother Roger, they prayed to God asking for forgiveness for the assassin. This community got something right at the altar. "Mysticism begins in experience; it ends in theology," wrote Leonard Sweet a couple of decades ago.²⁷ As Pope John Paul II wrote: "It is not by chance that the Gospel of John contains no account of the institution of the Eucharist, but instead relates the 'washing of feet'; by bending down to wash the feet of his disciples, Jesus explains the meaning of the Eucharist unequivocally."²⁸

²⁷ Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic*, 1st ed (Dayton, Ohio: Whaleprints, 1991), 76.

²⁸ John Paul II, Pope. (2004, October 7). *Mane Nobiscum Domine*. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2004/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20041008_mane-nobiscum-domine.html.

Conclusion

The posture of the Brazilian Evangelical Church towards culture in general displays a theology of domination that disputes cultural hegemony. Pastors and denominations use temporal power as a weapon. The quest for influence and intentional cultural change leads to a quest for power. This movement can be traced back to our colonization, or the first Protestant missionaries.

We are unaware—and we need to be, as Girard affirms—that the culture we cultivate or worship has violent origins. Whenever we dispute control of the narrative and try to change the culture, we are walking over a ground marked by violence. We participate in this culture; therefore the metaphor of the swords is an extraordinary element of culture. The question is how to use our swords. Can we use these swords for healing instead of hurting? This thesis asserts that all cultural weapons we have in our hands must be used to disarm the violent culture in which we live. How do we do that? We can't be sure. Jesus left an open script. What we do know is that a table of communion can shape our actions in the world. There needs to be a contemplative, mystical, approach to the mystery.

Christians are called to sacrifice hegemony. We can only sacrifice what is in our hands. We should aim for a cultural diaconate; power under (cross) instead of power over (sword). Movements like monasticism or the neo-Anabaptists have proved to be influential without the use of power. We need powerless prophetic voices, as Brueggemann suggested. We need to use our weapons with Eucharistic imagination.

The Bible presents an anthropology that reflects the plural character of God. Humanity should reflect the unity that exists in God which includes even the otherness of male and female. Humanity was designed to be a plural unity connected

with the triune God. However, we followed our desire and ate from the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, triggering a process of division that split everything, from our hearts to our relationships with God, creation, and our human family. It is a process of atomization. We witness violence taking place and turn brother against brother. Fear propels the gathering of these individuals. Humanity becomes a crowd, wounded by sin, sinking into ever deeper violence, until it becomes unbearable to God, who intervenes. God's intervention in Jesus was drastic but resulted in a new pattern of relationship with God and a new food pattern. Now, humanity could channel its violence toward an animal, which would then become a meal. That meal prompts God to declare that humanity has an ill desire from youth. Therefore, instead of destroying every wicked human, God decides to promise a future for all creation. This promise is guaranteed by a sign of remembrance: an undrawn bow. God perpetually sees his undrawn weapon and re-members the project of walking with this wicked humanity without destroying it. There must be another way.

A little later, the descendants of Noah who mocked his vulnerability organized themselves to fortify a tower towards heaven. They were running away from any kind of vulnerability; they wanted hegemony. This impetus gave them a false sense of unity, a false atonement. Different from Noah, they don't listen to God, so they end up unable to listen to each other. The story ends by saying that they *lo'-shema'*. God, then, calls a man, who listens, and listens to the point of not killing his son, which would not be strange for his culture. From his family, who *shema* the *Elohim echad*, God starts to bring humanity to the unity he first intended. For generations, this family believed that God had high standards for the sacrifices he required. For generations, God insisted that he wasn't interested in the blood of goats and bulls. It was only with Jesus Christ that we all came to understand that the ones

who thirst for blood are we, not God. We are violent. God so loved us that God embraced our violence absolutely, and crossed it, going through death, opening a new way to atone us completely. Jesus not only lived this path, but he also gave authority to his followers to evoke everyone to this covenant of peace. This is the authority of suffering compassion, as is the authority of the Father. It is not as the authority of the rulers of this world. Jesus trains his disciples to go out depending on others' hospitality, and later on, he sends them out with swords and moneybags to offer hospitality themselves. The final token of his teaching is the transformation of a meal into a ritual of remembrance in a table that is open to traitors, waited on by the ruler of the universe. The food is both a human sacrifice and the work of our hands. The drink is both human blood and the fruit of the vine. Now, in the light of it all, how are Jesus' disciples supposed to use their swords? How can they love their enemies with these swords? How can they bring humanity to the unity God intended with these two swords?

This thesis maintains that the contemplative practice of the Eucharist gradually shapes the way we understand and use the cultural weapons in our hands to heal, unite, and atone. We need Eucharistic imagination to use the sword. After the undrawn bow that God set in the sky, after the cross that Jesus embraced being able to summon angels to defend him, I believe we have a clear direction. However, since it is not our natural inclination, we constantly need to go back and re-member the authority of suffering compassion that Jesus invested us with. The way we understand the table shapes the way we use our swords; when humanity fails at the altar, it fails in the field.

Throughout centuries, the church has had different images to describe how Jesus could unite us to God and to one another. The New Testament uses a polyphony

of images in conjugation. Each epoch of the church, however, seems to prefer an image over the other. The images are always borrowed from the spheres of public life. Each image reinforces one theology, one way to approach the altar, one way to see God and humanity, one ethics. I believe that the Eucharist, while constantly reenacted, becomes a placeholder for this “mélange of voices,” an open-source for new devices to address the current realities of each epoch, and finally the practice of this unifying experience. In my description of different theories of the atonement, my single concern was whether the theory obfuscated or highlighted the fellowship of the table that the Eucharist offers. Therefore, juridical, economic, honorary, and military images were regarded as less instructive regarding “the swords” and the church’s presence in the world. It is hard to dissociate some of these theories from the crusades and “just war” theory. Hence, I believe the whole kaleidoscope is useful, but images like the deification, cosmological unity, incarnation, and scapegoating are more related to the table and can best approximate “the swords” to the authority of suffering compassion.

Girard helps us in that matter, because he investigates both what causes social groups and societies to come together and cohere successfully and what the function is of religion in these processes. He describes how this scapegoat mechanism offers a false atonement, how the culture is founded on violence, and how the institutions born of this primordial violence work to protect this culture. The church, then, can be confusing a zeal for the Lord with a zeal for its cultural religion; and Jesus’ atonement with a false atonement of all against one. Instead of eating from the scandal of the cross, the Church can be eating from the scandals of the sinners she scapegoats ritually. Girard also helps us to understand how we are the ones who need sacrifices, not God, and that secularized societies are still sacrificing humans to their

secularized divinities. Finally, mimetic theory helps us to understand how dualistic logic has roots in archaic religion. Our tendency is always to read the scriptures trying to decipher the cross with our theology as though it was a sphinx. The cross, however, is a mystery we can only experience *a priori* and maybe describe something *a posteriori*. Christian religion uses biblical imagery pharmacologically, expelling the evil, the incoherent. Christian faith embraces co-inherence therapeutically. The trinitarian, non-dualistic thinking of the mystics might be better suited to prevent us from falling back into the archaic religion of the scapegoat mechanism. It is my claim that the co-inherent stance on the Eucharist can produce a prophetic-faith community open to the other, instead of a violent cultural-religious institution.

The question then is how the Eucharist can affect the subjectivity of the followers of Jesus. The story of the Tupinambás and the Calvinist priest is remarkable for this exact reason. Jean de Léry sees the hospitality of the indigenous, their confidence in the Earth that nourishes, and their modesty even in nakedness, to be in strong contrast with the Calvinist French. Their Eucharist was exocannibalism. They would take a foreign prisoner and push him to act in contradictory roles in order to incarnate the ambiguities of the contradictions of their own tribe. The idea is that, in this way, he would become a complete human being, living and interacting with the tribe as one of their own. The familiarity with the victim resulted in a successful symbolic transfer. The Calvinist Eucharist, which became a major crisis between Léry and the Catholics in Brazil, was a symbolic abstraction about a perfect man sacrificed by a wrathful God. There were no ambiguities, no Barbecue, no feast, no life around the table.

We are the ones who are “hangry” and thirsty for human sacrifice. The God revealed by Jesus Christ does not need to be appeased. God, while instructing Israel to

sacrifice, was actually redeeming this practice. We forget that, because archaic religion stands on our amnesia, so that we can believe in our innocence and believe in the guilt of the condemned, all in the name of a wrathful God. Hence, we need to remember our human condition. We need to be re-membered in our shared humanity, in our embodiment, and in the bodies that maintain our way of living. For that, the Eucharist is a school for manners. The Eucharist is a radical table fellowship that remembers us to the many friends (and enemies) that Jesus has.

The Eucharist is an exercise of “lower-archy” that dismantles dichotomies. The Eucharist trains our bodies to become martyrs. The Eucharist is an “un-sacrifice” that calls for an end to all religious sacrifices. The Eucharist is a ritual with a precarious script, an open script, that brings us out of our scriptless lives, out of the mundane scripts of violence and division, and into an enchanted ordinary meal.

The Eucharist is a peace offering, which gives the worshiper a vision of a redeemed world. The Eucharist invites us to face what we reject: suffering, death, humiliation, and self-sacrifice. The Eucharist is a true human sacrifice that redirects us from our idolatries. The Eucharist transforms a crowd of “hangry” individuals into the comm(unity) of the Body of Christ. But, how can we know if the Eucharist is serving its purposes or if it is a parody of the good, as in false atonements? We look for the traces of the food pattern.

In the Brazilian Evangelical Church, a meal during the service seems an embarrassment, since the center of the service is the pulpit and a rational message. But, the meal is the message, writes Sweet. So, bring back the table! The formula followed by most of the churches obfuscates the relation of this ritual to everyday life. The hygienic disposition of the elements distances the church from the brutal, honest, and human reality of the cross. There is little chance of projection or symbolical

transfer. It seems inhumane. It is not natural. We treat the Eucharist as a steak that we buy in the supermarket and don't want even a remote memory that belonged to a cow. While we reject the suffering and the sacrifice of Jesus in the Eucharist, we remain with our thirst for blood and our false atonements.

We have the opportunity to make this ritual meaningful, to amplify this posture to everyday life. We have the opportunity to learn from Jesus around his table. Apart from the spiritual benefits, the Eucharist has proven to be beneficial for our practical lives, our relationships, and our traumatized emotions. The Eucharist inspires nonviolence, inspires our commonality, and helps to heal our brains and our bodies from the common shock we all experience in our lives. Around a welcoming table, we change our perspective about "others" from possible threats to possible friends, from others to br(others).

The Brazilian Evangelical Church needs to convert itself from the false atonements of religion to the real atonement of faith. In the false atonements, we search to scapegoat the evil among us personalized by someone, some group, some ideology. We want blood. We expel incoherence. In the Lord's Table, we stop eating from the diabolical (from the greek "*dia*," division) fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and we eat from the symbolical (from the greek "*sum*," union) fruit of the Tree of Life. We embrace co-inherence.

The contemplative stance, non-dualistic as the mystic experience of monasticism, seems to be the best way to approach such a mystery as the Eucharist. Taizé is an example of how the Eucharist can be lived, more than performed, as a sign of atonement. The community that is born around this sacrifice is therapeutic, has the authority of suffering compassion, and inspires those around it to be as Jesus. I am convinced that the way we understand the table shapes the way we use our swords, not to hurt but to heal, not to oppress but to set free. The Brazilian Evangelical Church has a great opportunity to experience the Eucharist in a different, more humane, and more mystical way.

As we participate every week in the Eucharist, we pass again and again from death into new life. As we eat and drink Christ's body and blood, we're conformed to his sacrifice, so our entire life becomes "reasonable service," a liturgy of self-offering in which we, like Jesus, are priests of our own self-sacrifice. As we share this sacrificial meal, we're made over into martyrs, willing to shed our life's blood in faithful witness.²⁹

²⁹ Leithart, *Theopolitan Liturgy*, 078.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adogame, Afe and Gedeon Alencar. "Movimentos Pentecostais." Recorded August 25, 2017 in Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil. Video of Lecture, III Congresso Internacional de Teologia e Ciências das Religiões, Faculdade Unida, 1:39. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4B8G-CZt0A.
- Alencar, Gedeon. "Assembleias Brasileiras de Deus: Teorização, História e Tipologia." PhD diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, Brazil, 2012. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Alencar, Gedeon. *Protestantismo Tupiniquim. Hipóteses Sobre a (não) Contribuição Evangélica à Cultura Brasileira*. São Paulo: Arte Editorial, 2007.
- Alter, Robert. *The Hebrew Bible—A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.
- Antonello, Pierpaolo and Paul Gifford, eds. *Can We Survive Our Origins?: Readings in René Girard's Theory of Violence and the Sacred*. Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2015.
- Arjona, Rubén. "John Calvin on the Lord's Supper: Food, Rest, and Healing for Shivering Souls." *Pastoral Psychology* 66, no. 2 (2017): 177-90.
- Augustine. *The Trinity*, 2nd ed., trans. Edmund Hill. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991.
- Bailey, Sarah Pulliam. "A Trump-like Politician in Brazil Could Snag the Support of a Powerful Religious Group: Evangelicals." *Washington Post*, November 28, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/11/28/a-trump-like-politician-in-brazil-could-snap-the-support-of-a-powerful-religious-group-Evangelicals/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6dc15b361c39.
- Balthasar, Hans Urs Von. *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988.
- Baker, Margaret. *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel*. London: SPCK Publishing, 2014.
- Bell, Daniel M. *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering*. Radical Orthodoxy Series. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Bellinger, Charles K. *The Trinitarian Self: The Key to the Puzzle of Violence*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 88. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008.
- Bittencourt, Vilmar, producer. *O Santo Guerreiro*, Rádio Cultura, April 23, 2012, São Paulo, <http://culturabrasil.cmais.com.br/playlists/o-santo-guerreiro>.

- Blevins, Dean G. "The Trinity And The Means Of Grace: A Sacramental Interrelationship." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 231-255. https://wtsociety.com/files/wts_journal/2001-wtj-36-1.pdf
- Boadle, Anthony. "Brazil's Evangelicals Say Far-right Presidential Candidate is Answer to their Prayers." *Reuters*, September 27, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-election-Evangelicals/brazils-Evangelicals-say-far-right-presidential-candidate-is-answer-to-their-prayers-idUSKCN1M70D9>.
- Bock, Darrell. *Luke: IVP New Testament Commentary [IVPNTC]*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Boersma, Hans, Matthew Levering, and R. W. L Moberly. *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Boersma, Hans. *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Bosch, David. *Missão Transformadora*. São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 2002.
- Boyd, Gregory A. *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.
- Bradstock, Andrew. "The Reformation." In *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, edited by Peter Scott and William T. Cavanagh, 62-75. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Atlanta, GA: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. 2d ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.
- Caleiro, João Pedro. "Qual é o tamanho do esporte na economia?" *Exame*, June 26, 2014, São Paulo. <https://exame.abril.com.br/economia/qual-e-o-tamanho-da-importancia-do-esporte-na-economia/>.
- Calgaro, Fernanda and Mazui, Guilherme. "Bolsonaro diz que vai indicar ministro 'terrivelmente evangélico' para o STF" *GI*, last modified July 10, 2019, Brasília. <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/07/10/bolsonaro-diz-que-vai-indicar-ministro-terrivelmente-evangelico-para-o-stf.ghtml>.
- Calvin, John. *Comentary on Luke*. Public Domain. November, 20, 2020, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/luke/22.htm/>
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846. Public Domain. November, 20, 2020, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.vi.xviii.html>

- Cavanaugh, William T. "An End to Every War': The Politics of the Eucharist and the Work of Peace" *ABC Religion & Ethics*, January 19, 2016.
<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/an-end-to-every-war-the-politics-of-the-eucharist-and-the-work-o/10097406>.
- Cavanaugh, William T. "A World without Enemies: The Eucharist and the Work of Peace." *ABC Religion & Ethics*, September 12, 2019.
<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/a-world-without-enemies-the-eucharist-and-the-work-of-peace/10100300>.
- Cavanaugh, William T. "Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Social Imagination in Early Modern Europe." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 3 (2001): 585-606.
- Cavanaugh, William T. "The Body of Christ: The Eucharist and Politics." *Word & World* 22, no. 2 (2002): 170-177.
https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/22-2_Body_of_Christ/22-2_Cavanaugh.pdf
- Cavanaugh, William T. "The Church in the Streets: Eucharist and Politics." *Modern Theology* 30, no. 2 (2014): 384-402.
- Christian Congregation in North America. "Presentation". Last modified May 2, 2020. <https://www.ccnamerica.org/>.
- Chouraqui, André. *La Bible et Le Coran En Ligne*. November, 20, 2020.
<http://nachouraqui.tripod.com/id83.htm>
- Clapsis, Emmanuel. (ed.) *Violence and Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Conversation*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2007.
- Clark, Ron. *Jesus Unleashed: Luke's Gospel for Emerging Christians*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015.
- Collins, Kenneth J. *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Collins, Kenneth J. "Reconfiguration of Power: Basic Trajectory of John Wesley's Practical Theology." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33, no. 1 (1998): 164-184.
- Collins, Robin. "Girard and Atonement: An Incarnational Theory of Mimetic Participation." In *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*, edited by Willard Swartley, 132-153. Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2000.
- Craig, William Lane. *The Atonement*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Cunha, Christina Vital da. *Oração de Traficante: Uma Etnografia*. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2015.
- Cyprian, Saint. "De Bono Patientiae." In *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*, edited by Alan Kreider, 14. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

- DaMatta, Roberto. *Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis: Para uma Sociologia do Dilema Brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1972.
- Datafolha Instituto de Pesquisas. “Perfil e Opinião dos Evangélicos no Brasil.” Last modified December 28, 2016.
<http://datafolha.folha.uol.com.br/opiniaopublica/2016/12/1845231-44-dos-evangelicos-sao-ex-catolicos.shtml>.
- Davies, Brian, and Evans, G. R. *Anselm of Canterbury. The Major Works*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Dooyeweerd, Herman. *The Struggle for a Christian Politics: An Essay in Grounding the Calvinistic Worldview in Its Law-Idea*. Series B., Vol. 17, *The Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd*, edited by D.F.M. Strauss. Ancaster, Canada: Paideia Press, 2012.
- Downing, Crystal. *Changing Signs of Truth: A Christian Introduction to the Semiotics of Communication*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Dunnill, John. *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Dupuy, Jean-Pierre. “Panic and The Paradoxes of The Social Order.” Paper presented at the Colloquium for Violence and Religion, Innsbruck, June 2003.
https://www.academia.edu/6181866/DUPUY_Jean-Pierre_Panic_and_Paradoxes_of_Social_Order.
- Ellul, Jacques. *The Humiliation of the Word*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1985.
- Espacio, Valentina. “Brazil is Latin America’s Most Unequal Country in Terms of Income Distribution.” *Brazil Reports*, January 21, 2019.
<https://brazilreports.com/brazil-is-latin-americas-most-unequal-country-in-terms-of-income-distribution/2307/>.
- Felipe Brandão, “Programação Religiosa Ocupa 21% da TV Aberta, Aponta Estudo.” *RDI*, August 28, 2019. <https://rd1.com.br/programacao-religiosa-ocupa-21-da-tv-aberta-aponta-estudo/>.
- Ferreira, Franklin. *Contra a Idolatria do Estado: o Papel do Cristão na Política*. São Paulo: Vida Nova, 2016.
- Folha de S. Paulo. “Marcelo Crivella Manda Censurar HQ dos Vingadores na Bienal do Livros, no Rio.” *UOL*, September 5, 2019.
<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2019/09/marcelo-crivella-manda-censurar-gibis-dos-vingadores-na-bienal-do-livro-no-rio.shtml>.
- Freston, Paul. “‘Neo-Pentecostalism’ in Brazil: Problems of Definition and the Struggle for Hegemony.” *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 105 (1999): 153.
- Freston, Paul. “What is Prosperity Theology: A Sociological Review.” Video of lecture given at the Lausanne Global Consultation on Prosperity Theology,

Poverty, and the Gospel, São Paulo, Brazil, March 31, 2014.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSYEGxm8SU>.

- Freyre, Gilberto. *Casa-Grande & Senzala*. São Paulo: Global Editora, 1993.
- Giglioli, Daniele. *Critique De La Victime*, Trans. Marine Aubry-Morici. Collection Echanges Littéraires. Paris: Hermann, 2019.
- Girard, René. *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre*. Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2010.
- Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965.
- Girard, René, João Cezar De Castro Rocha, and Pierpaolo Antonello. *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture*. London: T & T Clark, 2007.
- Girard, René. *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.
- Girard, René and James G. Williams. *The Girard Reader*. New York: Crossroad Herder, 1996.
- Girard, René. *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*. Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014.
- Girard, René, Jean-Michel Oughourlian, and Guy Lefort. *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.
- Girard, René. "Generative Scapegoating." In *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard & Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987.
- Geller, Stephen A. "Blood Cult: Toward a Literary Theology of the Priestly Work of the Pentateuch." *Prooftexts* 12, no. 2 (1992): 97-124.
- González, Justo. *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015.
- Gortázar, Naiara Galarraga. "Um Ministro 'Terrivelmente Evangélico' a Caminho do Supremo Tribunal Federal." *El País*, July 10, 2019,
https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2019/07/10/politica/1562786946_406680.html.
- Green, Joel B. and Mark D. Baker. *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Green, Joel B. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament—The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997.

- Hahn, Carl. *História do Culto Protestante no Brasil*. Translated by Antonio Gouvêa Mendonça. São Paulo: ASTE, 1989.
- Hall, Douglas John. *What Christianity Is Not: An Exercise in "Negative" Theology*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013.
- Hart, David Bentley. "A Gift Exceeding Every Debt: An Eastern Orthodox Appreciation of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*." *Pro Ecclesia* (Northfield, Minn.) 7, no. 3 (1998): 333-49, 347.
- Heiser, Michael S. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015.
- Hollenweger, Walter. *The Pentecostals: the Charismatic Movement in the Churches*, Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.
- Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Huxley, Francis. "Affable Savage." In *Violence and the Sacred* by René Girard. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.
- IFCA Ministry. "About us." Accessed April 20, 2018. <http://ifcaministry.org/about-us>.
- International Theological Commission. "Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God." Vatican, 2000-2002. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html.
- IPDA. "História da IPDA." Last modified January 10, 2018. <http://www.ipda.com.br/historia-da-ipda-2/>.
- JM Notícia. "Igreja Encerra Conta no Santander após Exposição Polêmica." Last modified September 15, 2017. <https://www.jmnoticia.com.br/2017/09/15/igreja-encerra-conta-no-santander-apos-exposicao-polemica/>.
- Johnson, Dru. *Human Rites: The Power of Rituals, Habits, and Sacraments*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019.
- Jones, Paul Dafydd. The Fury of Love: Calvin on the Atonement. In *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, edited by Adam J. Johnson, 227-229. London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2017.
- Juall, Scott D. "Of Cannibals, Credo, and Custom: Jean de Léry's Calvinist View of Civilization in *Histoire d'un Voyage Faict en la Terre du Bresil* (1578)." *FLS* 33 (2006): 51-69.
- Just Jr., Arthur, *Luke*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

- Kierkegaard, Soren. "On the Dedication to That Single Individual." Trans. Charles K. Bellinger. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/kierkegaard/untruth/files/untruth.html>.
- Kirwan, Michael. *Girard and Theology*. London: T & T Clark, 2009.
- Kirwan, Michael. "René Noël Girard RIP", *Thinking Faith*, November 6, 2015, London, <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/ren%C3%A9-no%C3%ABl-girard-rip>.
- Kreider, Alan. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Lago, Davi. *Brasil Polifônico: os Evangélicos e as Estruturas de Poder*. São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 2018.
- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Amplified Edition, with a New Introduction, of the Three Books, Broadcast Talks, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality*. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2001.
- Leithart, Peter. *Blessed Are The Hungry: Meditations on the Lord's Supper*. Moscow: Canon Press, 2000.
- Leithart, Peter. *Theopolitan Liturgy*. West Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2019.
- Levis et al. "Persistent effects of pre-Columbian plant domestication on Amazonian forest composition." *Science* Edition 355, 925–931, 3 March 2017
- Lossky, Vladimir. *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimirs Seminary Press, 2001.
- Macedo, Edir and Carlos Oliveira, *Plano de Poder*. São Paulo: Thomas Nelson, 2000.
- Maddox, Randy L. and Jason E. Vickers. *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Maddox, Randy L. and Jason E. Vickers. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994.
- Mafra, Clara. "Jesus Cristo Senhor e Salvador da Cidade – Imaginário Crente e Utopia Política." *Revista de Ciências Sociais* 49, no. 3 (2006): 583.
- Mafra, Clara. "Distância Territorial, Desgaste Cultural e Conversão Pentecostal," in *Religiões e Cidades: Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo*, ed. Ronaldo de Almeida and Clara Mafra (São Paulo: Terceiro Nome, 2009), 52.
- Mariano, Ricardo. *Neopentecostais: Sociologia do Novo Pentecostalismo no Brasil*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2005.
- Marques, Adílio Jorge and Marcelo Alonso Moraes. "O Sincretismo entre São Jorge e Ogum na Umbanda: Ressignificações de Tradições Europeias e Africanas." *Revista Brasileira de História das Religiões* 3, no. 9 (2011):1-13. <http://www.dhi.uem.br/gtreligiao/pub.html>.

- Martins, Felipe. “Peça com Atriz Transvesti no Papel de Cristo é Proibida pelo Prefeito Marcelo Crivella.” *Revista Forum*. Last modified June 5, 2018. <https://revistaforum.com.br/lgbt/peca-com-atriz-travesti-no-papel-de-cristo-e-proibida-pelo-prefeito-marcelo-crivella/>.
- Matos, Alderi de Souza. “Breve História do Protestantismo no Brasil.” *Vox Faifae: Revista de Teologia da Faculdade FAIFA* 3 (2011). www.faifa.edu.br/revista/index.php/voxfai/fae/article/download/27/46.
- McCormick, Patrick T. *A Banqueter's Guide to the All-night Soup Kitchen of the Kingdom of God*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004.
- McDonnell, Kilian. *John Calvin, the Church and the Eucharist*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967.
- McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*. Blackwell Reference Online. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Meek, Esther Lightcap. *Loving to Know: Covenant Epistemology*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011.
- Mendonça, Antonio G. *O Celeste Porvir: A Inserção do Protestantismo no Brasil*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2008.
- Merriam Webster. “The Odd History of ‘Odd’: The Word Comes to Us from Geography.” Word History. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/the-odd-history-of-odd>.
- Michael Kirwan. “René Noël Girard RIP.” Thinking Faith. Last Modified November 6, 2015. <https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/ren%C3%A9-no%C3%ABl-girard-rip>.
- Montgomery, Brint, Thomas Jay Oord, and Karen Winslow. *Relational Theology : A Contemporary Introduction*. Eugene, OR: Point Loma Press, 2012.
- Nascimento, Analzira. *Evangelização ou Colonização? O Risco de Fazer Missão sem se Importar com o Outro*. Viçosa: Editora Ultimato, 2015.
- Neuchterlein, Paul. “The Anthropology of René Girard and Traditional Doctrines of Atonement.” *Atonement and Mimetic Theory* (blog). *Girardian Lectionary Study*, January 6, 2020, <http://girardianlectionary.net/learn/atonement-and-mimetic-theory/>.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M. *Reaching out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1986.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- Oliveira, Marco Davi de. *A Religião Mais Negra do Brasil*. Viçosa: Ultimato, 2015.

- Oughourlian, Jean-Michel. *The Mimetic Brain. Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*. Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2016.
- Owen, Wilfred. The Parable of the Old Man and the Young. Public Domain. November 18, 2020 at <https://poets.org/poem/parable-old-man-and-young>
- Packer, J. I. and Mark E. Dever. *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007.
- Pahl, Jon. *Empire of Sacrifice: The Religious Origins of American Violence*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.
- Park, Chris C. *Tropical Rainforests*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Parry, Ken. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.
- Paul VI, Pope. "Pastoral Constitution on the church in the modern world Gaudium Et Spes." Second Vatican Council, December 7, 1965. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.
- Paul, Robert S. *The Atonement and the Sacraments; the Relation of the Atonement to the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1960.
- Pereira, J. B. B. *Religiosidade no Brasil*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2013.
- Pierre Verger, *Lendas Africanas dos Orixás*. Salvador, Brazil: Fundação Pierre Verger, 1997.
- Pink, Arthur W. *The Sovereignty of God*. 3rd ed. Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, 1999.
- Polimédio, Chayenne. "How Evangelical Conservatives Are Gaining Power in Brazil." *Foreign Affairs*, Last Modified March 7, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/brazil/2019-03-07/how-evangelical-conservatives-are-gaining-power-brazil>.
- Pontes, Fábio. "Conversão na Fé ou na Marra." *Piauí*, Last Modified December 4, 2019. <https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/conversao-na-fe-ou-na-marra/>.
- Ramos, Arioaldo and Nilza Valéria Zacarias. "Neopentecostais e o Projeto de Poder." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Last Modified March 20, 2017. <http://diplomatique.org.br/neopentecostais-e-o-projeto-de-poder/>.
- Ramos, Arioaldo. *Igreja: e eu Com Isso?* São Paulo: Editora Reflexão, 2013.
- Read, John. *Catherine Booth: Laying the Foundations of a Radical Movement*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013.
- Rio, João do. *As Religiões no Rio*. Rio de Janeiro: H. Garnier, 1904.

- Rohr, Richard. *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*. New York: Crossroad, 2009.
- Rosa, António Machuco. "Spencer-Brown, Peirce, Girard, and the Origin of Logic." *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 22 (2015): 65-88.
- Rowe, C. Kavin. *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke*. Washington, DC: Baker Academic, 2009.
- Ruiten, Jacques T.A.G.M. van and George van Kooten, eds. *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7) - The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- Ryken, Leland, Wilhoit, James C, and Longman III, Tremper. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Sanders, John. *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.
- Santos, Jason Brian. *A Community Called Taizé: A Story of Prayer, Worship and Reconciliation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- Santos, Ludmila H.R. "Distância Territorial, Desgaste Cultural e Conversão Pentecostal." *Revista de Antropologie Social dos Alunos do PPGAS-UFSCar* 2, no. 1 (2010): 139-144.
- Sayers, Dorothy L. *The Mind of the Maker*. London: Mowbray, 1994.
- Schwarcz, Lilia Moritz and Heloísa Starling. *Brasil: Uma Biografia*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015.
- Schweiker, William. *Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology, and Ethics*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1990.
- Shelton, R. Larry. *Cross & Covenant: Interpreting the Atonement for 21st Century Mission*. Tyrone, GA: Paternoster, 2006.
- Shmeman, Aleksandr. *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988.
- Soares, Rafael. "'Narcopentecostais': Casos de Intolerância Religiosa Crescem com Expansão de Facção no Rio." *Época*, Last modified October 11, 2019. <https://epoca.globo.com/rio/narcopentecostais-casos-de-intolerancia-religiosa-crescem-com-expansao-de-facciao-no-rio-24009662>.
- Soberanes, Rodrigo. "Pare de Sofrer: os Segredos da Igreja Universal no Chile," *Carta Maior*, last modified January, 19, 2016, <https://www.cartamaior.com.br/?/Editoria/Internacional/Pare-de-sofrer-os-segredos-da-Igreja-Universal-no-Chile/6/35349>.
- Sonderregger, Katherine. *Systematic Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015.

- Sperb, Paula. "Veja Imagens da Exposição Cancelada Pelo Santander, No RS," *Veja*, Last Modified September 11, 2017. <https://veja.abril.com.br/blog/rio-grande-do-sul/veja-imagens-da-exposicao-cancelada-pelo-santander-no-rs/>.
- Squires, John T. *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Stein, Robert. *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. The New American Commentary Series. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1992.
- Streett, R. Alan. *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord's Supper under Roman Domination during the First Century*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013.
- Sweet, Leonard. *From Tablet to Table: Where Community Is Found and Identity Is Formed*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015.
- Sweet, Leonard. *Giving Blood: A Fresh Paradigm for Preaching*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014.
- Sweet, Leonard. *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010.
- Sweet, Leonard. *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000.
- Sweet, Leonard. *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic*. Dayton, OH: Whaleprints, 1991.
- The First Temptation of Christ*. Directed by Rodrigo Van Der Put. Netflix, 2019. <https://www.movies-net.com/director/rodrigo-van-der-put>.
- Van Der Kolk, Bessel A. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York, New York: Viking, 2014.
- Veliyannoor, Paulson V. "Morphing Crowd into Community: Eucharist as Ritual and Anti-ritual." Paper Presented at COV&R Annual Conference, January 2010. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326294019_MORPHING_CROWD_INTO_COMMUNITY_Morphing_Crowd_into_Community_Eucharist_as_Ritual_and_Anti-ritual.
- Verger, Pierre. *Lendas Africanas dos Orixás*, 4rd ed. (Salvador, BA: Fundação Pierre Verger, 1997), 72.
- Volf, Miroslav. *A Public Faith : How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011.
- Volf, Miroslav. "Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian Way of Being-in-the World." *Moore Theological College Library*. Accessed December 2020. <https://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au>.

- Walls, Jerry L. *Qual o Caminho das Assembleias de Deus? Amor Para Todos ou Somente Alguns? O Cerne do que Está Errado com o Calvinismo*. São Paulo: Editora Reflexão, 2016.
- Waltke, Bruce K. *The Dance between God and Humanity: Reading the Bible Today as the People of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013.
- Warner, Megan, Grosch-Miller, Carla, Southgate, Christopher, and Ison, Hilary. *Tragedies and Christian Congregations*. 1st ed. Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology. Routledge, 2020.
- Weil, Simone. *Waiting for God*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.
- Wesley, John and Charles. Hymns on the Lord's Supper. Bristol: Farley, 1745.
https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cswt/27_Hymns_on_the_Lord%27s_Supper_%281745%29_mod.pdf.
- Williams, George Huntston. *The Sacramental Presuppositions of Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo"*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1957.
- Williams, James G. "Dialogue on Sacrifice and Orthodoxy: Reflections on the Schwager-Girard Correspondence." *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, 21 (2014): 47-54.
- Zaccaro, Renato. "Mackenzie Censura Palestras Sobre Diversidade e Proíbe Editoras 'Subversivas.'" *Portal Disparada*, 2019. <https://portaldisparada.com.br/cultura-e-ideologia/mackenzie-censura-editoras/>.
- Zizioulas, John D., and Tallon, Luke Ben. *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*. London: T & T Clark, 2011.