GIRARD'S MIMETIC THEORY

AND THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN

A Preliminary Theological Perspective of Human Mimesis

By

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A Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS (Theol)

In the Sub-Faculty of Theology of the

Australian Catholic University

Canberra

January 2002

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Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any University; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain material previously published or written by any other person where due reference is not made in the text.

Peter Stork

Abstract

This study seeks to establish a link between Girard's mimetic anthropology and the Biblical notion that man is created in the image and likeness of God. While Girard developed deliberately an anthropology without reference to theology, this study – in an attempt to show that human mimesis makes also sense theologically - has taken creation theology as its starting point. By reviewing three Girardian authors, Alison, Bailie and Schwager, the thesis that mimesis belongs to man as a creature before God and is therefore inseparable from his response to God and from man's representational role in creation was further developed. To test it, the Genesis Prologue, contemporary trinitarian discourse and the life of Jesus were probed for the presence of mimetic patterns. The findings showed that the phenomenon of human mimesis seems to be profoundly linked to the purposes of God in creation and redemption. The Biblical dictum of man's creation in God's image means that humanity was conceived in and created as the earthly counterpart of trinitarian love. Therefore, the conclusion that the origin of human mimesis must ultimately be traced to the Trinity itself in whose image human existence has its being is seen as reasonable. At the same time, human mimesis in its present condition, represents at best a structure of hope for man's inner core of imitative desire fixated in acquisitive mode may be converted to one that imitates Christ's sacrificial love so that in the final analysis, human mimesis exists for doxological reasons.

Acknowledgements

To all who have helped to make this study possible I express my gratitude. My special thanks go to Professor Anthony Kelly, CSSR, STL DTheol (Anselmianum) for providing the stimulus. Next I want to thank my academic supervisors Associate Professor Raymond Canning LicPh STB (Greg) PhD STD (Leuven) and Lecturer Patrick McArdle BTheol STL GradDipEd MEd for their encouragement and caring critique by which they have kept me and this study on course. My thanks also go to the Australian Carmelites for the 2001 Titus Brandsma Scholarship awarded for the research proposal. This would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support of my referees, Tony Kelly and Raymond Canning. I am doubly grateful to them. And my wife, Elsbeth, how much I owe her! Only God knows how much she has given. To her goes my special gratitude for supporting this work through prayer and patient encouragement. Also I wish to acknowledge the generous help received from the library staff of the ACU Library at Signadou and from St. Mark's Theological Center, Canberra. By God's grace I have received from everyone more than words can express.

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PREFACE

It is the work of anthropology--especially Christian anthropology-- to address questions regarding the ontological and cultural boundary between what is human and what is inhuman. As history so emphatically reminds us, the re-working of our understanding of that boundary is an ongoing necessity.[1]

From time to time in the course of life's journey, one encounters providential moments, where one's intellectual and spiritual life takes an unexpected, and even unalterable turn. Such a moment arose for me two years ago during a Theology of Hope Seminar under Professor Tony Kelly which introduced me to René Girard's mimetic theory. Curiosity grew into fascination and my initial intuitive perception (tempered at first by a good dose of evangelical *skepsis*) blossomed into the comprehension that I was dealing with a significant hermeneutical key. Further reading confirmed that others not just shared this perception, but had already traveled a long distance on the road of exploring its significance for contemporary theology and biblical interpretation.[2]

This research proposal was conceived out of the growing desire to contribute somehow to the creative and expository challenge involved in the contemporary re-working of our understanding of what it means to be human. Since God is the Creator of all reality, we can in our

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[1] Jacques Ellul wrote: "Man has ceased for us to have objective reality. We are more and more plunged into this abstraction ... we can no longer communicate with the man whom we meet ... for man has disappeared. He remains in the form of the consumer, the workman, the citizen, the reader, the producer ... man as man has disappeared, yet it is to him alone that one can really speak" [J. Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989, 2nd ed.), p. 94-95].

theological reflections "lay claim to the human phenomena described in the anthropological disciplines", wrote Pannenberg, and accept their descriptions as a "provisional version" on the assumption that the anthropological phenomena contain yet undeveloped, but theologically relevant substance. Therefore, it is not just possible, but necessary that such critical appropriation is undertaken for the advancement of the theological enterprise.[3] Hence my conviction that Girard's theory presents a fertile sweep of intellectual soil where some serious digging and cultivating is bound to yield a rich crop.

"We all desire to be desired by the One we desire", wrote Sebastian Moore.[4] This catchy play on words expresses the core of Girard's anthropology, as I understand it. That He desires us indeed is the mystery of God's love in Christ, for He first loved us and in the embrace of His love I offer this thesis in return.

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That I have preserved the traditional names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (together with the appropriate pronouns "he" and "his") should not be seen as evidence that I follow or advocate a patriarchal let alone oppressive version of Christianity. A proper biblical understanding of these names would rather lead to the opposite conclusion. When

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[2] Refer to the following authors in the Bibliography: Alison, J., Bailie, G., Gans, E., Grote, J., Hamerton-Kelly, R., Kerr, F., Marr, A., McKenna, A. J., Palaver, W., Sandler, W., Schwager, R., Williams, J.

[3] W. Pannenberg, *What is man? Contemporary Anthropology in Christian Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 19-20

[4] S. Moore, *The Fire And The Rose Are One* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980), p. xii

speaking of human beings, I have in most cases used the inclusive word "man" (also with the pronoun "he" and "his") like the German *Mensch* without implying a male gender bias. Important as they are in conjunction with a re-reading of the "image of God", this study does not deal with feminist issues.

PART 1   HYPOTHESIS STATED

CHAPTER 1   <u>LITERATURE REVIEW, HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY</u>

1.1   Background

During an initial review of the literature, it became clear that not only Girard, but also his followers seem to have left the question of man's origin *as a creature made in the image and likeness of God* to one side. According to Christian tradition, Gen 1:26-28 makes an important statement of theological anthropology. Its importance, however, does not register in Girardian thought. Leaving such a gap seemed to omit from consideration man's primeval significance as a creature and by implication the question of God as Creator of humanity. On further reflection, this omission presented itself as a window upon which to center a study proposal, the details of which are outlined below. At this point a somewhat general statement shall suffice to describe the scope of this thesis: I propose to examine the relation between Girard's theory and the "image of God".

<u>1.11   Girard's Theory</u>

Theologically speaking, for human beings to enter a responsible relationship with God, they must be accorded a certain degree of freedom. Setting aside the question how such freedom may be realized given the universal presence of sin, many causes of human suffering are

not necessarily attributable to the ill-will or moral failure of individuals but to collective processes operative in society beyond the control of individual participants. What Girard's theory illuminates are the collective interdependencies in which human beings become so entangled that they forfeit their power to act pacifically and beneficially.[5]

Girard first noticed that interactions of human beings as reflected in the great literary texts from antiquity to the present were based on the interplay of imitation and desire. He formulated his insight as what has become known as 'mimetic theory' or his understanding of the structure of human desire. It postulates that every person is more determined by imitation or *mimesis* of other people's desires than by the existence of natural drives or the autonomous operation of a free will. He noticed that it was not the intrinsic value of an object which determined human desire, but its value in the eyes of another. Therefore, he reasoned, all human desire is mediated desire, which arises through the presence of a mediator, who models the desirability of the object before us. In other words, Girard sees the human being - contrary to rationalistic anthropology - as an impassioned being, yet no longer equipped with an instinctive orientation towards 'naturally attractive' objects once its basic needs are met. Consequently, the presence of "indeterminate desire" remains as *nature's constant* in man and constitutes that which is specifically human.[6]

According to mimetic theory, the structure of human desire is a triangular relationship between the desiring individual, the object of

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[5] W. Sandler, "Befreiung der Begierde: Theologie zwischen Rene Girard und Karl Rahner," in *Vom Fluch und Segen der Suendenboecke*, eds. by J. Niewiadomski, W. Palaver, 1995), 49-68

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desire and the model. In a world of limited resources, this structure leads inevitably to rivalry. When people become polarized through their mutually imitative interaction, there arises the fateful constellation that their desire reaches its peak, which is the point when they experience the opposition of their rival. Thus, the goal of their desire coincides with the desire for the overcoming and elimination of the rival, although their passion blinds participants to this relational reality. Paradoxically, the rival, whom they seek to eliminate, is at the same time the mediator of the desirability of the object. Fixation upon the opponent has now become more attractive than the object and the 'bone of contention' is simply forgotten.

In closely-knit societies, an outbreak of mimetic rivalry leads to what Girard calls a mimetic crisis, the violence of which may engulf the entire group and threaten its existence. At its peak, the rivalry disintegrates into a violent rage where everyone fights against everybody else. What assures societal survival is the scapegoat mechanism whereby the violent energy is redirected by fixing mimetic attention on one (mostly arbitrarily chosen) victim, which is collectively killed. This act of collective murder now unifies the warring parties as they jointly expel the victim and metaphorically lay on him the evil of their own malice and mendacity. The expulsion of the victim thus serves as the starting point of a new peace and the emergence of "the sacred" as the ensuing hush after the rage is attributed to a sacred source of wrath and blessing, a phenomenon first described by Rudolf Otto.[7]

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[6] M. Herzog, "Religionstheorie und Theologie Rene Girards," *Kerygma und Dogma* 38, no. 2 (1992): 105-137

[7] cf. R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958)

Through textual studies, Girard drives his hypothesis relentlessly through the phenomena of our cultural and religious history and demonstrates how around this violent core we humans have woven myths and rituals as reenactments of the foundational murder disguised as sacrificial offering to deity. Convinced of the universality of his theory, Girard ventures beyond ethnological concerns and from the same mimetic model develops hypotheses for the origin of human civilization and language.

His anthropology sees the human being from the beginning as a social being, in whose sociality, however, the violent structures of acquisitive mimesis are so deeply entrenched that mankind is unable to extract itself from their powers. Motivated by a deep skepticism of the notion that people are capable of sovereignly directing their destiny, Girard regards the existence of an autonomous will as a deceptive illusion, adherence to which causes blindness to their own condition and drives people only further into captivity to mimetic rivalry.[8]

Lastly, Girard has undertaken to interpret Biblical texts and found ample evidence for the same mimetic structures, where mob violence is resolved through the presence of a surrogate victim, of which the passion and crucifixion of Jesus is the prime example. But he reads the Gospels in non-sacrificial terms. That is to say, the Father did not require the death of his Son to shift his disposition from wrath to reconciliation. Rather, the death of Jesus is to be seen as self-sacrifice whereby the self-giving love of God totally embraces human sin and violence and in that embrace exhausts its power. Anthropologically, the cross of Jesus is a

case of victimage by which the violent structures at the root of human culture are exposed while his expulsion shows how deeply this unveiling is resented.

Predictably, Girard has not been without his critics. In the main, the thrust of this criticism has been aimed at his theology and at his scientific method. Dunnill has argued that Girard's attempt to find "one grand explanation to cover all cases and centering the phenomena around one type" diminishes the biblical text to the one explanation to which it applies. Despite its "imaginative appeal", Girard's proposal is "shaky in its empirical base".[9] Herzog admits that Girard's analysis of the relationship between the sacred and human violence is profitable as far as it goes, but alleges that Girard has by scientific standards failed to develop a universal theory of human history and culture. At the same time, he has reduced Biblical revelation to an explanation of violence and "replaced Christology and the teaching of God with anthropology and ethics".[10] Conservative Christian writers like Hoekema might rule out Girard's ideas on fundamental grounds saying that "all views of man that do not make the doctrine of creation their starting point ... are to be rejected as false".[11] While I agree with Hoekema that anthropologies which deny the divine/human relationship are un-Christian and perhaps even anti-Christian, one would take Biblical inerrancy too far if its assertions were to prescribe limits to scientific inquiry or make them the sole criteria for the falsification of scientific theories. Hefling, on the

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[8] cf. R. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World: Research Undertaken in Collaboration with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort* (Stanford, Cal: Stanford University Press, 1987).

[9] J. Dunnill, "Methodological Rivalries: Theology and Social Science in Girardian Interpretations of the New Testament," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 62 (1996): 105-119

[10] M. Herzog, ibid., p. 136, 137

other hand, is thoroughly convinced "that Girard has cut for theologians an hermeneutic key, which opens windows on the gospels, that have been largely shuttered".[12]

1.12   The Primeval Events and Their Text

Since we will be referring in this study to the Genesis story of creation, it is important that we relate our position at the outset. The primeval events as presented in Genesis have traditionally been interpreted as historical reports of the beginning of the world. Under the influence of a scientific worldview, this approach has been challenged. But the apparent conflict between the Bible and the sciences is based on a misunderstanding as Westermann has shown. According to Westermann, the Old Testament knows not one, but several creation accounts reflecting a variety of traditions. Therefore it leaves the question of how God created the world open so that "every age is free to express it in a way intelligible to itself".[13] In addition, it is not just the Bible that has something to contribute to the reflection on creator/creation but the whole world including the knowledge discovered by modern science and the historical-critical examinations of the Biblical texts. As far as the primeval events themselves are concerned,

[11] A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 76

[12] C. Hefling, "A View from the Stern: James Alison's Theology (So Far)," *Anglican Theological Review* 81, no. 4 (1989): 689-710, p. 699

[13] C. Westermann, *Creation* (London: SPCK, 1971), p. 5; Westermann points out that the Bible does not present us with a doctrine of creation but tells stories about it. The creation is made present by rehearsing the narrative accounts and in this way preserved early man's understanding of reality for future generations. This recall of ancient stories that belong to a mythical age did not address the philosopher's or the scientist's question how the world began, but tried to answer more existential concerns [Westermann, ibid., 13].

particularly the creation of man in the image and likeness of God,[14] I want to simply register three claims for the sake of emphasis. First, if we conclude (given the nature of the text) that it is the intention of the creation accounts to say something about God's activity in creation, we must also concede that they have something to say about what it means to be human. Second, what stands out is the personal nature of these beginnings. At the cradle of the universe and of humanity stood the "deed" of a personal being whose creative activity brought about the possibility for a personal relationship between the creature and the creator.[15] Third, while the Genesis accounts are more concerned with ends and relationships than with the actual process of creation, there is a vast difference between a personal creation and impersonal evolution. Recognition of the difference at the human level is far from automatic and without the Biblical witness highly improbable. This study will not just seek to ensure that the emphasis on a personal origin is not lost, but unequivocally presupposes it.

1.2   The Research Problem and Hypothesis

In the most general sense, the research problem exists because Girard is more concerned with cultural and religious anthropology than with the concept of God. This is by no means to say that he proposes an atheistic anthropology. Rather, he seeks to enlarge anthropology without making particular reference to a theological or transcendental premise. At the same time, we must give full recognition to Girard's self-confessed

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[14] Gen 1:26-28

intentions: "...mine is the search for the anthropology of the Cross, which turns out to rehabilitate orthodox theology".[16]

Since it is Girard's aim and that of his followers to establish a non-transcendental anthropology, the lack of reference to so obvious an anthropological datum as the "image of God" in the Biblical text is understandable. From our point of view this presents an opportunity to investigate what theological basis may exist for Girard's notion of human mimesis. Assuming such a relationship can be established, mimesis could be seen as a constitutive aspect of man's endowment as a creature before God and inseparable from man's response to him. This raises the further question how mimetic desiring and faith are related in Christian experience. Closely connected is the Girardian idea that the "collective victim" becomes the "sacred center" of the group, and also how is man's capacity for recognizing transcendent significance (even in a dead body) is related to the assertion that man is created in God's image. Moreover, how shall we relate human mimesis to the "image" as traditionally understood, namely as man's mandate to act as God's steward on earth pointing to his rule and witnessing to his presence?

This investigation will attempt to address these issues by seeking to prove the following hypothesis:

> ***The phenomenon of human mimesis is a constitutive aspect of man's creaturehood. It rests on the theological foundation that man is created in God's image and likeness. Mimesis is therefore inseparable from man's response to God and from man's representational role in creation.***

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[15] In Biblical terms this takes on the form of praise [Westermann, *ibid.*, 25].
[16] J. G. Williams (ed.), *The Girard Reader* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), p. 288

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1.3   The Significance of the Study

The central challenge of our age, which subordinates all that is human to all that is technical, is the question "what is man?" From where shall humans draw confidence and hope for the future, if all we can do is maintain a pretence to peace based on an international balance of terror? Will scientific positivism, techno-culture and post-modern philosophy bring about the desperately needed transformation of the human heart? In the light of history, this proposition must be doubted. Yet, especially in times of crisis, we perceive the operation of another dynamic. Subversive though it is as far as our human solutions are concerned, it brings new departures and offers steady hope. It is the dynamic of God's revelation in Christ through the gospel. Re-framing its expression, and bringing Christian understanding to a culture far removed from the Biblical idiom, is the ongoing task of theology and of the Church. It is in this context that the significance of this study is presented. It is based on the conviction that only Christian hope is real hope. At the same time a Girardian angle on gospel truth has much to say to our culture provided we make the intellectual effort to appropriate its conceptual substance without compromising Christian fundamentals.

By investigating how human mimesis may be supported on theological grounds, we hope to advance in a small way the application of Girard's theory in terms of man's relationship to his Creator. Therefore, the significance of this study is likely to arise from the creative stimulus of the unprecedented questions and from the prospect of

sharing with others the understanding of intriguing phenomena the author of which is God.

1.4 Methodology

The study will begin with observation, analysis and rational comparisons. At the same time, in dialogue with Girard and his followers I hope the inquiry will bear fruit in the form of creative insights and in the discovery of hitherto hidden or unknown connections. I propose to take the task forward in three steps.

Having presented a synopsis of Girard's mimetic theory and the research problem in form of the hypothesis in Part I, I shall in Part II elaborate on it by examining the work of three well-known theologians and interpreters of Girard's theory – Gill Bailie, Raymund Schwager and James Alison.[17] In the engagement with Bailie, I will focus on how the self-concept of human culture is mimetically constituted and how from earliest beginnings human desire has been hooked into the false transcendence of sacral violence from which man cannot escape except through the gospel. With the help of Schwager's dramatic theology we shall view in slow motion the inside of the redemptive process, that is the dynamics of the human transformation from violent to pacific mimesis through God's self-giving love. Lastly, Alison's exposition of original sin offers another angle, namely from the vantage point of the resurrection,

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[17] I have chosen G. Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad, 1995); R. Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation: Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Redemption* (New York: Crossroads, 1999); J. Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroad, 1998). While Bailie has so far only published *Violence Unveiled*, Alison and Schwager have written more widely on Girard's theory. For instance, Schwager, Professor of Systematic Theology at the

on how God's grace overcomes evil through a divinely given 'intelligence' which brings about a radical rectification of human desire. This expansion of the hypothesis is designed to deepen our understanding of mimesis as an element of what it means to be human as well as its dynamic role in the economy of God in redemption.

It is the purpose of Part III to test the hypothesis by seeking evidence for its validity independent of the Girardian School. To this end, we shall look for mimetic patterns in three places. Firstly, in the Creation story with special attention to Gen 1:26-28. The rationale is simple. If human mimesis is a creation gift to the human race, then we should be able to discover traces in the primeval story of man's origin. Secondly, in modern trinitarian discourse. Since man was created in the "image of God", it seems reasonable to ask whether a mimetic relationality may be discernable in theological descriptions as conceived by the doctrine of the Trinity. Taking our cue from Rahner's Rule,[18] the study will seek to investigate the development of the relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinity from Barth to Pannenberg. Thirdly, we shall examine incidents in the life of Jesus that may testify to the presence of mimetic desire.

In Part IV, we shall highlight some issues this study has raised but could not deal with within its limits and outline some suggestions for further studies which the fascinating concept of mimesis has evoked.

Karl Rahner University in Innsbruck, has focused his entire theological project in this direction. I have selected the above titles as being representative of the authors' theological orientation.

[18] T. Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in the Divine Life* (Louisville, Ky: John Knox Press, 1993), p. 22; Peters borrowed the term from Roger E. Olsen and employs it as a shorthand for Rahner's assertion that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa.

While a large part of this study draws on the work of Bailie, Schwager and Alison, it is not intended as a critical review. Where such comments are offered, they appear with one or two exceptions in footnotes rather than in the body of the text.

1.5   *Definition of Girardian Terms*[19]

Difference:
: Distinction arising from victimage, the "they" and "us" syndrome, which could have been originally a mere gesture or sign. All other distinctions (language, roles, cultural institutions and rules) have their origin in this first victimary distinction.

Double Bind:
: A term borrowed from G. Bateson's theory of schizophrenia. It relates to the experience of conflict or paradox when mimesis is blocked by prohibition (imitate me in this but not in that). The same experience arises when the desire of two subjects converges upon the same object and the mimetic process turns the mediator/model into a rival. This is also referred to as Mimetic Double [see Mimesis and Model].

Culture:
: All structures and arrangements as well as the common ideas and rules, which allow people to live together without being consumed by chaos, violence and random killing. It is the result of the functioning of the non-conscious mechanism of scapegoating that actually maintains the system.

Mimesis:
: Synonymous with mimetic desire, i.e. the non-conscious imitation of others, which in mimetic theory always carries the connotation of 'acquisitive' or 'appropriative'. It is not inherently destructive, for it is essentially what Girard calls a "dynamic enabling" that allows human beings to open themselves up to the world and engage in loving relationships.

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[19] The following definitions are a modified version of those found in Williams, *Girard Reader*, 289-294.

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Mimetic desire is mediated desire. The desirability of an object is not vested in the object but in the model that desires it. It is the function of culture to regulate the potential conflict between rivals who desire the same object. Since human beings are constituted as 'interdividuals', they live from the reality of the model or mediator. This involves them in the mimetic paradox where they become so fascinated with the model that they desire the being of the model, which is the experience of the mimetic double. It occurs when the other becomes either an obstacle that needs to be eliminated or so internalized that the distinction between the self and the other is no longer experienced. The possibilities range from murder and schizophrenia to conversion through love and forgiveness. In the latter case, Girard speaks of 'good mimesis'.

Model/Mediator: Whatever or whoever we are in a mimetic relationship with. It may be an individual, a group, cultural assumptions or settings with which we resonate. The model mediates reality for us and we are constituted by the model such that the self is a set of past and present mimetic relations. If the model is a person (authority figure, parent, important peers) the model and the one imitating are also potentially rivals. At the same time, every rival may be also a model who begins to entice our desire for imitation.

Religion: The cultic expression of mimetic desire, which in archaic societies regulates its rivalistic form through ritual prohibition and sacral violence associated with sacrifice. A mechanism for preserving order by protecting society from destructive mimetic crises.

Sacrifice: Originally the cultic immolation of humans or animals (as substitutes for humans) during religious victimization. In the negative sense sacrifice means scapegoating, in the positive sense understood as costly and loving self-giving as in the case of Christ.

Scapegoating: The mechanism by which societies obtain unanimity and/or surrogate peace or release from mimetic violence through the killing of an arbitrarily chosen victim. It involves always the non-conscious convergence upon the victim as an object of collective 'wrath', retaliation or vengeance.

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PART II.   HYPOTHESIS ELABORATED

This study is concerned with the relation of Girard's claim that human beings are mimetically constituted and the Biblical assertion that man was created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-28). As a question it may be put like this. How can one explain the anthropological phenomenon of mimesis theologically? If mimetic desire belongs to man's fundamental constitution, one could argue that it ought to be possible to find evidence for it in the theology of the "image of God" and its attendant symbolism and interpretations. By examining the work of three well-known theologians and interpreters of Girard's theory – Gill Bailie, Raymund Schwager and James Alison – we intend first to elaborate on this hypothesis.[20]

Our engagement with these authors will lead us into a fascinating range of emphases and styles. Bailie's *Violence Unveiled,* for instance, presents a cultural critique. He argues that our refusal to acknowledge our own propensity for mimetic violence and the victimage it produces drives humanity toward the apocalyptic state where violence becomes uncontrollable. Therefore, humanity is at the crossroad and its only way out is the gospel, the road of self-giving love. We shall explore what Bailie's examination of a culture that conceals the true image of God under a cloak of mimetic rivalry has to say to our hypothesis.

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[20] See note 17 for references to the individual works considered.

Schwager, too, looks at the part violence plays in culture, but only in connection with the Passion of Jesus. His focus is man's redemption and the burden of his scholarly work *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation* is the Father's love behind the cross and God's intent to reach man's heart through the dynamism of the God-drama he staged in Christ. We shall enlarge our understanding of the role of mimesis in this process and of man's response to God.

The main focus of Alison's highly acclaimed book *The Joy of Being Wrong* is original sin from the vantage-point of the resurrection, and how forgiveness becomes the way of transformation. His treatment shows us "what we are really up against when we 'work out our salvation'".[21] While he seems to integrate for us at another level what Schwager has worked out as a systematician, Alison pursues his own theological synthesis based on the absolute deathlessness of God and offers interesting clues for our hypothesis.

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[21] Sebastian Moore's in his foreword to Alison's *Joy of Being Wrong*, p. ix

CHAPTER 2   HUMAN MIMESIS IN GIL BAILIE'S CULTURAL CRITIQUE

2.1   Introduction

Violence, writes Bailie, is both fascinating and highly contagious, but we cannot understand what gives it this mysterious power, unless we understand religiously and anthropologically "the mimetic mechanism" that produces it.[22] As an introduction to Bailie's thought, let us briefly review this phenomenon.

The self-concept of a culture is derived from the stories a society tells about itself and its origins, especially the symbols and religious images embedded in them.[23] These myths perform a number of functions, as Barbour has pointed out. They structure the worldview, relate the individual to the past, offer a sense of identity and uphold a prototype for imitation.[24] In addition, myths function as an "ego defense" against threats and offer mechanisms for the restoration of unity in times of societal crisis. They help to explain the numinous experience of fascination and dread.[25] While Bailie would certainly agree with this description as far as it goes, he would probably object that it does not go far enough. It does not explain what gives the myths the influence over the life of the group and its members. This 'mystifying power' lies in the

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[22] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled,* 95

[23] I. G. Barbour, *Myths, Models, Paradigms* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 19-21

[24] Ibid., 21

[25] Ibid., 55-70

dynamics of man's mimetic nature and, according to Bailie, violence is its fiercest and most enthralling form.[26]

From Bailie's point of view, the principle behind violence, however, is not aggression per se,[27] but mimetic social contagion. It occurs when rivalry gets out of hand because in humans it is no longer instinctively controlled as it is among animals. In times of a chaotic outbreak of violence, cultures, in an attempt to reproduce the unity that brought the group together in the beginning, reenact the mythology of their own (violent) origins.[28] Therefore mimetic violence must be understood as an instrument of culture generation and maintenance. Its collective fascination bestows prestige upon the accompanying religious cult and its rituals. But ritual violence (killing required by religious scruples) is sacred violence,[29] through which the religious system maintains social order. This so-called 'sacrificial' mechanism resolves internal conflict by discharging the pent-up violence on an arbitrarily chosen victim. Afterwards, the ensuing peace is attributed to the sacral powers of the victim and the efficacy of meticulous adherence to the prescribed ritual. This Girardian view of archaic religious systems underlies Bailie's analysis.

Extrapolated into the Christian context, the crucifixion of Christ is anthropologically speaking such a reenactment. But strangely it does not fulfill the expectations of the archaic religious system. Instead of producing a surrogate peace, it "explodes the ancient myths and mechanisms and reveals their perversity". Religious mystification of

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[26] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 95

[27] See also Williams, *Girard Reader*, 10

[28] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 7

violence is no longer working, for the demythologizing efficacy of the cross has set in motion a historical reality which undermines the (false) legitimacy of sacred violence and the perception of its moral superiority.[30] According to Bailie, the old brakes on rivalry and vengeance have lost their power. As a result, mimetic violence is increasing to the extent that in our time "... essential cultural institutions are reeling in the face of a cultural meltdown...".[31] Since conventional culture is largely blind to its pervasive conditioning, something from outside the system must insert a logic (*logos*) other than the logic of violence. Structurally speaking, such an 'insertion' is only possible through the expelled victim, "whose expulsion brought the system into being in the first place".[32] Therefore, the ultimate answer to this turmoil is peaceful mimesis of the converted heart through the gospel. With this background in mind, we shall now turn to the theological focus of our discussion.

2.2   Hominization and the Birth of Religious Experience

Bailie's analysis makes two assumptions about man. Humans are created beings[33] although they did not emerge from the hand of God 'complete'. Rather, they evolved from higher primates. Bailie (following Girard) hypothesizes that our hominid ancestors emerged from their pre-

[29] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 7
[30] Ibid., 7
[31] Ibid., 4; to amplify this point, another quotation from Bailie: "The Bible's supreme anthropological value is that it allows us to see the structures and the dynamics of humanity's conventional culture and religious life and to watch as these structures give way under the weight of a revelation incompatible with them" (Ibid., 168).
[32] Ibid., 220; more will be said about this dynamic when we discuss Schwager and Alison.
[33] Ibid., 137

human forebears when an increase in mimetic excitability coincided with a commensurate disappearance of instinctive controls, such as the well-known dominance-submission pattern.[34]

According to Girard's theory, this mimetic propensity among hominids caused passionate acquisitive conflicts. A squabble between two over a desired object would soon excite the passions of all onlookers and draw them irresistibly into the conflict and as each participant senses the opposition of mutual rivalry, its ferocity escalates. Since the elimination of the rival becomes now the paramount desire rather than the acquisition of the object over which the fight began, the conflict becomes metaphysical.[35] If the conflict began with an acquisitive gesture, which another member of the group imitated, its growing volatility[36] turns the quarrel over 'acquisition' into violent 'accusation'. In such an all-against-all each takes revenge for what the other does to him.

How is such frenzy brought under control? When the fighting crowd turns into a lynch mob! At the zenith of the conflict a particularly strong accusatory gesture towards one member produces a new phase of mimesis. Now everyone's hostility is directed to this one victim.[37] It works, in Bailie's terms, like a "communal exorcism", which transforms the blind chaos into a strange unanimity. What's more, when the victim dies in a collective murder, "hush and awe" follow.[38] At this supreme point the atmosphere is charged with "terror and hallucination" giving

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[34] Ibid., 120
[35] Ibid., 120-121
[36] Because the first response signaled a greater desirability of the object through mimetic suggestion, it in turn elicited a rival response of increased intensity.
[37] Ibid., 122

birth to the "primordial religious experience" and "the following *detente* only heightens the mystery".[39] In this moment of primitive religious awe the attention of all is riveted on the victim, upon which they bestow sacred status. The dead body becomes an object that everybody wants to possess, yet no one dares to touch. Bailie calls it "desire frozen by terror" and the first hesitant gesture toward it he considers "the first act of terrified supplication".[40] In Bailie's view, this primitive religious event is also associated with the historical moment of hominization, when the "rupture with the pre-human primate realm can be pronounced complete".[41]

What is important for this study is the recognition that death becomes the signifier of something more than biological mortality. A new 'vertical' dimension seems to have been inserted into the horizontal focus that was previously fixed mimetically on members of the group and on material objects. The question that arises at this point, assuming we go along with Bailie's premise about human origins, is whether man's primitive intuition that a mutilated corpse possesses transcendent significance may have the faintest resemblance to the idea that man was created in God's image.

2.3   The Fall and False Transcendence

In the 1960s comedian Flip Wilson quipped: "The devil made me do it" and encapsulated the universal human tendency to externalize the

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[38] Ibid.
[39] R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 161
[40] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled,* 123

responsibility for our predicament. But according to Biblical tradition, the human race is fallen and by saying that, we make the rather unpopular assertion that the wrongs of the world are to be found in "the workings of the human soul".[42] The idea of a 'fall' only makes sense when posited against a 'good creation', which in this case means human beings who were prior to the 'fall' other that what they have been ever since. We will consider the issue of 'original sin' in our conversation with Alison. Here we simply wish to trace Bailie's interpretation of what tradition calls the 'fall' (Gen 3) from the viewpoint of mimetic theory. From this angle, it seems to present a fundamental piece of evidence that the phenomenon of mimesis is inextricably linked with Biblical anthropology from the beginning.

As Bailie puts it, "the story of the fall in Genesis is the story of contagious desire ... the kind of desire that is awakened by the display of another's desire".[43] We note the presence of the mimetic triangle: the woman, the serpent and the forbidden fruit as the desirable object. The serpent's suggestion about the desirability of the fruit evokes in the woman a mimetic desire to possess it and what it stands for, divine likeness. When she grasps it, her relationship with the Creator changes immediately from co-worker to rival, so that Bailie concludes: "Here then is the fall: mimetic desire and resentment in a situation in which there is no unsatisfied appetite and only One Transcendent Being against whom resentment may be aroused". And further, "even in a situation that is unconducive to envy, covetousness and resentment as the Garden of

[41] Ibid., 122
[42] T. Peters, *Sin: Radical Evil in Soul and Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 2
[43] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 137

Eden, the serpent's gaudy desire is all that it takes to unhinge the human race..." [44]

In the same breath, Bailie refers to man's creation and affirms that "we are creatures made in God's image". He clearly links the mimetic structure of man's constitution with the "image of God". Unfortunately, he does not develop this link and it would be futile to speculate why. What deserves comment, however, is the slant of his own interpretation:

> [T]he 'test' that the tree represents is whether or not humans can tolerate even the most innocuous form of self-restraint and even the most beneficent form of transcendence without becoming resentful and rivalrous. [45]

Bailie seems to suggest that the purpose of the Garden scene of Gen 3 was a moral test. While this may be in line with the traditional view, it runs against the grain of Gen 3:22, in which God comments on the post-fall situation that man now had "become one of us knowing good and evil". In other words, man could only distinguish good and evil after the fall and had been in this respect dissimilar to God prior to the event, a point Gerald Bray has stressed when he writes,

> Most seriously of all, the narrative of Genesis itself directly contradicts the idea that the image of God conferred moral awareness. It is extraordinary that this was never recognized....[46]

Bray's argument that the original image did not bestow on man moral awareness, would strengthen our hypothesis that the morally neutral but value prone structure of mimesis has been part of man's

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] G. Bray, "The Significance of God's Image in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 42, no. 2 (1991): 195-225, p. 207

design from the beginning.[47] According Girard, once mediated desire triggers the unconscious mechanism of mimesis, the behavior will predictably mirror the desire of the model. [48]

To be sure, post-fall humanity has created countless victims and drenched the earth in blood. But, (and I say this without seeking to diminish human culpability) if man's desire is now so constituted that the murderous human heart "has become the ordering principle of culture",[49] then the human condition is not a moral problem per se, but a deeply anthropological one. We need to be delivered from our captivity to the contagious distortion of desire, not from the fundamental anthropological category of desire itself.

By seeing the phenomenon of mimesis as the core of the 'sacred', Girard achieved a profound understanding of the cultic violence behind archaic religious systems. However, from the perspective of Christian theology, we note that the 'transcendent experience' of the primitive group described earlier did not result from an encounter with the divine, but from the intoxication of the primitive mind with mimetic violence. It was the *simulation* of a transcendent experience, a contagious counterfeit that seemed to function in the non-conscious underground as the cultic glue of society, and, if Girard is correct, it has been working there through the mechanism of victimage since "the foundation of the world".

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[47] This line of reasoning leaves open the question of moral agency. Gen 3:22 implies that man's design to have included the capacity for moral judgement, but its actualization came about through desire contaminated by an illegitimate source.

[48] It is therefore debatable whether human 'morality' was within the original intent of the creator. We do not have the scope here to examine this issue. In the above context, it is perhaps worth noting that even our best efforts are powerless to restrain or suppress the forces of mimetic desire. What is needed is not their restraint, but their transcendence.

[49] Ibid., 222

The notion that the core of our humanness is occupied by a powerful disposition for imitation runs counter to the cherished post-Enlightenment belief of Western culture in the autonomy of the individual. But Girard's theory insists on it. He sees in it the inordinate capacity to come under the influence of the desires of others. As already mentioned, it operates below the level of cognition, and as Bailie writes:

> ... is more powerful and less intentional than conscious imitation, so is the notion of desire broader and deeper than the eroticized and romanticized notion [of desire] of the modern era.[50]

This predilection not just determines all our social arrangements, but by its very nature constitutes an insatiable appetite for mimetic engagement, a form of concupiscence. We saw in the above example that as the conflict escalated, the appetite for violence became ferocious resulting in an uncontrollable frenzy that ended in a catharsis. In Bailie's view, if the pent-up violence is not discharged, an unquenched appetite lingers and seeks other forms of expression. Any aggravation then produces symptoms of acquisitive mimetic rivalry like resentment, jealousy, envy, covetousness, punitive attitudes, judgmentalism and hatred. We are reminded of Paul's letter to the Galatian Church warning them not to follow their sinful nature. The parallels are striking.

> The acts of the *sinful nature* are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Emphasis added). [51]

From the foregoing we note then two aspects of the human being. They are 'hungry' for models to imitate. But under the influence of sin (or

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counterfeit transcendence), this hunger is perverted. If we accept that humans have been created as mimetic creatures, then mimesis itself is not the problem, but the false transcendence into which this capacity is now 'hooked'. Paul's reference to idolatry seems to recognize the same link underscoring our point. This false transcendence, simulated by murderous mimesis, impersonates a God-centered transcendence.[52] The same issue surfaces in the account of Jesus' temptation. The tempter offers Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world" (Matt 4:8-10) in exchange for Jesus' worship. Jesus vehemently rejects the offer. Only through Girardian glasses do we see it as an attempt to engage Jesus in mimetic rivalry for the possession of a kingdom founded on the mechanism of generative violence and thus undoing his God-centeredness. One could argue that the story would have been pointless unless such a possibility existed, which in turn presupposes the presence of a link between the mimetic process and a fundamental transmutation of man's 'transcendent center' through worship.[53] These observations seem to support our hypothesis that there are profound theological reasons why human beings are mimetic and possibly just because they are created in God's image as we hope to demonstrate.

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[51] Gal 5:19-21 (NIV)

[52] A God-centered transcendence, Bailie says, "would satisfy our deepest imitative urges, our deepest desires" [Ibid., 145].

[53] The Bible calls worship of an object or person other than God idolatry and warns that those who do it become like their idols (Psa 115:8 and 135:18). Christian tradition has long recognized that this temptation sought to replicate the dynamics of Gen 3. Regarding the human 'center' or heart, it is interesting to note one of the hypothesis in the neuro-sciences that the human brain is the meeting point between the physical and the transcendent. Ashbrook and Rausch Albright maintain that the brain "reveals a basic and universal structure that underlies all belief systems" [cf J. B. Ashbrook and C. Rausch Albright, "The Humanizing Brain: an introduction," *Zygon* 34, no. 1 (1999): 7-39]. By way of extrapolation one could speculate that not only neurological underpinnings exist for the presence of human mimesis, but that a form of mimesis may be present in biological systems generally as an adaptive, self-organizing mechanism.

2.4   The Victim

That idyllic South Sea Islands should have been once the scene of rampant cannibalism, human sacrifices and victimization of children strikes us with a strange mix of emotions. At the same time, our cultural distance blinds us to the archaic religious system that thrived on such gruesomeness and has kept humans in bondage 'since the foundations of the world'. As Bailie reminds us, it is this part of our universal heritage which the human race cannot easily shake off, for vestiges of the archaic system are still with us. To be sure, its victimage mechanism no longer manifests in the form of pagan sacrificial rites.[54] But even today we create victims and scapegoat members of our own race. While victimization continues in apocalyptic proportions and at an unstoppable rate, what has changed is that their voice is no longer muted by a mythology that once legitimized this violence as religious service. This, according to Bailie, is entirely attributable to the emergence of the Christian conscience in the world, the moral by-product of the revelation of the cross.[55]

Before Girard discovered the link between sacred violence and mimetic desire, Rudolf Otto had noted the victim's pull as the center of religious fascination. He writes, "[the victim] … as an object of horror and dread … allures with a potent charm … and the creature … has always at the same time the impulse to turn to it, even to possess it".[56] Given its

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[54] The etymology of the English 'victim' (Lat. *victima*) is also related to the Goth. *weihan (weihs = holy)* or German *weihen*, which means consecrating as an object for religious sacrifice [cf W. W. Skeat, *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 691].
[55] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 31
[56] R. Otto , *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 31

magnetic power, what is it about the mutilated body of a victim that provides clues for our hypothesis?

As we have mentioned earlier, the act of unanimous violence by which the victim dies bestows on the body both a sacred status and a central place in the group. Not only does it now occupy the common focus of the group, but the victim also inserts itself into the center of consciousness of each participant in the collective murder. The emotions of horror, dread and religious awe inscribe the event in the individual and collective memory. In addition, the victim introduces a 'vertical' dimension into the mimetically fixed horizontal focus, which had held the members of the group captive to fear of each other. When a surrogate peace settles on the frenzied mob, the victim's status provides a sense of meaning to an otherwise incomprehensible event. The role of the corpse, as strange as it may sound, becomes essentially an epistemological one derived from the victim's presumed transcendence. Bailie draws a similar conclusion from the testimony of the Old Testament prophets, who spoke as victims of a religious system they had been called to critique. He writes,

> The revelatory power of the prophet depended on how close he was to the 'still point in the turning world', the point of lucidity in a frenzied world, namely the place occupied by the victim of frenzy.[57]

This role of the victim as we shall see more fully later in our engagement with Schwager, allows us to draw important conclusions about a theological justification of human mimesis. Here we follow

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[57] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 178. It is important to understand that for Bailie the great prophets lived in an era that was morally intelligible only through the notion of God's wrath. This explains why they often responded to spiritual opposition with sacred violence or with means that differed little from the religious systems they had come to critique [cf Elijah's sacrificial battle at Mt Carmel (1 Kg 18-19)].

Bailie's argument to its conclusion. The call to the prophetic office involved a radical openness to the voice of God. It meant speaking forth, without fear or favor, the corrective utterances of God in the face of a religious system that contradicted the divine character. Such a life presupposed a disposition of heart that was entirely given to an inner conformation to the divine will. It meant imitation of God through the formation of a mind that was free from archaic religious and mythological delusions. Quite simply, the prophets had come under the illuminating influence of the Spirit of God that liberated them from the "spell of the primitive sacred so that the living God it concealed and impersonated [could] get through … ".[58] Alternatively stated, the same inner structure of mimetic desire that brought other men into bondage to 'the primitive sacred' served the living God as an agency of truth telling. Man is therefore so constituted that the divine pattern may become evident in human lives through a conversion experience that alters man's orientation (model) but not his inner (mimetic) structure.

Conversion, or the miraculous transformation from a murderous human heart to a heart of love, is the work of the Gospel, which exposes the archaic religious system for what it is, namely murder and lies. The cross robs them of their mystifying power. At the same time, it maintains the focus on the victim as an agent of revelation. The entire Easter event shifted the attention from violence to true transcendence through forgiveness, especially after the resurrection.[59] In the cross, the full epistemological force of the victim's role becomes apparent. In Bailie's

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[58] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 195

language, it is a "counter-mythological, meta-religious revelatory image".[60] What's more, it now asserts its worldwide influence as Christ's promise, "when I am lifted up, I shall draw all men to myself"[61] is being worked out in history.

However, more than an intellectual process is needed to deliver humans from archaic delusions about the efficacy of violence as the bringer of peace. To overcome these effects of mimetic desire and to undo the underlying perversion of the human center, philosophy is useless, as Bailie has shown.[62] Rather, "[it] must be vanquished at the most intimate level of experience", to quote Girard.[63] This will be the case only when the true Victim occupies the revelatory center of the human heart. Then will "we 'desire' and have as our ultimate model the One in whose image we are made".[64]

2.5   Summary

In our engagement with Bailie we have seen that the self-concept of a culture is derived from its mythological base, especially from the symbols and religious images embedded in its stories about its origins. Not only do they offer cohesion, identity and explain the numinous, they also uphold a prototype for imitation. Further, we noted that the mystifying power of symbols and myth lies in man's mimetic nature.

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[59] We can believe in the resurrection because "the emancipating power of the Cross has begun to sweep away the mythological, ideological and rationalistic clutter that stands in the way of such belief" [Ibid., 232].

[60] Ibid., 130

[61] John 12:32

[62] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 235-259

[63] R. Girard, *The Things Hidden from the Foundation of the World* (London: Athlone, 1987), p. 399

[64] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 145

Sacral violence is the fiercest and most enthralling form of that power. By linking the two dimensions, man's hunger for models to imitate and his predilection for sacral violence, we observed that the human heart is perverted and locked into a false transcendence.

Extrapolating from there and from Jesus' temptation account, we suggested that there is a profound link between human mimesis and worship. We found the same idea reflected in Bailie's explanation of the Old Testament prophets. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, they were *given over* entirely to the imitation of God through the conformity of their minds so that the same mimetic structure that brought others into bondage to the primitive sacred served God as an instrument of revelation.

We also saw that the revelatory process was more than an intellectual one. Deliverance from the delusion about the efficacy of violence as a peacemaker requires more than a new philosophy or morality, but the undoing of the distorted desire, which is achieved through the epistemological role of the victim. Only when the image of God in Jesus Christ becomes our imitative center, will we be captive to true transcendence.

In the next Chapter, where we explore Schwager's dramatic theology, we will see the dynamics of this transformation. What we can provisionally conclude is that through man's mimetic predisposition the divine pattern of God's image may become visible in human lives but only when we are given over to him in worship will we imitate him as our model without rivalry.

CHAPTER 3   THE IMAGE OF GOD AND THEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE
                 FOR HUMAN MIMESIS IN THE DRAMATIC
                 THEOLOGY OF RAYMUND SCHWAGER

3.1 Introduction

In this Chapter we are asking what Schwager's dramatic theology
has to say to us about the image of God, about human mimesis and
about the relation of one to the other. Because of the complexity and
subtlety of Schwager's presentation (and his often highly technical
analysis), we propose to move slowly. We shall examine first Jesus'
identification with sinners and the problematic of judgment. Then, we
shall look at the question whether the Father's justice demanded the
death of Jesus. These two topics are somewhat preparatory for the
development of the third, Schwager's view of the transformation of evil
and the dynamics of conversion. It is in this last section that we propose
to draw conclusions about Schwager's contribution to our hypothesis.

Theologically the doctrine of redemption is found in the space
where the goodness and justice of God intersect, or in the language of
Psalm 85:10 where "mercy and truth have met together and
righteousness and peace have kissed each other". While such an
articulation may suffice as an expression of piety and faith, difficulties
arise when one tries to explicate what it means in history.[65] Many
models have been suggested. In order to connect exegetical and

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[65]The perceived polarity has created longstanding theological problems. For a brief overview of milestones from Marcion to von Balthasar see R. Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation: Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Salvation* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), p. 2-16

systematic considerations of the doctrine Schwager proposes a "dramatic exegesis".[66]

To introduce his argument, let me draw a sketch of the scheme. According to Schwager the drama speaks to us about man's captivity to the principle of sacred violence, victimage and retribution (see also Bailie's view of culture). Moreover, the dramatic structure of redemption speaks of the process of liberation and by implication of the original intention of the Creator. By taking upon himself on the cross the image of the victim and by modeling the experience of God as *abba,* Jesus replaces the image of vengeance with the true image of God. Thereby he establishes in human history the reality of "communicative love", which is able to reach the innermost recesses of the human heart, satisfy its deepest longings and so bring healing and freedom.[67] By coming to sinners in this (new) way, God designates non-violence as an ontologically superior principle that renders the archaic scapegoat mechanism[68] powerless and opens an entirely new path to human community.

3.2   Jesus' Identification with Sinners and the Problematic of Judgment.

Schwager summarizes his own analysis in two fundamental statements: *"if he* [Jesus] *identified himself with all victims of sin, then every offence against a fellow person or against one's self is aimed against him";* and "the universality of the *expulsion* and thus the

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[66] Ibid., ix
[67] Ibid., 43

exclusive nature of the substitution are based on the act of *universal inclusion* of the one who stood in for all by making himself one of them" (Schwager's emphasis).[69]

This multi-layered presentation of Jesus' identification with sinners produces a rather complex picture of substitution. All human beings are sinners and thus guilty of hostility towards God who allows himself to become victim of all; at the same time, they are also victims themselves, of their own sin and that of others. Since Jesus stood in for all, but only as far as they are victims, people still remain accountable for their hostile attitude towards God. To be sure, God's abundant love will woo and encourage, but it will never compel so that there is no automatic salvation. Yet, since Jesus acknowledged from the Cross that even the most hostile act performed against him was done in ignorance, the possibility exists that people are much more victims of deception and sin than committed agents of evil. Therefore, in Schwager's view "the great hope persists that all are saved in Christ".[70]

However, Schwager asks, does not such a hope fly in the face of the judgment sayings of Jesus?[71] He argues that in the judgment of Jesus something entirely new occurred in that the one who announced these judgments was also the one who was judged.[72] And although the New Testament makes ample use of apocalyptic judgement language, according to Schwager "Jesus, by many subtle details, expressed the

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[68] We must recall that the purpose of the scapegoat mechanism is communal cohesion. It serves to restore harmony and reinforce the social fabric, albeit based on ritualized communal violence.
[69] Ibid., 192
[70] Ibid., 194
[71] e.g. Matt 25:31-46
[72] Schwager uses Barth's atonement picture of the Judge who became the one who is judged and demonstrates it by allowing himself to be subjected to unjust accusation and judicial murder (cf Schwager *Jesus in Drama*, 82).

judgement as self-judgment".[73] Since this truth of self-judgment remains hidden from sinners as long as they do not acknowledge their status as sinners before God, judgment must still be preached and the individual remains accountable for the response.[74]

Schwager's deep concern is to show that God has revealed himself in the drama of salvation as the One who is not vengeful and even willing to forgive the unthinkable crime of killing his Son. At the same time, God's goodness must not be sentimentalized. Since he has stepped over the last limit by forgiving the ultimate crime, his goodness is indeed unlimited. But it is by no means without the polarity of judgment, of which hell is the ultimate expression. Hell, on the other hand, is also the ultimate expression of God's respect for the freedom of his creature.[75]

The notion of freedom is significant for our hypothesis, as we shall see when we draw these threads together in the last section of this Chapter. Here we want to ask what freedom means if fallen humanity is captive to a system that locks every one into rivalistic mimesis? And further, what does God's respect for this freedom mean if it allows the 'free' creature to go to its own doom because there is no way in which God will overpower his creature even for its own good?[76] Would not such a freedom amount to abandoning the creature to an evil power? That this is not so is the message of Easter, where Christ did his utmost to secure our eternal wellbeing while preserving our freedom without diminishing

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[73] Schwager, ibid., 195; Schwager seeks to make clear that the judgment Jesus delivered in his judgment sayings is meant to lead his hearers to self-judgment or repentance. In other words, Jesus' judgment is motivated by mercy. The OT parallel may be found in the judgment Jonah delivered to Ninneveh.
[74] Ibid., 196
[75] Ibid., 198-199

the scope of God's unconditional respect for it.[77] But before we examine these matters, we want to explore first one other question.

3.3 Did God Require the Death of Jesus?

According to Girard, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus brought to light the scapegoat mechanism. But are we reading the Gospel text correctly? Girard thinks not. If his theory is valid, it must also critique our interpretation of Christ's death and consistently refuse to re-introduce into our reading of the Biblical texts elements of the 'old order', which the Gospel has come to subvert.[78] Therefore, one of the central questions Schwager seeks to answer is whether Christ's death was a propitiatory sacrifice in the sense that God required it to appease his anger. Leading up to his analysis, Schwager examines the notion of vengeance and retribution. He seeks to show that in the New Testament the system of vengeance (which belongs to the archaic order of the sacred) has been breached once for all.

Let me begin with Girard's position. Already in the Old Testament the prophetic voice had criticized the sacrificial system in the name of YHWH.[79] In the New Testament, we find that Jesus not only confirms the earlier prophetic criticism (e.g. Matt 9:13), but also, through his own absolute commitment to non-violence and his refusal to the very end to strike back demonstrated the stance of the Kingdom he had come to

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[76] Ibid., 199

[77] Ibid., 201

[78] The cause for such misunderstanding must not be sought so much in the work of fundamentalists as in a modern ignorance of the scapegoat mechanism that belongs to archaic religion (cf. Williams, *Girard Reader*, 177).

proclaim.[80] To maintain a sacrificial reading in the sense that Jesus' death satisfied the wrath of God, it is necessary to assume that God's justice demanded the slaying of the Son for the salvation of humanity. This presupposes that the Father and the Son had entered into a secret pact, which obliged the Father to shift his disposition from wrath to reconciliation in exchange for the life of the Son. Moreover, the Gospel texts do not describe the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, but simply report his crucifixion, the Johannine imagery of the lamb not withstanding. Therefore, Girard rejects a 'sacrificial' reading of the death of Jesus as a cultural 'tie-back' to sacral violence.

Schwager underpins Girard's position with two contributions. The first is a study of the Old Testament atonement system in the light of the prophetic criticism just mentioned. God demanded 'steadfast love' and true knowledge of God rather then sacrifices[81] and the prophets called Israel to account not for infringements of cultic practice but for such cardinal offences as idolatry, injustice and murder, which revealed the true heart of the nation in its attitude towards YHWH. Since such crimes called for the death penalty, its rigorous application would have meant the elimination of all Israel, and indeed of the whole human race, obviously creating an absurd situation. In the end, the Old Testament does not resolve the tension between the prophetic critique and cultic practice, so that when the canon closes, the real meaning of the sacrificial system as an atoning mechanism remains ambiguous. Von

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[79] Typical references are Amos 5:21-24; Isa 1:11, 13, 15-16; Jer 2:20, 23; 7:4-7; 19:5-6.
[80] Williams, *Girard Reader,* 179-188
[81] Relevant texts are found in Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8; Isa 1:10-17; Psa 40:7.

Rad has made the same point when he wrote, "there is a realm of silence and secrecy in respect to what God works in sacrifice".[82]

Then Schwager examines the Epistle to the Hebrews, one of the clearest New Testament references to the issue of sacrifice.[83] The atoning value of Old Testament sacrifices is found in external, cultic purification, unable to bring real freedom from sins.[84] The letter to the Hebrews, while using the metaphorical framework of the Old Testament cult, re-interprets the tradition as something God instituted to awaken consciousness of sin, i.e. for its interim "pedagogic and linguistic function and not because of its atoning value".[85] But as Schwager admits, this line of argument does not solve the problem in its entirety, mainly because of an apparent continuity with the cult that operated through the blood (cf Hebr 9:7, 12, 14, 18-22). As the high priest of the Aaronic order brought blood into the sanctuary, so Christ entered with his own blood. How shall we then interpret the presence and operation of blood in the light of Jesus' insistence on the non-violence of the Kingdom? Do we after all have to accept the view that God's wrath struck Jesus directly through the violence of sinners and the experience of desolation?

Schwager eventually resolves the conflict at a different level by referring to Maximus the Confessor, who saw in the crucifixion another way of looking at the use of death.[86] The cross of Christ is seen no longer as punishment but as *"a means of salvation from sin"* (Schwager's

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[82] Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama,* 177-182; see also, von Rad, *OT Theology,* p. 260.
[83] Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama,* 182-191
[84] Hebr 10:3
[85] Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama,* 183
[86] Ibid., 187

emphasis). In his total identification with sinful humanity, even with his executioners, Jesus experienced the suffering of being struck to death by sin and thus entered the destiny of all human beings, so that Paul could write "One died for all; therefore all have died" (2 Cor. 5:14).[87] In other words, this hermeneutic move allows Schwager to reinterpret the death of Jesus in non-sacrificial terms. After carefully preparing his case over many pages, Schwager refutes the traditional penal substitution theory of atonement to demonstrate that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a God of vengeance and sacrifice, and that it was not the Father's justice that slays the Son but human violence.[88]

In the crucifixion of Jesus, the Kingdom of God and the mechanisms and powers of the old order meet head on. In Schwager's perception, the issue for Jesus in that moment is not the readiness of the Father to forgive, but how the Father's goodness may enter the human heart given the powers of darkness that hold it captive. The answer had to be found not in "substitute performance", but in Jesus' willingness to be handed over to these powers and become so identified with sinners that he answers their rejection of him with an even greater self-giving out of love for his enemies.[89] How the Father uses the death of his Son as a means by which his goodness may enter the human heart, is the subject of the next section. Before turning to it, I comment briefly on Schwager's atonement discussion.

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Pannenberg's substitutionary theory would have been worth considering here. For Pannenberg Jesus dies under the law as a blasphemer. The death penalty he bears is the penalty deserved by the whole people Israel as far as they are bound to the law. He is vindicated in the resurrection and through this reversal God turns Jesus' judges into blasphemers nullifying the law as interpreted in its pre-Easter operation. Pannenberg then widens the horizon of substitution to include all humanity [cf. Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 258-269].

[89] Ibid., 111-113

In my view, a good case can be made on Biblical grounds why a still wider scope of Schwager's atonement discussion would have added further strength to his hypothesis. As we have already observed, in his attempt to disprove the penal-substitutionary theory of the atonement based on the non-violent character of God, Schwager works carefully through a non-sacrificial exegesis of the Epistle to the Hebrews. However, other New Testament texts notably Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 5:9; 1 Cor 11:25; Eph 1:7; Eph 2:13; Col 1:20, also connect the idea of 'blood' with such important rubrics as expiation, justification, covenant, redemption, and reconciliation. Given his painstaking attention to the 'blood-metaphor' in Hebrews, it would have made his position more complete had he devoted some space to these texts also. When dealing with Jesus' self-understanding of his death, I noticed that he does not mention the idea of ransom (although it is implied in places, e.g. on p. 113). However else Jesus might have understood it, he certainly spoke of it in those terms (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). Since the term (grk *lutron*) and its cognates is used in the LXX close to 140 times with the general meaning of payment in exchange or compensation, I would have expected some reference to it. Lastly, I missed a discussion of Jesus' role in the cosmic dimension of reconciliation as an aspect of God's redemptive drama (cf. Isa 65:25; 2 Cor 5:19; Col 1:21).

3.4 The Transformation of Evil and Human Conversion

With our focus on transformation, this last part of our engagement with Schwager will cover new ground, but also draw together most of the

ideas discussed so far. It will also permit us to propose some conclusions about their value for our hypothesis.

The New Testament phrase, 'the remission of sins' (*aphesis harmation*) does not merely mean the pardon of sins as generally understood. It means also their removal, not only of the guilt but also of the warped patterns that have sin as their source so that man may be set free from their enslavement and compulsions.[90] In this section we shall give attention to two questions. How does this mysterious transformation that emanates from Jesus' work occur in the believer? And how is its dynamic related to mimetic theory and thereby to our thesis?

To understand Schwager's presentation of this transformation, we need to go back to his notion of 'victim'. At the crucifixion, Jesus became the victim of his executioners or generally speaking he became the victim of human violence and sin. But in his dying moment "by the power of the eternal Spirit" (Hebr 9:14), he surrendered and entrusted his Spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46). In this act he transformed human dying, which is largely something humans endure, into an act of deliberate surrender.[91] Since at this point Jesus gave up the very possibility of determining himself by his own spirit and so became "totally available material" to the Father, he fulfilled in his total abandonment the condition for a sovereign action by the Father, namely the resurrection from the dead.[92] Jesus, by turning the violent death into a deliberate surrender to the Father, became the Scapegoat and the Lamb of God in

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[90] This term 'remission of sins' covers what in Christian parlance is understood as 'justification' and 'sanctification'.
[91] Ibid., 188

one and the same act.[93] In other words, we must see the death of Jesus as self-sacrifice. By abandoning himself into the hands of his enemies, Jesus opened himself totally to God and united his will with that of the Father to the limit. And when the sinful deeds of his enemies drove him to his extremity, they wrung from his heart nothing but limitless self-giving love and in so doing, because of his identification with them, they generated unwittingly their own possibility for transformation.

But given man's "unprogrammable freedom",[94] how can people be brought into a subjective experience of what has been worked out for them in this drama? From our discussion of the idea of 'judgement' we recall Schwager's emphasis on Christ's identification with people "in so far as they are victims". Schwager also emphasized that there is in each person a domain of his or her own responsibility, which is "holy", "inviolable" and "original", so much so, that even the most costly substitution and grace must not and will not overpower it.[95] However, while God's respect for human freedom is unconditional, it is not limitless. As the Easter event shows, God's love will not abandon sinful humanity to its own fate. On the cross, Jesus submitted to the abuse of human freedom (sin) while in the same breath making the most

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[92] Ibid., 189

[93] Ibid., 205; cf. also Jesus' words in John 10:18: "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This command I have received from My Father."

[94] Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama*, 199; a question arises at this point, the exploration of which would require a different study than this one. What is Schwager's view of man and of human freedom? If man subsists in his biological constitution on the basis of "ontological necessity" rather than freedom, as Zizioulas has argued, what is the nature of freedom for 'biological man'? In our fallen condition, the possibility of choice is between rival alternatives. These arise from "divisions within [man's] being", born from his claim to be the ultimate point of reference. In other words, freedom of choice is not freedom but compulsion driven by the necessity of choice. True freedom comes when man is delivered from the inner division and his alienation from true community through new birth in Christ. It would seem from the phrase man's "unprogrammable freedom" that Schwager's notion of the human being is based on an individualistic ontology rather than on one of personhood in Zizioulas' terms [cf. J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), p. 50-53, 120-121].

excruciating effort for man's deliverance and welfare as an expression of God's goodness. As Schwager puts it:

> The dissolved limits remain in the concept of God as differences, but at the same time point beyond themselves. The "concept" of God, which is achieved in this way, is a concept which differs from all others not only by its content, but also by its nature. It is a concept that includes a complete event, which concerns humans, which at the same time radically surpasses them, and into which they remain drawn in under every aspect. With this event there is no longer a final external restriction, but all limits are *overcome from within* and remain only as richness of differences (emphasis added). [96]

This 'overcoming from within' lies at the heart of Schwager's model of conversion. As people are drawn into the Easter event, the image of the Victim infiltrates their world of self-will and violence. What had been man's prison from the foundation of the world[97] is about to be opened from within and with their consent. Because the image of the Victim is at the same time God's image in identification with people to the extent that they are victims, there exists now a path for the post-Easter movement of the Spirit.[98] We observe this dynamic at work in the post-Easter conduct of the disciples after the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Face to face with the Victim they had in an act of self-surrender to the other (which we may call worship), surrendered their right of self-determination. In this highest exercise of human freedom they had become 'material' for a sovereign act of God, the subsequent gratuitous 'invasion' of the Spirit,

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[95] Schwager, ibid., 194; power and its application to God is criticized by the meekness of the Crucified.

[96] Ibid., 201

[97] Ibid., 189

[98] Since the Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son, whereby both act as free persons in love towards each other in a deliberate act of "mutual self-giving" that includes their communication, the Spirit's work in conversion must be understood in the same way. This reciprocity of communication and surrender was especially visible in the dramatic progression of Jesus' ministry. The rejection of the Kingdom called for an ongoing interaction between the Father and the Son and involved the latter in giving his consent to the demands of every new situation in complete freedom as the Father desired. The freedom by which Jesus surrendered himself at the human level corresponds at the divine level to God's freedom in the eternal counsel of his will. In other words, freedom is more than 'freedom of choice' manifesting in

which transformed their inner being. If such are the dynamics that operate at the heart of all Christian experience,[99] what can we glean from them for our thesis?

As we have seen, as a fallen creature man is a victim of sin as well as its active agent. Because of God's unlimited goodness he has acted in Christ on man's behalf and performed an objective work to deliver man from the effects and the enslavement of sin. However, there is a subjective side to man's salvation that requires a deliberate act of consent and appropriation of what God has done to make it effective at the human level. As we have seen, the intersection between the objective work of God and the subjective experience of salvation is the image of the victim. Man can receive this image without fearing the violation of his freedom, because he too has been a victim. Schwager says that humans are "drawn" into this all-surpassing event that produced it, which closely echoes Jesus' own words when he spoke of the mysterious attraction of the cross (John 12:22). This 'infiltration', therefore, does not happen by stealth to get around man's inviolable freedom and save him against his will. Rather God uses the victim image as a symbol of self-communication, for it is a familiar sign. Or one might say it provides the structure, into which the image of *the* Victim fits, for it was generated by the familiar mechanism of collective violence. As irony works as a literary device through its opposite, so the true Victim uses the shape of the 'receptor' which the founding mechanism of archaic religion has fashioned in the human heart. As people are drawn to the image of the

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particular acts of obedience, rather an all-encompassing freedom capable of surrendering the whole being [cf. Schwager, ibid.,209-217].

Victim, the Spirit of God inserts the true image, which, when received, releases its freight of truth and love and so subverts from within man's bondage to the false 'transcendence' based on lies and violence. Thus the image of the Victim becomes the point of contact and continuity between the old order and the new.

3.5   Summary

In the foregoing we have tried to show from Schwager's analysis that in Christ God is so identified with human beings that he himself becomes their sins' victim. He experiences in his own person sin's destructive power and tastes death not because the justice of the Father slays the Son, but because he embraces and exhausts in that embrace the universal victimhood of human sin.

Through the image of the victim, which is the focal point of the 'old order', man may be 'infiltrated' with a familiar symbol that now comes to him as God's self-communication. When under the influence of the Spirit man's inner being comes to agree with God, and man performs this act freely, albeit not unaided, it constitutes the actualization of his original responsibility. Since it replicates the Son's obedience and surrender to the Father in response to the Father's self-communication, it is man's first act of pacific imitation.

By opening himself up to God, man lets go of his hold on self-determination. God responds with the gratuitous bestowal of his Spirit and man enters a new mode of existence. He receives a new identity that

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[99] Which Jesus himself saw as so radical that he called this transformation a re-birth by the Spirit (John 3:3,

is on the one hand rooted in Christ's identification with him - even the reality of sonship for he is now identified with Christ as Victim and as Son. On the other hand, because he is a son, he now desires to work out his sonship situation by situation and face to face with the true image of God. Man's identity is now carried by grace, setting man free from grasping something that is already given. Converted man is called to actualize this life in history by faith and in obedient imitation of Christ who has become his model and the center of his being. In this way Schwager's brilliant analysis supports our hypothesis that there are theological reasons why humans have been created as mimetic beings.

Through the work of Bailie and Schwager we saw the drama of man's salvation in a fresh light as Girard's theory illuminated unseen nuances of both actors and story. The next Chapter where we explore Alison's treatment of original sin from the vantagepoint of the resurrection promises to enrich this picture further.

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CHAPTER 4   HUMAN MIMESIS AND ORIGINAL SIN FROM THE VIEW OF THE RESURRECTION IN JAMES ALISON'S *The Joy of Being Wrong.*

4.1 Introduction

We concluded the previous Chapter with the remark that converted man now lives by grace resting in the identity he has received as a gift and no longer seeks it by grasping for what has already been given.

Alison's work, too, concludes on such a note. While the outcome is the same, in comparison with Schwager's route Alison traverses quite different theological terrain to arrive there. The larger context of his theological project seeks to establish the absolute deathlessness of God and our calling to participate through pacific mimesis in "deathless divine effervescence".[100]

In *The Joy of Being Wrong* he deals with original sin and takes as his anthropological starting point the death and resurrection of Christ. This explains why he abandons the Biblical narrative sequence of 'creation – fall – redemption – new creation', and instead adopts a perspective he calls "Easter eyes". He claims to follow "the logic of discovery", because in his view we are able to explicate the meaning of original sin only through the revelation of God's activity in Jesus Christ and the radically new humanity that emerges as a result of the

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[100] This expression was taken from the comprehensive review article of Alison's theological project by Charles Hefling [C. Hefling, "A View from the Stern: 689-710].

resurrection.[101] Thereby he seems to align himself with Barth's view that Christian theology begins with the resurrection.[102] His conceptual tools are those of Rene Girard.

What is important for our thesis is his development of a view of God as deathless, creative relationality and its coherent relation to mimetic theory. In our engagement with him, we hope to elaborate further on our hypothesis that there are discoverable theological reasons for human mimesis, or more broadly that the Biblical idea of the 'imago Dei' may perhaps be more fully understood in the language and concepts of Girard's theory.

We plan to draw on supportive arguments from three themes of Alison's work. Firstly, we shall examine from a mimetic point of view the pattern of original sin in relation to the death of Jesus. Secondly, we shall explore Alison's idea of the "intelligence of the Victim"[103] [by which he means not a particular piece of knowledge but a fundamental change in human consciousness]. Thirdly, we shall consider Alison's view of the new community (and its underlying relationality) that gathers as a result of the Christ-event.

4.2   The Pattern of Original Sin and the Death of Christ

Sin existed in the universe before the fall of man. Since the Scriptures are silent about its ultimate origin, 'original sin' refers to its first presence among humans. Traditionally its pattern has been

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[101] Alison , *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 94
[102] C. Hefling, ibid.
[103] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 80

identified as two concurrent processes. The tempter enticed the woman in the Garden (Gen 3) to doubt the veracity of God by appealing to the fruit's desirability through the suggestion that God was withholding something valuable from her. In the presence of the prohibition not to eat the fruit, these insinuations unleashed in her the irresistible desire to proceed with its illicit acquisition. The charge of idolatry and the depravity of the motif have often been taken as the interpretative focus typified by the following commentary, "she gave the tempter the place that belonged to God only [and] accepted the most blasphemous assault upon [his] integrity".[104]

This is not the place to discuss the long and complex career of the doctrine, nor the incomprehensible nature and origin of sin. Alison's phrase that "desire distorted itself"[105], does not offer meaning but is in itself an indication of sin's non-sensical nature as Hefling has pointed out.[106] The aim of this discussion is more modest, namely to answer the question how the pattern of original sin *as Alison describes it* can deepen the understanding of our hypothesis.

According to Alison, at the root of the story in Gen 3 lies the presence of mimetic desire. The object (the forbidden fruit) became desirable, because some one else desired it. In this case it was God for whom it was proper to desire what was his. Since the object belonged to God but through the serpent's mediation became an object of desire in

[104] J. M. Houston, "Sin," in *New Bible Dictionary*, eds. by J. M. Douglas, (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1962), 1189-1193.
[105] Alison , *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 151
[106] Hefling has also drawn attention to the risk Alison took by doctrinally linking "originated sin" with an "originating sin". The latter has to do with the Girardian hypothesis of a founding murder and the question whether we need an original scene at all, for any hypothesis may be a mistake. According to Hefling, most modern theologians prefer to be agnostic about the issue whether original sin was also originating sin. They

the woman, her desire must indeed be seen as the desire to be like God. Since the object was illegitimately appropriated, this acquisitive move brought a number of consequences. Human desire was deformed.[107] It became fixated in the "mode of appropriation", that is in the mode of getting rather than of receiving, and the relationality that followed became rivalistic.[108] Hamerton-Kelly makes the same point when he says, "[Adam] was the first to turn desire to acquisitive and conflictual mimesis".[109] Further, good and evil, instead of being determined on the basis of who God is, became defined by the criteria of man-centered appropriation ("What is good for me?" or "This is better than that"). Moreover, man no longer accepted his 'self' as something given but as something that needed to be acquired by "forging an identity over against the other".[110] We find a similar idea in Bultmann, for whom "the ultimate sin reveals itself to be the false assumption of receiving life not as a gift of the Creator but procuring it by one's own power, of living from one's self rather than from God".[111] Since such self-determination based on good and evil always elicits discriminatory judgments, Alison says, it functions as "self-expulsion out of the paradise of receiving gratuitously".[112]

This deformation of desire is not limited to sensuality as has often been read into the story based on the shame of nakedness felt by the

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are content to accept sin as originated and thus avoid the literalism of a historical fall, a position with which Alison disagrees [Hefling, "A View from the Stern" 689-710].

[107] By speaking of 'deformed desire' we are making already a theological judgment based on a 'good creation'. In other words, Alison is asserting that humans possessed a desire different from what it became after the fall.

[108] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 246

[109] R. Hamerton-Kelly , *Sacred Violence: Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross* (London: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 88

[110] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 246

[111] R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 232

man and the woman after their transgression. Such an emphasis on concupiscence (undoubtedly a consequence of sin) tends to obscure more significant elements such as covetousness, rivalry and scapegoating. Together they are symptoms of a mimetic crisis. Hamerton-Kelly has even suggested that they signify the presence of sacred violence.[113] Alison too alludes to the same idea in his christological reading of the fall. He claims that the murder of Jesus suggests what must have taken place at the fall. Convinced that sin is at heart a relational matter and not a failure in observance, he writes, "sin has to do with relational disturbance, which leads to violence among the whole community".[114] It follows automatically from the distortion of our desire and its manifestation as rivalistic mimesis. This is more than the Pelagian argument for a social mediation of sin, the infection by bad example and its imitation.[115] It is a corruption of the human heart where covetousness powered the mimetic conflict so that even God was cast in the role of the "vengeful rival".[116]

In his christological reading of the fall, Alison urges a radical demythologizing of the event. He argues that from the perspective of the Christ-event the first prohibition of eating the fruit looks like a projection of a way of salvation that depends on Law.[117] Paul has shown that Law leads without fail to the 'double-bind' of appropriative mimesis.[118] Law cannot save, says Alison, because it cannot "reach us at the level of

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[112] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 246
[113] R. Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, 91
[114] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 137
[115] W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 255
[116] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 148
[117] Explained as a pre-occupation of the post-exilic compilers of the Hebrew Scriptures.
[118] See also R. Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, 88-120

desire".[119] If used without an anterior change in desire, the Law will function only as an instrument of its distortion for it will suggest that God himself is enviously keeping something for himself. Since the New Testament repudiates salvation by Law, the only appropriate interpretation of the story of Gen 3 is one of substitution.[120] Such a reading of the original Garden scene drastically shifts the focus. The center is no longer the transgression of a primal prohibition but a person.[121] According to Alison, the relationality God was bringing into being from the beginning was based on the possibility that humans recognize each other "as alike in the light of non-appropriative mimesis".[122] The same humanity that God originally intended becomes visible in the new community he gathers after the resurrection, where he brings into being a people called to be like him by loving each other, rather than a social order that lives by prohibition.

To fully understand Alison's argument, we still must answer the question what Alison means when he says that we need to see a person at the center of Gen 3. He reasons like this: if God was bringing into being creatures capable of seeing each other "as alike" human mimetic propensity would have resulted in the temptation of desiring not an object such as the forbidden fruit but another human being. In other words, the creature made to relate to others in non-appropriative ways, now acted against its own kind rivalistically. Since such coveting of the being of another means nothing less than taking their life, the initial sin would have been an act against the life of one of the beings God was

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[119] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 250. Paul's lament in Rom 7:15ff seems to reflect this experience.
[120] Ibid., 247
[121] Ibid.

bringing into existence and not the transgression against a command to abstain from reaching for the fruit.

Since it was this sphere that Christ entered, a world where through the dynamism of mimetic rivalry the very being of others is coveted and violently 'appropriated', Gen 3 must also be understood in the light of this dynamic. When a hostile mob took Jesus' life, he suffered the fate of all other human victims, which if applied to Gen 3 means that the pattern of original sin is murder. Concerning the Law, his death showed that its ultimate logic leads to expulsion and sacral violence. However, as the "perfect imitator of the Father", he exhibited the true nature of God, who has nothing to do with expulsion and violence for he is without rivalry.[123]

Alison is aware that his interpretation of the fall is speculative and that his presentation of the story in Gen 3 is a creative re-reading. However, by weaving together a Girardian and christological explication of its pattern, Alison reconstructs for us the idea of original sin. He takes us beyond the symbolic language and imagery of Gen 3 and raises the possibility that the Christ-event revealed the bondage we need to be delivered from by re-enacting what might have happened originally.[124] The human condition is not a sickness for which Jesus is the cure, but captivity to rivalistic and death-dealing mimesis. Hence, we need life in the form of a new, non-acquisitive consciousness to reform our desires. Only thus will humans be able to enjoy the non-violent relationality of

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[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid., 51

[124] Re-telling the Genesis story the way Alison does may have its fascination, but it also raises some serious questions about epistemology and theological method, which are beyond the scope of this paper. I disagree with Alison when he sees in the primal prohibition only a rabbinic preoccupation with "salvation

grace that God wanted humans to have from the beginning, a relationality with him and with each other through radical pacific mimesis of his own pattern of gratuitous self-giving. Alison's argument strongly supports our hypothesis that pacific human mimesis belongs to man's design as part of God's original intention. The mimetic structure exists as the mechanism by which human existence may be constituted relationally, in pacific resonance with God himself. As we shall see in the next section, such resonance with God produces a new consciousness in man, which Alison calls "the intelligence of the victim".

4.3   The Intelligence of the Victim

When Alison speaks of the 'intelligence of the victim', he does not mean a certain piece of information about a person or an event, but the complete change in human consciousness that Jesus came to insert into human history. The resurrection revealed this consummate shift.

Jesus' return from the grave brought to light the possibility of human existence that previously had been completely unimaginable.[125] Previously the dominant paradigm of human existence was constituted by death; now, his return permitted a view of reality that had until then been quite impossible, despite mental assent to certain credal statements about the "resurrection at the last day".[126] Death represented the defining datum of the human story and its ultimate limit. It colored every aspect of human culture and society. But the vision of the crucified

by law", without making room for the view that it represents the moral demand of love [see also D. Kidner, *Genesis: Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), p. 33].

[125] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 77

and risen Lord offered a new hermeneutic key not only to the understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, but also to human existence as a whole.[127] Until then, his followers possessed little or no comprehension of what Jesus was talking about, when he referred to it during his ministry. Only afterwards, did they understand what Jesus meant. This new understanding was brought about by the revelatory event itself (the presence of the crucified and risen Lord) and through the work of the Holy Spirit, which as the Scriptures tell us, had only become possible after his death. This shift in consciousness, Alison calls the "intelligence of the victim".[128]

It enabled the disciples to see the life and death of Jesus from the perspective of the victim, a view he had possessed all along, while to them it had to be revealed with the help of hindsight. Only then did they realize what it was what Jesus in his teaching had been trying to communicate to them from the beginning. This was more than information. It meant the deconstruction of the principles that had heretofore governed their lives, i.e. rivalry and survival by victimization. It meant nothing less than the re-constitution of their way of thinking and being. They had to receive a new pair of 'inner eyes' capable of seeing everything from the view of the risen victim.[129]

Now the human story could be told from the inside, no longer from the position of the victimizers but from that of the victim. But until their mind had been renewed, they could not receive what Jesus had come to

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[126] See Martha's comment in John 11:24

[127] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 79; Alison refers to the OT as the Hebrew Scriptures as he speaks of the time when an OT/NT structure of the Bible was unknown.

[128] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 80

[129] Ibid., 81

give, namely himself in gratuitous self-giving. Until then, they could not imitate his life. Only after their awareness had been changed, were they able also to comprehend the other dimension behind the same reality, that the one who moved Jesus was the Father and that the Son was his *eikon,* his perfect imitation.[130]

The conversion of Paul exemplifies such a profound change of mind. So incisive was the break with his former life as a violent persecutor of the Church that he would say afterwards -

> I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh, I now live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.[131]

To die with Christ meant to identify with the victim. For Paul the sufferings of Christ were identical with the demands of the Mosaic Law for which the exclusionary system of the Temple stood as a monumental symbol. But his conversion allowed him to see the difference (which in essence meant a change in desire): in the realm of the Sacred, mimesis favors the persecutors and creates victims; in the realm of Christ, persecutors are transformed and now see with a new intelligence what they have been doing. They see their deeds for what they are – murders; and through the "intelligence of the victim" they are rendered incapable of justifying their violence by claiming it is 'good violence' because it is done in God's name. Hamerton-Kelly sums it up well when he writes:

> To mime the victim is to see the truth about oneself in the mirror of the victim, decoding the transference, so that the representation appears as the representation of one's own mimetic rivalry and surrogate victimage.[132]

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[130] Ibid.; in Chapter 7 we shall examine our hypothesis from a Trinitarian perspective for which Alison offers us here an intriguing point of contact.
[131] Gal 2:20
[132] R. Hamerton-Kelly , *Sacred Violence,* 70

This same intelligence not only structured Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God but also his radical moral teaching.[133] No wonder he equated anger with murder and lust with adultery, for in each case a thoroughgoing reconstitution of consciousness is needed to grasp the meaning of this message and bring freedom. Such a reconstituted consciousness is more than a coping mechanism that resigns itself before an evil world by passively playing the 'doormat'. Rather, the new intelligence actively desires the imitation of Christ as a proactive encounter with the processes of violent victimization in the world to embrace them and in a smaller or greater degree exhaust them.

The human consciousness of Jesus, as Alison asserts, was not formed in violence but was "pacifically given and received".[134] On the other hand, the disciples had to be possessed by this new mind that was able to perceive the very grace that made it possible. To quote Alison:

> ...in Jesus this gratuity was always there and had made the intelligence of the victim connatural with him: in this world, what a purely gratuitous human presence perceives *is* the intelligence of the victim.[135]

This revolutionary understanding then suggests two conclusions for our hypothesis. What emerges is an image of God that is entirely without violence and only the radical self-giving of God can make possible its application to human society whereby our own complicity with violence is totally undone by the intelligence of the victim. This shift engenders a move from one community to another, from the world of mimetic violence to the *ecclesia* of God whose members have experienced

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[133] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 81
[134] Ibid., 82

such a renewal of consciousness and now live in "penitent solidarity" (mimetically) with the victim.[136] This renewed humanity shall be the focus of the next section.

4.4 The New Humanity

Before we explore Alison's view of the new humanity God came to bring about through his self-revelation in the death and resurrection of Jesus, we need to return to what we have been saying about the present state of human affairs.

We recall Bailie's argument that the historical moment of hominization coincided with the moment when our prehuman ancestors encountered primitive religious experience. Alison refers to the same event when he says that humanity was born when the pattern of imitation "proper to anthropoids became the relatively distinct phenomenon of desire".[137] Prior to the point of hominization, there was no acquisitive imitation, but when it happened, bloodletting was inevitable. Animal sociality became no longer sustainable among the evolving hominids and the human race was born, "however dimly recognizable".[138]

A Girardian reading of the doctrine of original sin reflects the above anthropology. Human origins are closely associated with the foundational murder and produce a societal structure that is based on the distorted desire of mimetic rivalry, the futility of which is now

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[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid., 83
[137] Ibid., 253

experienced on a universal scale. As we have already observed, the pattern of original sin visible in the 'Adamic' order exhibits a conflictual form of identity building. The resulting sociality is however permanently locked into the necessity for self-justification at personal and corporate level and generates an insatiable existential neediness to acquire value and significance in comparison with and over against the other.[139] This social order is constituted and sustained by the dialectic of mutual exclusion. Yet, because of its need to rationalize its identity by rendering the other culpable for the present state of affairs, the one and the other are locked into an inseparable co-dependence. And by attacking and blaming the other, they condemn themselves to the futility of mutual resentment and victimization. It is the pattern of a failed foundation.[140] The questions we are asking along with Alison, how this state of affairs is going to be overcome and what does this overcoming have to say to our hypothesis?

Being human meant for Jesus a different sociological order. In fact, he predicted that the current societal order was going out of existence, and that a new order was coming into being, based on the radical revelation of grace,[141] which in Alison's terms is the subversion of all other foundations. Jesus announced the 'divine project', which existed before the fall, and it was the latter that had caused the distortion of man's mimetic desire.[142] It follows that it is not mimesis but its distortion that needs to be undone, namely its enslavement to a false

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[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., 170
[140] Ibid., 171
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

death-dealing transcendence. What is needed is a transformation from within or 'rectification' of our desire.

But since the fall, God's original intention for a human sociality based on the gratuitous self-donation of God needs to be worked out in the midst of this futility, as Jesus' life and death have shown. Its revelation (and the overcoming from within) does not come to us in a single event. Rather it enters human history through the continuity of God's story, beginning with Abraham, via the history of Israel up to and including the death and resurrection of Christ, and further, through the preaching of the gospel. Alison calls this overcoming of the Adamic order "the coming into being of the *ecclesial hypostasis*[143] [to which] the gratuitous self-giving of God is original and anterior".[144]

This free gift of God's grace is experienced as an unlocking or unbinding reminiscent of the raising and unbinding of Lazarus (John 11:38-44), which comes about as a creative act. Through it comes the undoing of the "thrall of death" and the "undistortion of desire". Both are brought about as a result of forgiveness. It takes the form of a dismantling of the structure of futility accomplished through the self-giving of God and is received as forgiveness and acceptance. The resulting transformation is so radical that the Bible speaks of it as a new creation. It is the coming out of death into life, out of the clutches of

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[143] Alison borrowed this term from Zizioulas, but sets it into a different context. While Zizioulas, in order to describe human existence in patristic theology, juxtaposes the *hypostasis of biological existence* and the *hypostasis of ecclesial existence*, Alison takes the 'ecclesial hypostasis' as the foundational reality of what it means to be human but in eschatological terms ("what we are becoming through ecclesial life"). He then sets it side by side with its negation that is with human existence locked into original sin. Hefling has taken issue with Alison for "sewing the phrase into quite a different fabric of terms" and thus "piling one mystery upon another" [cf. Hefling, "A View from the Stern", 695]. To avoid this problem, we shall not use Alison's terminology. Unless I misunderstand Alison, I think Paul's use of "new" and "old" is quite adequate for our purpose to signal the same distinction Alison seems to have had in mind.

original sin and its concomitant grasping for identity by rivalistic mimesis into the possibility of a new mode of existence that "floats on gratuity".[145]

As the old relational foundations are undone, the capacity for a peaceful mimesis and God's original pattern begins to emerge. Alison writes, "this new way of being human ... is the fulfillment of the original intention, access to which is made available by our being constantly unlocked from our insertion into futility of the human foundation".[146] Subjectively it means that we become captivated by a new consciousness that grafts us into the new foundation of gratuity from where our new desires engender a peaceful mimesis. In the divine ambience of forgiveness (Paul calls it "living in the Spirit") the unlocking takes place and we no longer relate to the mediator of desire in the mode of comparison, but in the mode of self-giving.[147]

The paradigmatic difference between the 'old' and the 'new' sociality is therefore nothing less than the grafting of man into a new foundation. Here people leave behind the rivalistic system and no longer live by self-justification in comparison with others. Personal and communal identity now rests in Christ. Identity is no longer derived from the desire to establish it on the basis of what other people think, approve of or condemn, but by faith in Jesus.[148] Alison equates the subjective experience of this reality with the Pauline terminology of justification by faith. It comes about by the undoing of the 'old' desires on the basis of

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[144] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 174
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid., 175
[147] Paul no doubt speaks about this very phenomenon when he describes the generosity of the Macedonian Churches: "they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us" (2 Cor 8:5).

God's creative forgiveness. The emergence of 'new community' coincides with the emergence of pacific mimesis. This community now imitates Christ even to the point of becoming a victim as it gives itself into the world with the goal of undoing the mimetic workings of the 'old'.[149] Herein lies the reason why the martyr church has always been the most efficacious instrument in the hand of God in giving birth to the new creation, for it presented next to the cross the least distorted human exemplar of the (victimary) image of God.

In the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, God broke into human history. Gradually, Alison says, it dawned on the first community (the apostolic group) that humanity was locked into the false paradigm of reciprocal violence, which in turn "disfigured" man's perception of God.[150] Now they understood not only the subversive nature of Jesus' table fellowship with 'sinners', but also grasped that a new sociality was possible where people could in the peaceful imitation of Christ live freely "as if death were not". For those who have experienced the creative forgiveness of God, the continuity between this life and the next has already come into view. Through the revelation of the "deathless nature of God" they have come out of death into life so that for them human history has begun to participate in eternity.[151]

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[148] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 177
[149] Ibid.; Peter's exhortation, "he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he should for the rest of his life no longer live for the lust of men, but for the will of God" (1 Pet 4:1) is just another expression of the same point Alison makes.
[150] Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong,* 216. In our discussion with Bailie, we spoke in a similar context of a 'false transcendence'.
[151] Ibid., 216-218. Alison sees in this process also the undoing of the apocalyptic view of history. To him it is a progression in the revelatory unfolding leading from the 'day of vengeance' to its subversion from within and the replacement of vengeance with a new eschatological paradigm through the return of the

4.5 Summary

In summarizing the results of our engagement with Alison we want to draw three conclusions.

Humans were created to relate to God and to each other by peaceful imitation. This non-violent relationality of grace that God intended humans to have from the beginning, however, is not accessible in acquisitive mode, only through radical self-giving until humans resonate with the love of God.[152] Human mimesis may therefore be seen as the mechanism by which such resonance is achieved.

However, humanity since the fall is captive to a death-dealing mimetic consciousness that has its origin in a distortion of desire. The revelatory impact of Christ's radical self-giving in the teeth of human appropriative violence inserts into our consciousness, namely the revelation of the absolute deathlessness of God. This new "intelligence" subverts the distortion of our image of God as a vengeful rival and causes a profound transformation of human desire. This shift in consciousness enables humans to see everything from the perspective of the crucified and risen victim. It opens up the possibility for peaceful mimesis by accepting and replicating the self-offering of the Other.

What overcomes the thrall of death and dismantles the structures of futility is the free gift of God's grace. It makes way for a new sociality, in which God's original pattern of peaceful relations begins to emerge.

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crucified and forgiving victim. See his *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996).

[152] Radical self-giving to God is primarily an act of worship. We are reminded of St Basil's imagery: "when a sunbeam falls on a transparent substance, the substance itself becomes brilliant and radiates light from itself. So too spirit-bearing souls, illuminated by Him, finally become spiritual as well" [St Basil, *On*

This new community lives in penitent solidarity with the victim. Its members appropriate the forgiveness available to them through the presence of the crucified and risen Lord. They now exist "as if death were not", albeit in the midst of the old order, which is going out of existence, but henceforth they live as a testimony to the eschatological dimension of the new. The Christ event released and empowered the potentiality for pacific mimesis, which God had laid into the cradle of humanity so that man may exist as his image and likeness.

PART III   HYPOTHESIS TESTED

By studying the work of three Girardian authors, we gained in Part II a deeper understanding of the hypothesis that human mimesis may have a theological explanation. In Part III, we shall test this idea by seeking evidence for it outside the Girardian School in the hope of discovering links between mimetic theory and the revelation of God. Our sources are the Creation story (where we shall focus on the current exegesis of the phrase that man was created in the image and likeness of God), present day trinitarian discourse in its doxological and its doctrinal form, and the life of Jesus.

The logic we are following is straightforward. If human mimesis is a creation gift to the human race, we should be able to discover traces in the primeval story of man's origin, especially in the theology of the *imago* and its symbolism. Secondly, mimesis has been defined by Girard as the capacity to be open to the world and engage in loving relationships. If human relationality is meant to reflect the image of God, we may suppose that trinitarian discourse in its descriptions of divine relationality might also show some mimetic traces. Finally, we expect to find perhaps the strongest evidence in support of our hypothesis in the life of Jesus and in his handling of the mimetic paradox.

Where we investigate the current trinitarian discussion in its doctrinal mode, we shall take our cue from Rahner's Rule and examine briefly whether the development of the relationship between the

immanent and the economic Trinity from Barth to Pannenberg may have something to say to our hypothesis.

We note that since we will still be using the Girardian lens as our apparatus, the theory-laden character of this test is unavoidable. But given our aim, it will serve to identify additional mimetic patterns as evidence for the provisional conclusion that human mimesis is rooted in God's design for humanity as his image and by implication perhaps even in the very relationality of God. At the same time, we must leave open the question whether in the process of testing our hypothesis every detail authentically reflects Girard's system of thought.

CHAPTER 5   <u>MIMETIC TRACES IN THE GENESIS PROLOGUE</u>

5.1   *Introduction*

For a long time, the first sentence of the Bible formed the foundational framework of Christian understanding of the beginning of the world. But even in a scientific age, we must not relegate the creation story to the realm of primitive religion because it is written in confessional language. The narrative of Genesis 1:1-2:3 has been called a Prologue to the Book of Genesis. It covers the history of creation, where we find ourselves in "time before history" as Scullion calls it.[153] While the narrative is presented in the language of symbol and story, and is as such without proof, it constitutes by no means 'myths' or fictitious material.

According to Westermann, the beginning of the Book of Genesis points unmistakably to God as Creator.[154] For the people of the Old Testament the world could not have come about in any other way, and their response was the praise of the Creator. In such a matrix of Creator-creation man found his own place as part of a larger whole. Brueggemann sees the Genesis narrative as centered on two divine calls: the calling of the world into existence, and the calling of a people. The text becomes a reflection upon what these calls imply in terms of demand from and response to the Creator.[155] Firmage, on the other hand, takes a source critical approach and attributes significance not to

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[153] J. Scullion, SJ, *Genesis, a Commentary for Students, Teachers and Preachers* (Collegeville, Min: The Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 1-10

[154] C. Westermann, *Creation* (London: SPCK, 1971), p. 1-5

the cosmology of the narrative nor primarily to the creation of man as the climax of God's work, but to the underlying *Leitmotif* of the P source, which he sees as holiness. He argues that humanity and holiness are twin concepts of God's image on earth.[156]

The text reflects a mindset different from ours. In the Hebrew mind all questions had to be resolved in the relationship between the Creator and his creation. Man existed as a whole being in a theistically ordered world without abstract conceptions or speculative metaphysics that divided the universe into such opposing ideas as 'God and the world' or 'the finite and the infinite'. It is this inner cohesion of the Hebrew view of reality that encourages us in our search for mimetic allusions as an expression of the relationality between man and his creator. If they exist, we should find them right at the beginning.

We propose to first examine God's inaugural movements in creation and the surrounding circumstances of which the creation account speaks. Secondly, we shall look at God's work and man's work mandate. In the first instance, we hope to grasp something of the Creator's original vision, while in the second we shall seek to discover how this intention for his creature was to be implemented on man's part.

5.2   *The Creator's Vision*

By bringing forth from chaos an ordered cosmos, by allocating fundamental astrophysical and geo-morphological structures and by

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[155] W. Brueggemann , *Genesis: Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 1

[156] E. Firmage, "Genesis 1 and the Priestly Agenda," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 82, (1999): 97-114.

calling forth a world that teems with organic life, God designates himself as Creator.[157] His vision is put in place through divine speech such that his spoken word is continuous with his creation.[158] God pronounces blessing to ensure life's increase and perpetuity and, when this work is done, he declares it to be "good" and avers that what has come forth conforms to his original vision and design. McBride puts it this way:

> [God] attribute[s] an ethos to creation, underscoring that its order reflects deliberate decisions generated in the will or "moral imagination" of the creator.[159]

What is noteworthy is the complete and immediate correspondence between God's desire (expressed by his utterance) and the emerging universe. If we analyze this responsiveness, we find a two-fold structure.

First, there is the recurring word-response pattern: 'God speaks and so it happens'. God's word is efficacious as proclaimed in Isa 55:11: "so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it".[160]

The second element of this responsiveness, by which the world takes shape incrementally under further acts of divine speaking, is that it follows an intrinsic order or *logos*. Subsequent tradition has called it 'wisdom'. For instance, the personified wisdom of Proverbs 8 identifies her presence in the act of creation. Consequently the world is not chaotic

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[157] An interesting question arises in this context. Can it be said that what surfaces at the human level as mimesis is already inherent in the reflexive self-designation whereby God chooses to be 'Creator'?

[158] Cf. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 76; also, Bruce Vawter has pointed out that in the ancient world, words and deeds were frequently seen as one [Vawter, B., *On Genesis*, p.41].

[159] S. D. McBride Jr., "Divine Protocol: Gen 1:1-2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch", in *God who Creates*, W. Brown and S. D. McBride Jr. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 10

[160] Analogously we find in human relationships that words have power. Not because we live in a magical world, but because words are able to induce a response in the hearer that may be consonant with the intention of the speaker.

nor senseless, but intelligible. Hermisson wrote, "Wisdom ... is present in the created world as regularity and purposiveness, and therefore also as beauty". [161]

There is yet another dimension. According to Biblical tradition, the presence of wisdom while it ensures order and beauty in the universe has also an important educational function. Wisdom sayings were formulated to turn the correspondence between the intelligibility of the world and the divine purpose into effective knowledge at the human level.[162] By aligning man's desires and conduct to the pattern of wisdom, human affairs are adapted to the divine ordering, so that God is honored through this response (a form of imitation), which in type emulates the material universe in its response to the creator.[163]

Other places of the creation story also point to this divinely ordained intimacy. For instance, in God's direct speech addressed to man,[164] how God allocates food,[165] and in the regular fellowship he seems to have enjoyed with man during walks in the Garden.[166] The relationship with man was to be of a "familial" nature.[167] It meant - within human limits - doing what God does, and the scene of Gen 2:19 is a vivid illustration of the idea. God brings to man all the living creatures he had made and calls upon man to 'name' them. To be sure, this stands symbolically for man's commission to exercise dominion. But just as God

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[161] H.-J. Hermisson, "Observations on the Creation Theology in Wisdom", in *Creation in the Old Testament*, Bernard W. Anderson, ed. (London: SPCK, 1984), p. 120
[162] Ibid., 119; see also D. Atkinson, *The Message of Proverbs* (Leicester, UK: Intervarsity Press, 1996).
[163] Proverbs 1:7, 20-33; 2:2-5; 10: 12-17; 3:15; 4:6-8; 7:4; 8:10-11; 9:5; 10:23; 16:16; 17:16; 19:8; 23:23; 24:14 are relevant examples.
[164] Gen 1:28, 2:16
[165] Gen 1:29, 2:16-17
[166] Gen 3:8
[167] M. Wilfong, "Human Creation in Canonical Context", in *God Who Creates,* W. P. Brown and S. D. McBride Jr. eds., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 44

himself had 'named', differentiated and called forth the cosmic creation,[168] so is man now apprenticed to do a similar work at his level with the lower creation and thus *imitate* the divine pattern under God's loving supervision and in close relationship with him.[169] Here we find God and man working together in a moment of shared experience and meaning, in a situation one may call the 'primal participative event' between the Creator and his creature. This experience of intense mutual participation, we suggest, is capable of mediating the desire to do so again. For our purpose, we note its triangular structure. As in all communication, there is one who communicates and the other who experiences the communication and reciprocates it. But then a third entity is present, namely the *participative event* between them. As we have suggested, it is the experience of shared meaning that registers as a mutually possessed moment of existence made intelligible through an exchange of signs. Because the structure of participation is highly dynamic, it continually absorbs the relationship into itself, so that each new event partially deconstructs and recomposes the concept of the relationship, which in turn leads to an ever renewed sign or representation.

6.3 God's Work, Man's Mandate

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[168] God's 'naming' calls into existence and stands in no comparison with what *adam* was called to do.

[169] I agree with Patrick McArdle that the relations resulting from the naming of the animals are "simple and closed" and that the exercise of naming led to the recognition that the rest of creation is utterly "other"[cf. McArdle's paper "Called by Name", p. 10, presented at the ACU Research Seminar of July 23, 2001]. To my reading, the intimate and mimetic relationship of man to God seems to be also quite visible in the divine assignment of naming.

We have already suggested that man, as God's creature was to follow God's pattern, loving what God loves and doing what God does. If we apply this thought to the aspect of work, we find here too some interesting parallels. The Creator worked for six days and rested on the seventh. Hart has suggested that this pattern "is plainly presented as a pattern for man to follow".[170] He argued that the command to rest makes sense only if preceded by days of work and that, in addition, the language of the Genesis prologue clearly conveyed the idea of a correspondence between God's work and man's. Important from our perspective is that the text not only demythologizes man's environment, making it safe for work, but also presents again an imitative structure where the Creator's work is translated into a mandate for man to fulfill in functional terms. Westermann too highlights the point we made earlier that man was called *to do what God does*. He is of the view that the nature of man's work (tilling and keeping) falls into two essential categories, creating and maintaining,[171] which likewise suggests that man was to replicate God's work.

Hart highlights also the liturgical dimension of the "feast of creation" as Moltmann calls it,[172] when he suggests that man's work mandate must be seen in relation to the Sabbath.[173] Its basic significance in Israel was not rest (in our meaning of the term) but the idea of worship. On the Sabbath Israel did not rest, but engaged in liturgical activity and collective worship. According to Hart, "observing

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[170] I. Hart, "Genesis 1:1-2:3 as Prologue to the Book of Genesis", *Tyndale Bulletin,* 46, no. 2 (1995): 315-336

[171] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11,* 221

[172] Moltmann, *God in Creation* 276, following F. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erloesung* (Heidelberg, 1959), p. 63-69

the Sabbath day was a way of making a theological statement". Drawing on the parallel of the sabbatical year, which through the *pars pro toto* principle acknowledges God's sovereignty over the land, he argues that the meaning of the Sabbath day should be seen in a similar light. Giving God the seventh part of the week means giving him the whole, which sets man's work in the context of worship. Man's whole life is thus directed towards God.

If Hart is correct, we could argue that the sabbatical principle is more than just a reminder. Rather it is an invitation to participate in God's own pattern at the human level. The idea of man observing God's pattern as it may have been communicated before the fall and its fragmentary development during Israel's history based on *torah,* does not diminish the force of the argument that we are dealing with an imitative mandate.

Looking at the dimension of God's work in the rest of the Scriptures, one finds the same pattern that has already been observed in the prologue to Genesis. There is ample support for the idea that God is a worker who intends us to engage with him in the same activities as he does. For example, R. Banks has shown that a "theology for every day life" may be effectively centered on the correspondence between God the worker and man's work.[174] No doubt, the imagery of God as artist, composer, potter, metal worker, gardener, garment maker, shepherd, builder etc. has been taken from the living images of man's world. At the same time, we are conscious that God has also revealed himself in those

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[173] Hart, "Genesis 1:1-2:3", 315-336
[174] R. Banks, *God the Worker: Journeys into the Mind, Heart and Imagination of God* (Sydney: Albatross, 1992), p. 10

terms. To be sure they are metaphors that provide us with familiar vocabulary through which we can relate to God. But we would miss an important dimension of God's revelation if we left it at that. Rather, they are given to engage our imagination so that we may be drawn more deeply into God's pattern of life. Just as metaphor seeks to bring harmony between language and the world, so it reaches perhaps its supreme instance of connectivity when it mediates between God and man through the image it conveys. Such images are designed, says Banks, as "a journey into the imagination of God into the heart of God's creative work. It is a journey that takes place not for its own sake, but that we might become imitators of God." [175]

Our closing example comes from the vast realm of musical expression. Its very existence may be seen as part of the creative/artistic side of God's inspiration exemplified by the music-making of Israel. Even a superficial reading of the Psalms will show the constant interplay between the life of God and the invitation to sing, extended both to the individual and to the community, and often resulting in spontaneous worship. When the Bible speaks of the creation as singing together with the angelic host (Job 38:7) and God himself singing over his people with joy (Zeph 3:17), the perception that the musicality of man corresponds to God's own musicality is unavoidable. Once again we recognize the pattern of intense mutual participation which God inspires to bring about a 'participative event' of mutually shared meaning between the creator and his creature, which strongly suggests that this participation in its worshipful ecstasy obeys on man's part a mimetic structure.

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[175] Ibid., 23

5.5   Summary

We began our search for mimetic clues with a reflection on God's original creative vision and inaugural movements in creation and noted how the creator brought it into being through divine speech. What stood out was the immediate correspondence between God's desire and the emerging creation. This responsiveness, as a reflection of divine sovereignty, followed an intrinsic order of regularity and purposeness. The ordering principle of wisdom, we argued, had at the human level also an educational function. It was to align human desire with God's order by evoking a response that emulated the response of the material universe and in this interplay, the presence of a form of imitation was perceived.

We also noted from the creation story that man was called and apprenticed 'to do what God does'. Through the work mandate and the underlying seven-day structure of the creation week, God was laying out a pattern for man to follow. In the assignment to 'till and keep the garden', man was expected at his level to replicate God's work of creating and maintaining. This correspondence between God's work and man's, to which the Scriptures as a whole testify through a variety of imaginary metaphors, exists so that man might imitate God in functional terms as his partner and co-creator.

In the course of these reflections on the prologue to Genesis it became clear not only that the tenor of the relationship between God and man was one of intense mutual participation, but also that man's role

was one of imitating God as his model. These discoveries suggest further that it is God who inspires this participation with the aim of drawing man deeper into the divine life. In other words, man's entire existence was to be lived from within a God-centered ecstasy through mimetically conditioned participation.

CHAPTER 6   MIMETIC TRACES IN GEN 1:26-28

6.1   *Introduction*

Few passages in the Bible have been examined and commented on
more exhaustively than the text that proclaims the reality of God's
creative activity in the origin of the human race, and declares in daring
albeit enigmatic language something substantial about man and his
divinely appointed mission.

> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our
> likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds
> of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping
> thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image; in
> the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Then
> God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill
> the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the
> birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.[176]

As one would expect, the career of this text in exegetical history
has been as colorful and diverse as the history of interpretation itself,
influenced as much by the characteristics of the times as by the
favourite motifs of its interpreters. A vast body of literature has accrued
on the question what may be meant by the 'image of God' and the
subject is still an important focus for theological discussion, although
interest in its exposition has waxed and waned in the course of
history.[177] Over the centuries, the study of the *imago* has had an
important cultural influence, so much so that the history of Western

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[176] Gen 1:26-28, NKJV, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1988)
[177] G. Jonsson, *The Image of God: Gen 1:26-28 in a century of OT research* (Stockholm: Almqist &
Wiksell, 1988), p. 1-3

understanding of man has been regarded as a reflection of the history of interpretation of the *imago*.[178] But as the literature shows, the range and the diversity of exegetical opinion have been such that one must legitimately ask whether a consensus is at all possible.

The task of this Chapter, however, is not to explore each exegetical position but to seek evidence for human mimesis. Since this term is more concerned with sociality than personality structure, we shall limit our search mainly to those interpretations of the *imago* that emphasize the dynamic and relational dimension of humanity. To that end, we shall first sketch the biblical basis of the *imago*, then summarize the most prominent views of its interpretation. Next, we shall explore to what extent human mimesis is detectable in the exegetical proposal that currently enjoys the widest support among Old Testament scholars. Lastly, we offer a brief excursus on the work of Origen (185-254 AD). While his interpretation of the *imago* does not fit the current majority view, we believe we can justify his inclusion in this study. From our reading of Crouzel, Origen's modern commentator, it seems plausible to me that Origen might have had some distant inkling of the idea of mimesis.

6.2   The Image of God in the Bible

The primary evidence for the phrase 'the image and likeness' in the Old Testament is relatively sparse. The first reference in Gen 1:26-28 follows a solemn self-exhortation on God's part "Let us make man..."

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[178]Ibid., xiii, citing E. Brunner.

Therefore, interpreters have argued the phrase appears first as a theological statement, not as an anthropological one. Further, it expresses the creator's intention that human beings should have dominion over the rest of creation and that they are created as social beings through their male- and femaleness. The second reference appears in Gen 5:1-3. Here the 'image' is mentioned in the context of generational succession through filiation. The third in Gen 9:5-6 presents man as an especially dignified being (albeit a sinner by now) whose blood may not be spilt on account of the image of God that is in him.

Since the 'image' and 'having dominion' are closely connected in the creation narrative, it is reasonable to conclude that "humans have been created with a special status as image bearers" and with "special accountabilities before God".[179] Von Rad proposed in parallel with ancient Middle-Eastern ideas of royal representation, an analogy that man is the image of God to represent and "enforce his claims to dominion over the earth".[180] Man as God's image had a function in the world. Inherent in the text is the social rather than the individual emphasis, not only by virtue of the reference to a plurality of sexes but also on account of God's own self-reference.

The New Testament places the image in a christological context. Christ is presented as the ultimate image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), the one who reveals his glory. In salvation the life of believers is transformed into the image of Christ and now reflects his glory (2 Cor 3:18) and it is their destiny to be conformed to his likeness (Rom 8:29).

Therefore, believers must appropriate (put on) the new self (Eph 4:24) to experience the renewal of that image (Col 3:19). God's vision from the beginning was to bring about a people (a plurality in community) who will reflect his image, the completion of which will have to await the consummation of history.

6.3   Summary of "Imago" Exegesis

The current exegetical tradition (as distinct from the doctrinal tradition) of the *imago Dei* has existed for over a century as Jonsson has shown.[181] During this period many changes in exegetical methodology and emphasis have occurred which influenced the interpretation of the *imago Dei.* Literary criticism together with the emergence and subsequent refinement of the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch text, played important roles. In addition, the discoveries of ancient extra-biblical materials like the *Enuma Elish* offered further insights into the importance of these earlier traditions. Since the 1970s a flood of articles and books has appeared dealing with the image and likeness of God in man. Helpfully, within the broader context of Old Testament studies noted scholars (e.g. Jonsson, Wenham, Westermann and others) have compiled summaries of *imago Dei* exegesis. We rely on their work for outlining the main contours of current state of the exegesis classified by the central idea of each exegetical proposal. [182]

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[179] S. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), p. 225
[180] G. von Rad , *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), p. 60
[181] Jonsson, *The Image of God,* 6

1.   The 'image' and the 'likeness' are distinct:

This proposal rests on the assumption that 'image' (*tselem*) refers to the natural qualities in man like reason and personality. The 'likeness' (*demuth*) by contrast represents the supernatural graces, which have been lost in the fall. First proposed by Irenaeus, others (including Origen) have understood image and likeness as separate aspects of human nature. Catholic and Orthodox theology (as distinct from exegesis) still show traces of this idea. It has been abandoned as a serious proposal mainly because such a distinction is foreign to the Hebrew text and does not express the original meaning.

2.   The 'image and likeness' refer to spiritual qualities:

The idea that man shares the mental and spiritual faculties of the Creator has enjoyed longstanding support ever since Philo and Augustine. Not only were the powers of the soul in memory, intellect and will trinitarian traces in man's make-up (Augustine), but the image of God manifested also as freedom, consciousness and immortality and any other noble trait in man. From its earliest beginnings of the Church in East and West, interpreters have been drawn to this view as the most plausible one, even though the Old Testament does not support such explanations. Augustine, for instance, saw this likeness as constituting memory, intellect and will. Modern adherents include such scholars as Schleiermacher, Dillmann, Koenig, Procksch, Eichrodt, Gross, Soehngen,

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[182] Ibid., 26-34; also Westermann, *Genesis 1-11,* 147-161

and numerous others. The view is still current although attempts to define the 'image' have been abandoned because it is considered superfluous because the nature of the 'image' is too well known. Critics have alleged that those who hold this view tend to read their own values into the 'image'.[183]

3.   The 'image' consists in physical resemblance:

Based on the most frequent interpretation of the Hebrew *tselem* (image) we meet in this proposal with the idea that 'man looks like God'. The corporeal form is seen as the expression of the spiritual nature resulting in a real external relationship between man's inner being and his outward (upright) posture. Those who propose this view do not hold it exclusively but see it as part of the meaning of the 'image'. Among them we find Gunkel, Humbert, Koehler and von Rad. This view has been criticized on the grounds that the Old Testament does not distinguish between corporeal and spiritual realms and that in putting it forward, scholars have resorted to a crass anthropomorhism. Others have been critical from a different angle altogether, arguing that the 'image' has nothing to do with what man is or does, but with humanity as a whole.

4.   The 'image' means man is God's representative on earth:

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[183] G. Wenham , *Genesis 1-15* (Waco, Tx., Word Books 1987), p. 30

This interpretation has come about largely as a result of Barr's semantic studies, which led to the understanding that the biblical text joins the meaning of the 'image' with the idea of 'having dominion'. Two closely interwoven emphases characterize this interpretation, viz. the 'royal' and the 'functional'. While both locate their meaning in the purpose of man's creation (to have dominion), the first draws support from recent studies of ancient extra-biblical texts, mainly from Assyria and Egypt, where the statue of the king represented the royal presence. Analogously the 'image of God' assigned to man a vice-regal position, which in turn pointed to God's sovereign rule and witnessed to his presence. W.H. Smith and Wildbeger pioneered the royal interpretation, while Holzinger and Hehn emphasized the functional view of the 'image' which interpreted man's role as one of stewardship. The latter gained little support initially, but has now gained favor with most Old Testament scholars like Brueggemann, Clines, Dumbrell, Gross, Klein, von Rad, W.H. Smith, Wenham, Wildberger, Wolff and Zimmerli. According to Hart,[184] it represents the majority view today. Critics have argued that the royal metaphor overlooks that the 'image' does not refer to individuals but to the species. Wenham says in defense that this criticism fails to acknowledge man's implied mediatorial role between God and the rest of creation.[185]

5. The 'image' as capacity to relate to God:

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[184] Hart, "Genesis 1:1-2:3", 315-336.
[185] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 31

This exegetical proposal emphasizes that man has been created as a being that can stand before God and be addressed by him. It points to the divine - human partnership and emphasizes that God and man may have dealings with each other. This view has often been associated with Barth, but it enjoyed adherents before him. It is first found in Riedel (1902). Barth, Brunner, Hessler, Horst, Stamm, Vischer, Vriezen and Westermann are among its main proponents. Barth's view that the 'image' did not refer to anything that belonged to humanity, but to humanity itself, offered a new starting point for the 'imago Dei' discussion. According to Barth it is in Jesus that we perceive by faith the true image of God. Thompson commenting on Barth, writes: "it [the image] is given in and with the structure of our being and belongs inherently to all people, whether they know it or not."[186] However, it is not only the humanity of Jesus that is in view here, but also man's communal nature given through our male and femaleness. According to Barth, the *imago Dei* is found in our creatureliness such that our co-humanity in Christ encompasses the possibility of partnership with God, which can only be fully exercised as re-born members of the body of Christ.[187] Westermann took a different route and argued that the biblical text speaks of an action on God's part and of human nature and that the 'image' has meaning only in the context of the primeval event, namely the process of creation. His presupposition critiques all other views, which assume that people bear the image of God as a special quality. In his view, exegesis has falsely centered on what the image consists of and what it means. Since the text does not offer a universally valid statement

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[186] J. Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.112

about the nature of man or the quality of human beings, we must rethink our interpretive framework and see the process of creation as the hermeneutic of the 'image'. Because the text says something of the beginning of humanity, it is the act of creation that enables an event to take place between God and man. To that extent, Westermann's view overlaps with #4 above.

<p style="text-align:center">*　*　*</p>

How do we relate the foregoing to our investigation? If, with Westermann,[188] "the meaning [of the image] must come from the creation event", we can argue that what God creates must correspond to him. Furthermore, since the creation text is not concerned with the creation of the individual but with mankind as a species, we must avoid engaging in ideology driven speculation about special qualities. But if no particular quality is meant other than being man, if humanity as a whole is created as God's counterpart,[189] then all differences between men and women, between one ethnic group and the other, are transcended. In Chapter 6 we noted the immediate correspondence between God's creative utterance and the order which followed. We also observed a similar correspondence between God's work and man's so that the representational/functional interpretation of the 'image' is quite compatible with the thrust of our main argument. Our reflections on the vision of the Creator and man's mandate are, in other words, in close agreement with the last two exegetical positions. What we shall now attempt is to probe this relational expression for human mimesis.

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[187] Ibid., 113
[188] Westermann, *Creation,* 56
[189] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11,* 158

6.4 Iconic Man - God's Counterpart

Let us begin with the already familiar idea that the creation, including the creation of man, is the embodiment of God's loving and creative desire. Because humanity as a whole was created as God's image, this species is 'iconic'.[190] We have already seen that this symbol has more to do with the origin of man and the relationship constituted by that origin than with a special quality. At the same time, the human being is so constituted that the fulfillment of its iconic design may only be sought in an intimate relationship with the creator. Barth puts it very eloquently:

> "In our image" means to be created as a being that has its ground and possibility ... in God's own sphere of being ... . There exists a divine and therefore self-grounded prototype to which this being can respond, which can therefore legitimate it for all that it is in heterogeneous *imitation*; (emphasis added).[191]

Apart from the ontological point that Barth stresses here, what is of interest for our thesis is that God created man such that his true existence rests on the *imitation* of the divine prototype. From the perspective of God's original vision we might say that God did not seek just to behold what he had created. If human beings are ordained to be the image of God, it means that the creature was to recognize the creator, and God would in his work behold as in a mirror his own countenance.[192] Thus man is created as a genuine counterpart whose

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[190] P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, p. 173, and J. Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity", p. 425

[191] K. Barth, *CD III*, 183

[192] Cf. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 77

fidelity could be safeguarded only by a love response in terms of God's own character. But if humanity is iconic by virtue of its creation, we need to ask how iconic humanity is supposed to manifest the 'image of God'? The example of ancient Israel illustrates the point. According to McBride,

> Israel unlike other nations, ... [was] obliged not only to honor the creator from afar but to be configured into a corporeal temple, infused with holiness and order to *mediate* the gracious presence of the cosmic sovereign ...." (emphasis added).[193]

In other words, man's iconic role was to be mediatorial to the rest of creation. Just as Christ is the *eikon* of the invisible God, so humanity was to become a visual reproduction through its relationship with the creator. This portrait was to consist in corporate holiness "compatible with the divine presence".[194] Let us look at some implications.

As God's counterpart, man was apparently capable of responsible action towards God, towards his fellow man and towards the rest of creation. But this implied further that man had to be endowed with the ability to be aware of these relationships and ask questions about them, that is the capacity for genuine face to face encounter. In Vawter's words, "man was not only a creature but also a conscious creature".[195] He goes on to say, "in the consciousness of his creaturehood he *mirrors* in some fashion the supreme consciousness with whom he can dialogue" (emphasis added).[196] This co-existence and cooperation with God was to be achieved along the path of consciousness, discovery and adaptability through reciprocity with his Maker, by which humanity through

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[193] McBride Jr., *God who Creates,* 29
[194] Ibid.
[195] B. Vawter, *On Genesis,* 57

creaturely imitation was to replicate the divine life in human existence.[197]

We have already mentioned man's mandate to have dominion and model it on God's dominion. Wilfong's words underscore this idea:

> If humankind is to carry out the task of dominion as God's representative, then the exercise of human dominion should *imitate* God's own dominion .... (emphasis added).[198]

As we can see, the position of iconic man in the scheme of creation was to be pivotal. As God's counterpart, it was to be the representative link between God and creation by bearing the divine life through conscious and faithful reciprocity with its source, doing what God does, mediating the presence of God to the rest of creation. This role of man is magnificently described in Psalm 104. The psalmist uses his consciousness to meditate on the great works of God and thereby recognizes the divine order in all that exists. Face to face with God, he is concerned about his personal adaptation to the divine pleasure (v 34) and expresses his relationship to God in praise and worship (v 1, 31, 33, 35b).

But these relational expressions would have little meaning if God were not genuinely interactive.[199] In Brueggemann's view, the human person, according to Old Testament understanding, "lives in *intense mutuality* with YHWH" (emphasis added).[200] This keenly sensitive relationship has obvious moral implications for man, for representation

[196] Ibid.
[197] Cf. K. Barth, *CD III-1*, 184-185
[198] Wilfong, "Human Creation in Canonical Context", in McBride, *God Who Creates,* 45-46. For Vawter this dominion was not to be exploitative, for man's food had been restricted to plants, i.e. man was not allowed to kill animals for food [cf Vawter, *On Genesis,* p. 60].
[199] Brueggemann, *OT Theology,* 453
[200] Ibid.

demands both form and integrity. And the covenant with its obligation to fidelity is the instrumentality by which God seeks to ensure that humans are empowered to function as the iconic medium of the divine presence. "Humanity is sustained by God's covenants", writes McBride.[201] But man's enjoyment of God's benevolence presupposes adaptation to the will of God by replicating in life the liturgical pattern of the covenant.

What we have been able to establish so far is strongly suggestive of what we shall see more clearly in the next chapter, namely that the phenomenon of human mimesis seems to be rooted in God's intent for man in terms of the divine/human relationship. Man's mimetic design is aimed at the fulfillment of his mediatorial and representative role in creation. The human being then - like a work of art - was to be a sign that incarnates and temporalizes the intention of the Creator, who is the ultimate referent of the sign. The possibility exists that this sign is to be accomplished dynamically as Gans puts it by "mimetically appropriating the central Being".[202]

We cannot leave this reflection without thinking about man's freedom. If man's role is predicated on an intensely personal relationship with God through loving covenantal fidelity, what is it that triggers and sustains in man the desire to imitate someone other than himself, especially since God's love cannot and will not coerce or compel? On the other hand, would not imitation reduce man to a mere mirror or reflector and what would that mean for his endowment with power for self-transcendence and discovery? We cannot explore these issues fully, but

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[201] McBride Jr., *God who Creates,* 41
[202] cf E. Gans, L., *Signs of Paradox: Irony, Resentment and other Mimetic Structures* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 94

simply draw attention to two aspects. Firstly, our earlier reference to what we have called the *participative event* and its function as the mediator of the desire of further replications (which in turn renew and reconstruct the signs and representations of the relationship). Secondly, that fidelity in the relationship between man and God lies not in meticulous observance of law or ritual, but in repeated 'vertical' participation (worship). Assuming man is constituted mimetically as the foregoing seems to suggest, we would say that man participates freely in that relationship, and since he does not perceive his mimetic constitution as 'non-freedom', he understands himself as 'free' for he acts mimetically towards the model or mediator of his desire. But as we have already seen in Chapters 5-7, since man's entrapment in rivalistic mimesis is very real, he is deceived about his freedom. Having forfeited the ability of pacific mimesis, he cannot extract himself unaided from the dark powers of its rivalistic mode. Man must be born again, for only Christ can set him free.

6.5   *Excursus – Origen*

One of the ancient minds that seemed to have perceived elements of mimesis is Origen's. While neither he nor his commentator H. Crouzel whose work we are following, would have thought in terms of mimetic theory, we find many astonishing parallels of expression in his work. Although Origen adheres like many of his contemporaries to the view that the 'image' and the 'likeness' are separate entities, his ideas deserve

to be heard in the context of this study. For reasons of space, we shall limit our observations only to the most telling examples.

Like most of the ante-Nicene Fathers, Origen interpreted the opening of Gen 1:26 as "a conversation between the Father and the Son, his co-worker in creation".[203] Christ is the agent as well as the *model* for the creation of man. Since, for Origen, only Christ is "the image of God", Origen invariably refers to man as made "after the image".[204] The locus of the image, however, is not in the body but in the soul and in its higher regions such as the "intellect or the governing faculty".[205] For Origen the phrase "after the image" also means "participation in the Father and the Son", which in turn means "receiving divinzation and progressing in it".[206] The Son communicates to us the "quality of sons". The humanity of Christ, while not included in "Christ the image of God", plays nevertheless a significant role in the transmission of the image, or as Crouzel puts it, "it is the most immediate model offered to us to imitate".[207]

Origen understands our participation in God dynamically. As Crouzel writes, "the image tends to rejoin the model and to reproduce it".[208] While he does not imply divine determinism, he sees the image as man's most profound part. His deepest and dynamic core (participation in God) leads man to become more like his model through the imitation of God in Christ, which can be understood as progressing spiritually

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[203] II. Crouzel, *Origen* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), p. 93
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid., 94
[206] According to Crouzel, this term "after the image" stands synonymously for Origen's understanding of sanctifying grace [cf Ibid., 95]
[207] The imitation of God, says Crouzel, is found already in Greek philosophy. While absent in the Old Testament, it is abundantly present in the Gospels and the Pauline epistles. The concept holds a strong place in Origen. [ibid., 97; see note 30].

from being "after the image" towards the attainment of 'likeness'. As only like knows like, we are what we imitate and we imitate what we are.[209]

Under the influence of sin, however, earthly, even bestial images, are superimposed on the heavenly image. These are assimilated by man and worked out on the moral plane. While these images can pollute the original, they cannot destroy it. Although the original image may be buried under the mire of sin, it can be rehabilitated through the grace of Christ. It is this permanence of the image which assures for Origen the possibility of conversion. Only through the presence of the image can we know God.

Being created "after the image of God" makes man akin to God, and it is God who causes man to desire him. Love is defined as the desire for divine things.[210] The more man gives himself to that knowing and desiring, the more he progresses towards God's likeness, which is at the same time progression in Son-ship through the believer's participation in the reciprocal relationship between the Father and the Son.[211] Such a relationship Origen hypothesized had its origin in the pre-existence of the soul, and rational creatures before the fall were "absorbed in the contemplation of God".[212]

But it is Origen's doctrine of sin that offers us perhaps the strongest language in support of our thesis. In a passage on the purity of desire, Crouzel, quoting Origen, describes the presence of the mimetic

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[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid., 96-97
[210] Ibid., 140
[211] Ibid., 117
[212] Ibid., 209

paradox, where the imitator seeks rivalistically to take the place of the model:

> In the divine thought ... the aim of the perceptible is to point the soul in the direction of the true realities and ... to inspire in the soul the desire for these. There is, however, the risk, because of the weakness of selfishness of man that it will take the place of its Model and arrogate to itself the adoration due to the Truth, which it figures. ... impurity does not attach to the perceptible but to the selfishness of man.[213]

While the conclusion from Crouzel's language seems almost self-evident, let us draw the threads together briefly. We note first that even in this short account of Origen's interpretation of the *imago*, all the elements of mimetic theory seem to be present: the model, the reference to imitation and above all the notion of possessive or acquisitive desire. Secondly, we note the deeper insight that, under the deceptive influence of selfish desire, what is perceptible to the senses is capable of impersonating the true image of God. It may become man's imitative center so that this false image emerges as the object of man's transcendent desire. Man's propensity for desiring was, by divine intention to be directed towards God, and this internal core remains present even after the fall. Through it man may recognize and imitate the true model, Christ, and grow into his likeness. Astonishingly, it seems as if in Origen's mind man was constituted on the basis of imitative desire even before creation and that, in his inner core, he was meant to live in a reciprocal relationship with his creator, a view to which Crouzel's language rather persuasively points.

6.6   Summary

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[213] Ibid., 138-139

The purpose of this Chapter was to test the image-of-God interpretation as it currently stands in exegetical scholarship for its compatibility with the idea of human mimesis. After briefly surveying the biblical narrative for occurrences of the "image and likeness of God" terminology, we summarized the current state of the *imago* exegesis. Today the majority of Old Testament scholars favour a model of the 'image' that encompasses humanity as a whole and is both relational and functional. We also concluded that this interpretation was in many respects compatible with our reflections in Chapter 5 on God's vision in creation and man's mandate so that man as a species stands as God's counterpart in a privileged, iconic role. The manifestation of man's iconic function as a reproduction of the divine prototype was to be both mediatorial in the sense of representing God to the rest of creation and relational in that it was to be derived entirely from the relationship with the creator. This 'portrait' was to be compatible with the divine character by mirroring and replicating the divine life in creaturely existence through ongoing participation. Since God himself is genuinely interactive and seeks to live in intense mutuality with his creature, representation demands both fidelity and adaptation to the divine character, which is to be accomplished through mimetic appropriation of the divine Being. The evidence gathered thus far seems to point to a conclusion that iconic man was designed for mimesis. Additional evidence came to light in our study of Origen, in whose work we detected many of the elements of mimetic theory. The findings of this Chapter strengthened our conclusion that the phenomenon of human mimesis is rooted in God's

original intention for man to desire him and act mimetically according to his ways. It was given to man that he might fulfill his mediatorial and representative role in creation and reflect in his creatureliness the desire of the creator through free mimetic, yet creative participation with him.

CHAPTER 7   MIMETIC TRACES IN TRINITARIAN AND
                CHRISTOLOGICAL THOUGHT

7.1   Introduction

In this Chapter we shall reflect briefly on the Trinity, the central mystery of our faith with the aim to apply an additional test to our hypothesis that theological reasons exist for the phenomenon of human mimesis. Speculative as this attempt may be, the question is whether the relational structure of mimesis might have its origin not only in the creative intention of the triune God for man (as we have shown in Chapters 5 and 6), but possibly in the very life of the Trinity. Space does not allow us to engage in a comprehensive review of the doctrine and its many nuances. All we can hope to accomplish in this section is to discover mimetic traces in trinitarian discourse as it presently stands.

Already in our discussion of the Genesis prologue we noted that the relationship between God and man was intended as one of intense mutual participation. Since it was God who inspired it, we argued that man's entire existence was to be lived from within a God-centered ecstasy. From the viewpoint of trinitarian theology this conclusion says two things. The primary trinitarian discourse of the believing community is not an abstract and cool doctrinal reflection but a passionate address to God himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In other words, before trinitarian discourse becomes doctrinal discourse within the community, it is worship - the result of divinely inspired ecstasy.

In our reflection, we shall follow this twofold pattern[214] and look first for mimetic traces in trinitarian confession and worship, and then seek to discern it in the relationality of the Trinity as understood doctrinally. To further underpin our argument, we shall also consider the man Jesus in relation to the paradox of mimetic desire.

7.2 *Mimetic Traces in Trinitarian Discourse*

7.21 Trinitarian Confession

In the New Testament we encounter the primary trinitarian discourse in the context of worship and prayer. The true worshiper worships the Father in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Christ's work of reconciliation brought us access by one Spirit to the Father (Eph 2:18), and "God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6). The Holy Spirit as Advocate and Intercessor inspires the worship and the prayer life of the community (Rom 8:26). Worship of the Father is presented not primarily as man's work, but as the work of the triune God in which we participate through the Son and in the Spirit.

The same may be said for the ministry of proclamation, as Thompson has shown. Apostolic testimony and preaching was "explicitly trinitarian" for it depended on "the Father, who was manifested in Jesus Christ himself and written testimony to him by the Holy Spirit is given to us in the Holy Scriptures".[215] Christian worship, prayer and

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[214] Thompson attributes its articulation to Walter Kasper [see J. Thompson , *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 102]
[215] Ibid., 96-97

proclamation exist therefore in a trinitarian framework. But since it was made possible through Christ it must essentially correspond to him.[216] This is particularly true for the Eucharist, which is an act of worship and follows a trinitarian structure. Jesus comes from the Father and through the Spirit enables us to have communion with him and "participate in his own communion with the Father".[217] It reflects the great circular movement of the life of God. Originating in God's self-giving love it comes to us only to be returned to him in the self-offering of the believing community as praise and worship.

Moltmann, who devotes a whole chapter to what he calls the Doxological Trinity, writes: "real theology, which means knowledge of God, finds its expression in thanks, praise and adoration. It is "responsive theology"[218] distilled out of the experience of salvation. The Lutheran theologian R. Jenson also points out the essentially doxological character of trinitarian theology. Praise and liturgy, he writes, are an aesthetic response to the Beauty of God. Its apprehension is not mere subjectivity but the place where "thinking and willing are grasped by a reality beyond themselves".[219] And, paraphrasing Jonathan Edwards, he writes, "the apprehension of beauty is the very event in which our thinking and willing are first founded as successful intentions of an other".[220] But unless God is actually "Father, Son and Holy Spirit", Jenson argues, all our trinitarian talk would be of little value. Then,

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[216] Ibid., 97
[217] Ibid., 99
[218] J. Moltmann , *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 151-161
[219] R. W. Jenson, "What is the Point of Trinitarian Theology?," in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, eds. by C. Schwoebel, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 31-43.
[220] Ibid., 32

great visions of the throne and the lamb or of the fires [and] our icons and rhetoric must therefore either be misrepresentations or *mimesis...*" guided by the sight of seers whose eyes are attuned to such visions (Jenson's emphasis).[221]

Jenson continues:

> It is throughout eternity that we will be initiated into the pattern of God's triune life among the three; if we are now able to shape our liturgy..., it is because our minds may trace a logic not of this world.[222]

The point Jenson makes is highly significant for our hypothesis. Interestingly he links the human capacity for the apprehension of beauty with human mimesis and that in the context of trinitarian worship and divine inspiration! He thus seems to rank it as the highest of human faculties. If, as Jenson implies, human vision of divine realities is linked with mimesis, then we can also conclude that it belongs to what Edwards has called "the transcendental unity of the person".[223] One could even apply his words to the nature of mimesis, that it structurally belongs to "a logic not of this world".[224] The same echo is found in Thompson's thought. He sees in Christ the true worshiper and, since the Spirit draws us into the worship Christ offers, human worship becomes a response to a response whereby "God's glory has its human counterpart in our praise and worship".[225] In other words, the nature

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[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid., 34

[224] Jenson's idea (following Edwards) that worship fuses human thinking and willing into acts of divine-human glorification and representation would in my view add strength to Bray's argument (cf p. 28) that the issue behind Gen 3 was not primarily moral. If one applied Jenson's insight to Gen 3, one could argue that the real issue was relational failure to respond to divine Beauty that is failure to make the aesthetic response of praise. Eugene Peterson comments similarly when he writes, "Being in the company of Prince Myshkin (Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*) has nothing, or at least little, to do with morality, the doing and saying what is right. It has to do with beauty and the good. These cannot be observed in abstraction, for they occur only in settings of life, in living, loving persons" [E. Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 54].

[225] J. Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 103; this reminds us of Paul's exhortation that we are to "live for the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:12).

and structure of worship is trinitarian, but its inspired movement is mimetic in the form of our free response to Christ's mediation (response) on our behalf by which we are drawn into the fellowship with the Father.

7.22 <u>Trinitarian Doctrine</u>

Since it is not feasible in this study to examine every trinitarian model, we need to create a workable methodology consistent with current trinitarian thought before we can proceed with this experiment. We propose a three-step advance. Firstly, we shall assume that the economic and the immanent Trinity are constitutively related, for without such relatedness we could not say anything about God.[226] Secondly, we shall develop, with the help of Peters,[227] a brief summary of how the above assumption has fared in recent trinitarian discussions, and within this compass we shall search for mimetic traces.

When Barth challenged the understanding of God as simply *a se*, uninvolved with the world, an understanding which theology had inherited from Greek metaphysics, he significantly altered the course of the trinitarian discussion. For Barth there was only one divine subject, yet three modes of being which he grounds in the content of scriptural revelation so much so that the Word as God's self-disclosure constitutes

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[226] As Schwoebel writes, "if the discourse about the immanent Trinity and the discourse about the economic Trinity are not constitutively related, the history of salvation becomes irrelevant..." [C. Schwoebel, "Introduction, The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology: Reasons, Problems and Tasks," in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Action*, ed. C. Schwoebel, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), p. 7]. What we are witnessing here comes close to Rahner's Rule that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa. With this assumption we not only identify the divine self-giving in creation and redemption as a trinitarian movement, but also see trinitarian implications in what we will be saying later about Jesus and the paradox of mimetic desire (see 8.3 below).

the Godhead as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From this starting point new departures followed, or according to Peters:

> What developed since then has been a progression toward greater temporalizing of the self-constituting event of God and the drawing out of further consequences of understanding the divine essence in relational terms.[228]

Juengel attempted to resolve the dilemma between God's aseity and his relatedness. This problematic is rooted, according Peters, in our desire to affirm that God is personal.[229] If being personal means relationship with other persons, and if God is personal, i.e. related to his creation, then we cannot at the same time affirm God's being a person and his aseity. Juengel's solution rested in the proposal that relationality already existed in the immanent Trinity. His starting point (like Barth's) was not philosophy but special revelation. Since God had revealed himself in Jesus Christ, our trinitarian discourse must be grounded in Christology. In other words, we can be certain that God "is immanently trinitarian" because of what has been "revealed in his economy".[230] However, by resorting to the principle of correspondence as the link between the immanent and the economic Trinity, the relationality of God still remains for Juengel confined to the latter.

A new phase in the trinitarian discourse began with Rahner's notion that the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity and vice versa. In this scheme God relates to the world not in general but in terms of the three *hypostases*. Each "in its own particularity and diversity"

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[227] Peters surveys the mainstream trinitarian discussion of the last fifty years in *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in the Divine Life* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), p. 81-145. Our summary is based on his work.

[228] Ibid., 142

[229] Ibid., 91

[230] Ibid., 143

communicates a gratuitous relation.[231] This threefold communication is in Rahner's mind not a copy, analogy or correspondence, but the Trinity itself.[232] But if it is the relationality itself that is being communicated, then God relates his very Self in the economy of salvation so that the immanent Trinity has come to us in gratuitous self-giving. Rahner's analysis takes the discourse beyond Juengel's by saying that the "Trinity itself is with us".[233] If we follow Rahner, there emerges an important connection for our hypothesis, because Jesus' role as the incarnate Son in human history could be seen as identical to his role in the inner life of God. We shall connect with this idea in a later section. In Peters' summary of Rahner's scheme an important point concerning the nature of God is highlighted, which we can only mention but not discuss. If, as Rahner insists, we cannot surrender the assumption that God is unchangeable, how can the immutable God 'become flesh' and thereby incorporate the history of his incarnate life into his own being? According to Peters, Rahner does not resolve the dilemma, but hides the problem in the divine mystery. Peters asks whether Rahner may still be working with the substantialist assumption based on Greek philosophical speculation that God is immutable. In any event, Rahner has advanced the trinitarian discourse so that Rahner's Rule (the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice-versa) has become a "decisive watershed in twentieth century trinitarian thinking".[234]

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[231] Ibid., 97; Peters quoting Rahner [K. Rahner , *The Trinity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p.34-35]
[232] Peters, *God as Trinity*, 97
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid., 102

In Moltmann the trinitarian discussion moves into another stage. By giving priority to divine relationality, he leaves the presupposition of divine substantialism behind. He posits that Christian trinitarianism is neither monotheism nor tritheism but something entirely unique and only intelligible through an encounter with the God who suffered in Jesus Christ.[235] The history of Jesus is both, the experience of the Son's God-forsakenness on behalf of sinful humanity as well as the achievement of a new unity with the Father in the Spirit through the Son's immersion into history. Because the Trinity is an open Trinity it is possible to draw history into the divine life so that Jesus' own history becomes the promise of future eschatological glorification. Until then, the Holy Spirit makes Jesus' past and future a living experience in the Church. According to Peters, Moltmann seeks to ground his view in the revelation of the original Scriptural witness free from the metaphysical assumptions about divine substantiality that posed such a problem for Nicene theologians. Moltmann sees three subjects acting in history so that Jesus' own history is not 'accomplished' by just one, but precisely by their "co-efficacy" with each other in their trinitarian inter-relatedness, and it is that which we witness in the New Testament.[236] Their unity then is not to be found in a prior ontology, but in a "unification through dynamic mutuality and relationality" or "in the perichoresis of the divine Persons".[237] For Moltmann, the identity of the divine subject is no longer in a presupposed metaphysical unity (the

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[235] Ibid., 103

[236] Ibid., 104

[237] Ibid.; also Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom,* 149. Moltmann countered the critique that he was projecting a modern notion of persons on to the divine being by pointing out that personhood was closely tied to the mutuality of an I-Thou relationship. And if there was to be mutual love in the Trinity, then there

absolute individual), but in the plurality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which he believes aligns with primitive Christian experience.

Although Moltmann does not fuse the economic and the immanent Trinity "allowing distinctions on doxological grounds" or in Moltmann's own words, "we worship God for his own sake, not for the sake of salvation",[238] he stretched further the line of argument that began with Barth and continued in Juengel and Rahner. In him it reaches the point where the Christ event itself "is constitutive of the divine life proper", which "comes close to eliminating the immanent Trinity itself".[239]

Before we draw these thoughts into the framework of mimetic theory, we must still consider the views of two other theologians, who according to Peters also adhere to Rahner's Rule, Robert Jenson and Wolfhart Pannenberg.[240]

For Jenson the identity between economic and immanent Trinity lies in the perception that the latter is the eschatological reality of the former. If God is Spirit then the begetting of the Son lies in the moment of the incarnation and we should interpret his deity as the final eschatological outcome. Interpreting Jenson Peters writes, "the Spirit is the principle and source with the Father. The Spirit's witness to the Son and the Son's saving work are equally God-constituting."[241] In other words, Jenson posits God's personhood in his "self-constituting relations with the history of the world".[242] The decisive point is God's communal

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must be more than one 'I' and one 'Thou'. If personality and mutuality belong together, then who we are and who God is are both constituted by the I-Thou relationship. [cf T. Peters, *God as Trinity,* 105-106]

[238] Ibid., 107. See also Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* , 153

[239] T. Peters, *God as Trinity,* 107

[240] Ibid., 128-142

[241] Ibid., 134

[242] Ibid.

personhood and ours, which is inseparable from relationships with others.

Pannenberg begins where Jenson leaves off (in fact he refutes Jenson's position[243]) with an emphasis on a relational unity of the divine essence constituted in trinitarian reciprocal relations. For Pannenberg substance is subordinated to relations and since relations are themselves constitutive, it means for God's being that "each person [in the Trinity] is determined by its relation to the others".[244] The Father is the Father through the Son and the Son through the Father, while the Spirit is the bond of their reciprocal love. Pannenberg goes even further than this. Not only is divine personhood mutually and reciprocatively constituted, but divinity itself. It comes to each of the Three through their co-inherence integrated by love.

> To the Son divinity manifests itself in the form of the Father, and the Son knows himself only through participation in the Spirit. The Son reveals the Father as divine. To the Father, the Son is the realization of his own divinity through obedience – that is through the establishment of his kingdom of love. And in the Spirit, the Father finds his unity with the Son and therewith the certainty of his own divinity. Finally, the Spirit serves the Son and serves the Father, thereby finding his own personhood and divinity in the community of the Father and the Son.[245]

With these thoughts Pannenberg leaves the moorings of the Western tradition that relied for divine unity on the ontological presupposition of a single essence and crests the wave of the trinitarian discourse by postulating a mutually 'dependent' self-constituting divinity.[246]

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[243] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* I, 331
[244] Peters, *God as Trinity*, 136-137
[245] Ibid., 138
[246] Peters emphasizes that in Pannenberg, God is still "free, eternal and independent of the world", but explains that God's attributes can only be discerned in relation to the world, so that through the creation he made himself dependent on the world [Ibid., 140]

As the discussion has been moving towards an understanding of the Trinity based on continuous becoming and modes of interaction between the Three,[247] the question that arises at this point is what insights this doctrinal discourse offers for the phenomenon of human mimesis. According to Peters, trinitarian theology has traditionally sought to define the persons of the Trinity by making use of language that belonged to the human notion of the individual. It asserted the unity of God by treating him as the absolute subject. Later developments in Western theology since Barth moved away from seeking the unity in a pre-existing divine substance, but perceived it in the relationality of the three divine *hypostases.* As Zizioulas has recently shown, this position was first developed by the great Cappadocian theologians. The three persons of the Trinity, by their mutual and reciprocal interaction constitute the existence of each other through a constant interchange of love and desire for, with and through the other. By reciprocating the love of the other they perfectly and instantly imitate the self-giving of the other. The Father constitutes the Son who thus receives the Father's likeness and in the act of receiving imitates the Father, while the Holy Spirit is the shared love in imitation of the Father and the Son. In other words, what has traditionally been called *perichoresis* may be perceived in terms of pacific mimesis whereby the three subsistent relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit desire the perfect exchange and imitation of uncreated self-giving love in, for and through each other. However, to remain true to mimetic theory, we must account for the possibility of the mimetic double. The Son in imitating the Father must do so without

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[247]cf J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), particularly 27-65.

becoming another originating center with its inherent potential for setting up within the Trinity a model/obstacle in the Girardian sense. Here Hegel's insight is relevant that each person of the Trinity relinquishes particularity for the sake of oneness and universality. The resulting perception of the Trinity as reciprocal self-donation Pannenberg has hailed as one of the most significant contributions to the understanding of divine perichoresis.[248] In our context it suggests a resolution of the tension between unity and three-ness consistent with mimetic theory.

While we have not explicitly stated in this study how 'mimetic theology' sees the constitution of persons, we have nevertheless implied it in many places. A brief summary shall therefore suffice to make the point. What is called the 'self' is founded in mediated desire. Thus there is no pre-existent self, no subject, only that which is constituted mimetically in relationship with others.[249] When we think of persons, we must therefore think in terms of 'becoming' through the perpetual exchange with others, that is in a constant mimetic transposition of desire from which the 'self' [250] emerges as a result of socializing imitation. When we lay these aspects of mimetic theory alongside present day trinitarian thought, the conclusion is almost self-evident. Modern trinitarian discourse as it seeks to articulate divine relationality seems to

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[248] Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man*, p.182-183. If the relinquishing of particularity out of self-giving love lies at the heart of the Trinity, must we not see the cross of Jesus in the same light? [cf. "... unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24)]. Such a view would add further support to a non-penal interpretation of his death (see atonement discussion, p 46-47).

[249] As we have seen in our discussion with Bailie and Alison humans are structured in their consciousness by mimesis. As long as their culture is structured rivalistically, they too will without fail be constituted in their inner being by the same dynamic from which they can only escape through conversion to a pacific mimesis in the imitation of Christ.

[250] 'Self' does not mean individuals only; it is equally applicable to groups and cultures.

show significant traces of a language that belongs to mimetic theory particularly in Moltmann and Pannenberg.

7.3   Jesus and the Paradox of Mimetic Desire

Jesus never presented a systematic exposition of his relationship with the Father, but the gospel texts offer ample narrative evidence of how he saw himself in that relationship. Right through his life he testified to its intimacy. One of the most startling claims Jesus presented to his hearers was his identity with YHWH, which earned him the charge of blasphemy: "I and the Father are one", and "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father".[251] Many other such references with much the same meaning could be cited. Relevant examples are: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son";[252] "Just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself";[253] "... understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."[254]

These passages point to the conclusion that Jesus saw his identity and his origin in the Father.[255] But does this mean that he did not have the option of being his own person? In the way Jesus lived and taught we note that he never advocated a particular religious observance or 'rule' as the basis for relationality. Instead, he spoke always in terms of

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[251] John 10:30, John 14:9

[252] Mat 11:27

[253] John 5:22-23

[254] John 10:38; other passages alluding to the oneness of Jesus with the Father are found in Mt 16:17; 20:23; 25:34; 28:18. Mk 13:32; 14:36. Lk 9:26; 10:21, 22; 22:29, 42; 23:46.

[255] By way of extrapolation we may say that the relationship between Jesus 'on earth' – circumscribed by the inevitable limits imposed by his humanity – and the Father 'in heaven', may be directly correlated to

model and example and clearly put himself forward as the model to follow. His words "follow me" occur over twenty times in the four gospels.[256] While he points to himself, he primarily points beyond himself to the ultimate model, the Father, whose image he is. At the same time, he emphasized that imitating him would require costly adaptation for it would mean to live in a totally yielded and constantly yielding dependence on the Father.[257]

> I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.[258]

When we inquire therefore into Jesus' view of his own desires, the answer is simple. He gave it himself: "I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me"[259] acknowledging that he possessed no desire of his own, that it flowed entirely from his Sonship which rested in his relationship with the Father. At the same time, the bestowal of the Father's love required from him more than passive receptivity. In order for this love to become life in him, it needed to be deliberately received and returned. In other words, although Jesus rested in the fullness of the Father's love, as the Son of Man he needed to *appropriate* this love. And it was precisely this need that would have brought him face to face with the mimetic paradox. At the human level it surfaces as a question how man can love God without being jealous of him. For if we admire

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what we have already observed about the Trinity. Their mutual and reciprocal interaction, as well as the priority of the Father's will are only too evident.

[256] It occurs with equal frequency in the Synoptics and in the fourth gospel.

[257] The word 'imitation' does not mean that following Jesus involves becoming a carpenter or conducting an itinerant gospel ministry. Rather it means following in his footsteps of radical self-giving love to the point where the established order of rivalistic culture is called into question with the predictable consequence of expulsion for those who do. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "everyone who leads a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12).

[258] John 5:19

[259] John 5:30

God, yet cannot be like him we humans are aroused to jealousy.[260] We have already touched on this dynamic when we discussed the Trinity. Since we can only know what we desire through models, we must suppose that Jesus as a human being could have become entangled in the 'double-bind', whereby at the height of his imitation of the Father his model might become the obstacle or rival. Judging from his temptation experiences, Jesus understood these dynamics very well.

The first is recorded for us after his baptism. He had heard the voice from heaven: "this is my beloved Son".[261] Soon after, the tempter approaches with these words, *"if you are* the Son of God...."[262] By questioning Jesus' Sonship, the tempter insinuated an ontological deficiency while subtly suggesting that Jesus needed to grasp its realization on his own terms as he accentuated its desirability. Had Jesus followed this satanic invocation, he would of course have repeated the mimesis pattern of Gen 3 bringing about a sonship 'from below'.

The gospels record other incidents which humanly speaking would have constituted mimetic crises or temptations for Jesus. By briefly examining them we will highlight the underlying mimetic issues and see further evidence for our hypothesis. For instance the episode when the crowd, after having been miraculously fed, sought to make him king by acclamation and also the moment when the possibility for a political uprising arose after the cleansing of the Temple. A particularly illustrative example is found in Matthew's gospel. Just before his

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[260] For a more detailed exploration of the double bind in the context of the spiritual life see J. Grote, "The Imitation of Christ as Double-Bind: towards a Girardian Spirituality," *Cistertian Studies* 29, no. 4 (1994): 485ff.

[261] Matt 3:17

[262] Matt 4:3; 4:6.

crucifixion Jesus refuses to draw on angelic troops to rescue himself and his mission through an act of "messianic violence".[263] In each case Jesus responds with a gesture that showed his authority but he refuses to assert his power. In other words, whenever he finds himself in a situation of rivalry with earthly powers or satanic suggestions he conquers the mimetic crisis in his own being. Faithful to the Father's desire, he rejects the model 'from below' that baits him to respond with an appropriation of personal power.

Finally, although the gospels are silent about it, one can surmise that on the cross this faithfulness would have had to undergo one ultimate trial. At the height of his demonstration of trinitarian love, this final temptation would have pressed upon him from the same direction as the earlier ones, the taunts of the bystanders suggest at least this much. At the extremity, he would have been tempted for the last time to discontinue his steadfast trust in the Father and take matters into his own hands. But instead of responding with scandalized resentment, which would have meant that he had taken offence at the Father, he responded with loving obedience. As Jesus embraces on the cross the unspeakable tension between humanity's violent expulsion of himself on the one hand and the Father's desire for their gratuitous inclusion on the other, the power of the mimetic paradox is overcome.

The significance for our thesis is this: these temptations would have been rather pointless had the man Jesus (sinless as he was) not been mimetically excitable. Yet he was immune[264] to mimetic

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[263] I have borrowed this term from John H. Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, 2nd Edition), p. 46
[264] See also note 97.

contamination. This immunity is to be seen in the irrelevance of the freedom of choice in the life of Jesus for the content of his freedom was not choice but being in the grip of a destiny that came from the Father which excluded all other possibilities. This notion would be consistent with Girard's theory which denies the existence of an autonomous will (freedom of choice) because the presence of mimetic desire (in Jesus' case the Father's desire) which excludes the free play of possibilities and presupposes an indifference to other objects of desire. By virtue of his own mimetic fidelity to the Father's desire he opened up within the compass of human existence the possibility of its transformation through a mimesis not of this world.

From the preceding account of the life of Jesus the impression is reinforced that human mimesis as it pertains to man's creatureliness (not his sinfulness), may have its origin in the dynamic life of God as seen in contemporary theological reflection.

7.4 Summary

We began our search for mimetic clues in trinitarian and christological thought with the observation that trinitarian discourse is worship before it becomes doctrinal reflection. This logic provided the structure for our inquiry. We examined some of Jenson's thoughts on doxology and discovered that he was quite aware of the mimetic nature of human worship implying that mimesis belonged to man's transcendental capacity given for the apprehension of liturgical patterns and of divine beauty. Thompson too believes that when we worship God

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we imitate Christ the true worshiper and he called worship a "response to a response". Similarly Moltmann speaks of doxology as "responsive theology". To discover in scholarly trinitarian thought (particularly in Jenson) such a clear recognition of the doxological dimension of mimesis might come as a surprise especially as such reflections occurred quite independent of the Girardian School.

Next, we argued our case from the development of Rahner's Rule in recent discussions of the doctrine. We noted - if Peters' summary is an accurate reflection - that modern formulations in their description of divine relationality have engaged concepts and language that are quite consistent with mimetic theory, particularly in the work of Moltmann and Pannenberg. In other words, leading theologians express their understanding of the inner trinitarian life in terms that show distinctly mimetic connotations.

Lastly, we examined the presence of mimetic desire in the life of Jesus. After pointing to his own self-understanding as the perfect imitator of the Father's will (desire), the presence of mimetic paradox was highlighted by reference to his temptation experiences where the satanic logic of grasping (violence) and Jesus' logic of trusting (non-violence) clashed. The key to his overcoming was his absolute and moment by moment yielding to the Father in loving self-donation. We concluded that it was not by virtue of morality, but through a higher order of mimesis that he achieved an imitation of the Father free of jealousy and resentment. Jesus' pathway to a faithful representation of the Father's will was an utterly pacific mimesis so that Jesus is the only human

being who totally fulfilled the calling that belongs to all mankind as the image of God.

PART IV   CONCLUSION

Our exploration of the question how Girardian anthropology may be related to the image of God ranged across a broad theological compass. It opened up a number of new angles, but its scope was limited. Several other fascinating perspectives had to remain unexplored. In any case, this investigation can at best claim to be a preliminary work. But having reached its end, we want to draw together in this Part the various aspects of the study, highlight the conclusions and outline those areas that could not be developed, but may warrant further studies. Regarding the latter, four areas look particularly promising.

First, the observation made during the discussion of man's creation that human musical ability may be mirroring the musicality of God belongs to the discipline of theological aesthetics. The same may be said for the reflections on the doxological and confessional aspects of trinitarian discourse. I related these thoughts to man's mimetic capacity suggesting that through this relational mechanism man is equipped to 'mirror' (imitate) the creator. Since the discipline of theological aesthetics addresses the relation between divine Beauty, man's ability to apprehend it and translate it into life, it explores theologically the artistic and liturgical sphere of human existence. Until recently, Christian theology had no difficulty in relating one to the other. However, since the work of Alexander Baumgarten, a deliberate disengagement has set in that separated Beauty from the experience of the beautiful. The need to reconnect them has been recognized as an urgent task in theological

aesthetics.[265] From the perspective of my conclusions, one could hypothesize that mimetic theory offers a fresh approach to this task.

Second, my thesis was concerned in part with the (redemptive) unveiling of the scapegoating mechanism which holds humanity in bondage to mimetic violence. It also highlighted the experience of freedom (pacific mimesis) through a conversionary transformation of consciousness. This raises questions in social ethics at several levels. Since even the followers of Jesus are not immune to the contagious influence of mimetic rivalry and scapegoating, we must ask whether for the believing community the practice of an utterly non-violent ethic is indeed possible. But if not, what will become of the witness to the nature of God (as exemplified in the life of Jesus) and to a pacifically reconstituted humanity to which Jesus calls his followers as a sign of discipleship and love? For secular society - if its cultural agenda remains unconsciously captive to acquisitive mimesis and the reciprocal exclusion this engenders - there arises the question as to the source of its hope for peace and for liberation from violence. And, if Girard's theory is correct, must not this tendency of mutual expulsion intensify under the political pressures of multiculturalism, no matter how idealistically conceived?

Third, Girard and his followers rely on an evolutionary model for their understanding of hominization. They posit a radical animal-human continuum that makes higher primates the ancestors of the human race. Granted, this assumption is widespread also among Christian scholars.

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[265] A. Garcia-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful: A Theological Aesthetics* (Collegeville Min: Liturgical Press, 1999), p.10

However, in the light of Biblical revelation we need to keep asking whether such a model of hominization is justifiable. Even Girard's work evinces the struggle. On the one hand, he proposes an evolutionary anthropology, on the other he calls the first Adam sinless and speaks of him as of a historical person without explaining how one is to move from one to the other.[266] From my reading of the literature, the task of juxtaposing Biblical revelation and scientific discovery in a model of hominization that is acceptable to both faith and science remains still to be done.

The fourth area I have singled out is more speculative. Mimesis is a sensitive and unconscious relational mechanism. It may be compared to what is known in physics as resonance. Since dynamic patterns of resonant relationality have been discovered in molecular and subatomic reality, one could ask whether the notion of mimesis might not be observable also in the natural sciences. In other words, are we perhaps dealing with a more fundamental phenomenon like a biological mechanism of adaptation or even with a structure located between the transcendent and the physical realm along the lines of Polkinghorne's mind-matter complementarity?

We shall expand these sketches briefly in Chapter 8 and advance preliminary arguments why further studies may be indicated. In Chapter 9 we shall summarize the findings and conclusion of our thesis.

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[266] R. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World: Research Undertaken in Collaboration with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort* (Stanford, Cal: Stanford University Press, 1987 p. 223

CHAPTER 8   UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

8.1   Pacific Mimesis and Theological Aesthetics

The overall thrust of my thesis was to show that there is more to the concept mimesis than rivalistic differentiation. This 'more' is already implicitly present in the thoroughly Girardian notion of *pacific mimesis*. In my discussion of the language of trinitarian confession, pacific mimesis was perceived as the ability to apprehend divine Beauty and with this designation pointed in the direction of theological aesthetics.

Its central question is how divine Beauty is perceived at the human level and how this perception is transposed into the experience of the beautiful. If, as Jenson has implied, the apprehension of Beauty belongs indeed to the core of man's transcendental unity and mimesis is the human capacity not just for appropriating it, but for its actualization in life, another question needs to be asked. How are these related to each other and to the human experience of the beautiful?

An Old Testament example shall illustrate the point. When God revealed to Moses the design of the tabernacle, Moses received a 'heavenly pattern'. It included the layout of the tent of meeting, its construction as well as the exquisite beauty of its ornaments. At the same time, Moses understood their liturgical meaning. This 'heavenly pattern' had somehow crossed the ontological chasm between the Creator and the creature such that divine Beauty took up residence on the creature's side of the divide. Foreshadowing the incarnation, invisible

Beauty was made visible in the layout and the furniture of God's earthly dwelling, in columns and curtains, in vestments and wash basins.

Christian tradition has never been unsure of the origin of Beauty. The perfection of God was its locus and since it had appeared to man in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, faith perceived the drama of salvation as perfection's most glorious manifestation.

For centuries theologians never questioned the capacity of finite man to be touched by infinite Beauty until one hundred and fifty years ago when Baumgarten treated it as a problematic.[267] A gradual disengagement of Beauty and the experience of the beautiful followed and this process Garcia-Rivera suggests has come to its peak in our day. He writes:

> We have lost confidence, perhaps belief, in the human capacity to know and love God as Beauty. Thus while some still believe in God as the source of Beauty, and many, that the beautiful may be experienced, few are willing to say that these are connected in a profound and organic way."[268]

According to Garcia-Rivera the theological consequences of this loss are far reaching. Not only is the believing community severely enfeebled in its ability to express faith and speak with conviction about the dignity of man, but its sacramental role in the world is undermined.[269]

By using mimetic theory as hermeneutic key I have attempted to show a relational continuity between the orders of creation and redemption. From the findings, especially from what emerged from reflections on Jenson's thought, one could approach the above task in

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[267]Garcia-Rivera, *Community of the Beautiful,* p. 10
[268] Ibid., 11

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theological aesthetics also from a Girardian point of view. Its hypothesis would argue that the source of Beauty and the human experience of the beautiful are indeed organically connected possibly through man's mimetic capacity which in Girard's anthropology is also linked to the comprehension of signs. One of the conclusions of my thesis that human mimesis exists for doxological (and therefore for liturgical) reasons offers itself perhaps as a point of departure.

8.2   Pacific Mimesis and Social Ethics

As far as ethics go, Jesus' exemplary life is to be seen as more than an abstraction. By virtue of his radical immersion into the drama of salvation as it was played out in the politically charged ambience of first-century Palestine, he became a personalized model of Christian ethics. When his message of the Kingdom was violently rejected he did not respond in kind but maintained to the end his non-violent position in order to liberate humanity from its bondage to mimetic violence. Killed like a scapegoat he refused to be drawn into vengeful retaliation. In his post-Easter appearances he returned as the forgiving victim offering peace to those who had at least passively sided with the perpetrators. The Gospels are quite clear that the new community which formed after the resurrection, had its eyes opened to an entirely new relationality based not on the murderous scapegoat mechanism but on forgiveness and non-violence as the outworking of the Kingdom of God on earth.

[269] Ibid.

This transformation was the result of a radical change of consciousness through conversion.

Is therefore the non-violent model of Jesus ethically normative for his followers and thus for the Christian community? Some have argued that his radical commitment to non-violence is unrepeatable. To elevate his model to an ethical absolute would simply overtax human capacity. Therefore, a Christian ethic must take into account human weakness in a world where horrifying, even fascinating powers shape human culture.[270] Others have recognized the ambiguous nature of even sanctioned violence like military service from a Christian point of view. Tom Frame wrote:

> Christians who engage in military service find they wield a two-edged or delphic sword. When one edge is used to cut down those who practice evil and promote injustice, the other cuts across the teaching of Jesus into moral conscience.[271]

Again others - at great personal cost - have genuinely attempted to put Jesus' non-violent ethic into practice (e.g. the martyrs, the Ana-Baptists during the 16th century and the Mennonite community in more recent times) only to discover that the unveiling of violence as the foundation of culture cannot yet abide in our world.

In our day the call for a non-violent Christian ethic is heard with renewed urgency. Among the Girardian writers, Bailie has called for a total renunciation of violence. Previously John Yoder and Jacques Ellul have made Christian pacific radicalism a fundamental plank of their theology. After all, the New Testament speaks very clearly of the

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[270] W. Palaver und W. Guggenberger, "Pluralismus - Ethische Grundintuition - Kirche," *Zeitschrift fuer Katholische Theologie* no. 120 (1998) accessed via http://theol.uibk.ac.at/artikel.18/html

redemptive and pacific reconstitution of humanity as one corporate person in Christ (Eph 2:11-22) making the outworking of Jesus' social ethic and his non-violent political strategy a central concern for the believing community.

The world too longs for peace and for an absence of violence, yet it cannot escape the double-bind. It must rely for its survival and its external order on the mechanisms of rivalry and exclusion (and does so with varying degrees of sophistication). Consequently its social ethic will always contain certain elements of force, coercion and victimization. But where shall society place its hope for peace and freedom from violence if it needs the *pharmacon* of violence as a culture maintaining mechanism, which through its very presence blinds it to the thrall of its contagious and intoxicating power? What then does this dynamism mean for a society like ours wedded to an almost utopian conception of cultural pluralism situated in a world that seems to drift towards almost uncontrollable violence? In my view, these questions are worthy of further exploration. Such a study would bring into play mimetic theory, a political theology of non-violence (i.e. the theology of hope) in critical dialogue with the contemporary ideology of multiculturalism.

8.3 Hominization

In the context of this investigation, we noted that both Bailie and Alison subscribe to a model of hominization where humans evolved from higher primates as the mimetic powers of our proto-human ancestors

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[271] T. Frame, "Wielding the Delphic Sword: Reconciling Christianity and Military Service" (MTh Thesis,

outdistanced their instinctive controls. Having explored the link between mimetic anthropology and a theology of relatedness, I believe the issue of hominization needs further development beginning with the question whether from a Christian point of view the thesis of these writers is supportable. To clarify my point, let me briefly outline the argument.

Evolution, once a scientific theory, has become a symbol of a way of looking at life. It is a worldview which most people consider to be in accord with reality. It enjoys broad-based cultural backing. This dominance has little to do with science. Secularized culture uses evolution to shape its view of reality in non-theistic ways and evolutionary apologists like Stephen J. Gould, Richard Dawkins and Francisco J. Ayala among many others make sure that this atheistic agenda is brought before the widest possible public. Given their media presentations and popular writings the impression is unavoidable that their objective is to shift public consciousness more and more towards their own materialistic-evolutionary world-view. Today, evolution functions as a culture shaping mythology [272] or as Haering puts it, it has become the "megatheory of Western thought". [273]

As a Christian I believe that there is a personal, triune God who is Love, who creates, brings forth life and sustains it by giving himself kenotically to his creation. While the creation account in Genesis has more to do with the outcome of the creation process and with relationships than with the process of creation itself, one cannot entirely

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Canberra: St Mark's College, 1993), p. 226

[272] If we apply mimetic theory to evolution as a culture constituting mechanism, it works like a pagan religious system with its own scapegoat mechanism that victimizes those who do not abide by its rituals and prohibitions.

overlook the problematic of process in the context of an anthropology that affirms man's creation in God's image. The question whether God in a semi-deistic way created matter with such a nature that eventually life of various kinds including human life would emerge, or whether we are dealing with a special creation seems to me highly significant.[274] According to Christian revelation, God acted specifically in the unthinkable drama of salvation (incarnation, resurrection). If we are faithful to this revelation, we must ask what would have prevented God from doing also a special work at the point of hominization?[275]

By raising this question I am not thinking of the tenets of Creation Science[276] or of the 'God of the gaps', but more broadly of the sub-hypotheses of the evolutionary theory. The grand evolutionary program rests on four planks or sub-systems generally known as the 'big bang', the 'progression of life', 'common ancestry', and life's 'materialistic origin'. While the popular mind makes no distinction between them, they belong not only to quite different scientific disciplines, but also their evidentiary backing varies considerably. For instance, while there seems to be a good deal of evidence available in support of the first and the second sub-system, actual *knowledge* about the third is rather sparse, and for the fourth it is literally non-existent. If one adds to this the fact

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[273] H. Haering, "The Theory of Evolution as a Megatheory of Western Thought," *Concilium* no. 1 (2000): 23-33.

[274] I am not thinking here so much of a miraculous insertion of a new creature into an existing ecosystem as of a special work of God within the vast continuities of the cosmic creation in which the Creator is personally involved by endowing this creature with those capacities that make humans human.

[275] Even Girard's own words may be taken to point in the direction of our question. He believes on the one hand in the Virgin Birth of Christ as a special work of God (incarnation) and also that "the first Adam was himself without sin ..." (human creation). Assuming his use of Biblical language is deliberate, these words like a code will lead the reader to the understanding that Girard also sees in the human creation more than a chance-driven biological event [Girard, *Things Hidden,* p. 220-223].

that reputable scholars have begun to challenge some of evolution's cherished assumptions on the grounds of probability, one can sympathize with Platinga's view that the odds are against the idea of evolution in the materialistic random selection sense of the term.[277] For instance, Denton and others have written about the unparalleled complexity and adaptive design (even in a single cell) pointing to them as a continuing source of skepticism that this could have been achieved by pure chance.[278] Moreover, twentieth century physics may allow for a theistic interpretation that has so far gone unnoticed. The Russian mathematician Andrej Grib who bases his view on quantum logic, has been critical of the notion of a 'self-organizing universe'. According to Grib, without an external observer (creator) "there is no actual event in reality but only the *objectively existing potentialities* of the quantum logical reality" (Grib's emphasis). Such a universe could not have developed by chance.[279] We shall refer again to the 'observer dependence' of the universe in the last section.

Admittedly these issues are very complex. However, I believe a deeper understanding is needed from a theistic point of view so that the

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[276] While I disagree with their methodology and conclusions, I am not ashamed to confess that I am spiritually much closer to them than to apologists of an atheistic evolutionary ideology like Dawkins and Gould.

[277] Cf. A. Platinga, "Evolution, Neutrality and Antecedent Probability: Reply to Van Till and McMullen," *Christian Scholars Review* XXI, no. 1 (1991): 80-109. For instance, he makes the point that nearly all species appear for the first time fully developed with few transitional links to ancestral forms. Further, as Denton has shown, there are no explanations how such complex systems like eyes, brains, and wings developed by the mechanism of natural selection [see M. Denton, *Evolution: A theory in Crisis* (Bethesda: Alder & Alder, 1985), p. 188-190]. Davies has argued a similar point when he says that paleontologists cannot explain the sudden appearance of the complex visual system of trilobites. No life form prior to the trilobites possessed even a rudimentary eye, let alone a complex one [J. J. Davies, "Is "Progressive Creation" Still a Helpful Concept," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* no. 50 (1998): 250-267].

[278] Cf. M. Denton, *Evolution: A theory in Crisis* (Bethesda: Alder & Alder, 1985); we note that Denton cannot be accused of special pleading for he is not a theist. See also M. J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

[279] A. A. Grib, "Quantum Cosmology, the Role of the Observer, Quantum Logic," in *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature*, ed. J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, C. S. Isham, (Berkley and Vatican State: CTNS and Vatican Observatory, 1999), 165-184.

Christian community has a basis for thinking about them in the light of Christian faith. Since the evolutionary model (as a world view) is by no means religiously neutral, it seems important that as Christians we do not accept uncritically an epistemology which at its core denies a theistic and spiritual view of reality. We must not for the sake of consistency with a scientific theory (the evolutionary model) no matter how plausible it may be at the epistemological level, forfeit the possibility of an ontological discontinuity between animal and human existence to which the Christian revelation clearly points.

No doubt, as children of this age our knowledge about human life and about the universe has increased enormously, which challenges theology to enlarge our understanding of the creator also. To achieve this, we must bring our theology and our science constantly into dialogue with the aim to develop new models that are acceptable to both faith and science.[280] Since the Bible points to an ontological difference between animals and humans[281] and millions of Christians kneel in reverence at the words *"incarnatus est"*, I question whether an animal-human continuum is a model of hominization acceptable to Christian faith. And if not, how should we think of human beings as creatures in the light of Biblical assertion and scientific discovery?

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[280] For instance such a model would need to integrate the findings of Biomusic, one of latest and exciting new disciplines that explores the role of music in all living things. Research into the songs of birds and of humpback whales has shown that their music "converges on the same acoustic and aesthetic choices and abides by the same laws of song composition as those preferred by human musicians and human ears", wrote N. Angier in a NY Times Article of Jan. 9, 2001 [N. Angier, "Sonata for Humans, Birds and Humpback Whales" 2001].

[281] Not only by virtue of a separate creation, but also by virtue of his sinfulness is man distinct from animals. Conversely, no animal dies in the prospect of being judged and potentially excluded from the source of life. Further, is it not this perceived ontological difference that lies at the root of the current debate on human cloning?

In my view, any dialogue between theology and science must take the Biblical data as seriously as the data of science by making use of the best hermeneutical tools available. Girard's theory is certainly one of them. While its interpretive power has definitely opened new windows for our understanding of the Biblical texts, its anthropology, however, presupposes a model of hominization that may be incompatible with Christian faith. A theme closely related to hominization, viz. individual human uniqueness, for which Girardian anthropology does not offer an immediately obvious explanation, would likewise benefit from further study.

8.4   Mimesis: Interface between Mind and Matter?

The first inkling that mimesis may be more deeply embedded in the structure of existence surfaced when I detected allusions to mimetic patterns in what neuroscientists seemed to be saying about the possibility that the human brain might be the meeting point between the physical and the transcendent.[282] Additional hints came from the work of W. Wildman and L. Brothers who have attempted to develop a model describing the relation between experiences of ultimacy and neurological phenomena.

> When a particular pattern impinges on another set of neurons it becomes a 'sign' to be interpreted. The action of the second set of neurons, in response to the original pattern, is the 'interpretant'. This action in turn becomes a sign and so forth, until the interpretant arises

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at the level of somatic effectors – for example, as movements of muscles. Once again, muscular movements become signs.[283]

At the human brain level then, such 'signs' are relayed to sensory areas and interpreted into actions so that sign-producing neural events and sign-interpreting social events exist together "as a single continuous flux of signs".[284] While the authors do not explain the causes of such experiences, their semiotic model sees them as "rich and deep forms of engagement with reality" and vice versa.[285]

At the neurological level we find of course no thematization yet as to what is being signified. But the issue of signification may be left to one side at this stage, since the relevance for our point comes simply from the semiotic terminology employed by the authors, which seems to hint at mimesis.[286]

Looking farther afield, I detected similar allusions in other disciplines. For instance, the unpredictability of the "exquisitely sensitive physical systems"[287] of the subatomic world is perceived as an aspect of an interface between a bottom-up and a top-down pattern-forming reality. I am leaning here on Polkinghorne's "complementary metaphysics" of mind and matter akin to the wave and particle complementarity known in the physics of light. Such complementarity would allow participative behavior to occur at either of its two poles, the

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[283] W. Wildman & L. Brothers, "A Neuropsychological-Semiotic Model of Religious Experiences," in *Neurosciences and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, eds. by R. Russel, M. Nancy et al. , (Vatican State: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1999), 347-416, p. 403-4
[284] Ibid., 403-4
[285] Ibid., 407
[286] In mimetic theory the first 'thought' occurred when the (appropriative) gesture was transformed into a sign, i.e. Girard's "first non-instinctual attention". Gans by contrast defines 'thinking' as a "deconstructive search for the original and ultimately originary components that underlie the idea/image" [cf. E. Gans, *Signs of Paradox*, 97]

mental and the material. He writes, "we cannot avoid arriving at a new view of matter, which sees it as manifesting mental, personal and spiritual activities".[288] Dyson makes a similar point when he says: "the architecture of the universe is consistent with the hypothesis that mind plays an essential role in its functioning".[289]

Mimesis is by definition a pattern-forming structure energized by mediated desire. Could it be that it functions at more fundamental levels in the universe as a kind of synaptic gap or fluid transmission between the transcendent mind and the immanent material manifestation? Is mimesis perhaps the place where the mental agency (desire) at the higher level becomes physically enacted through resonance in the indeterminacy at the lower level through which new patterns and an open future are influenced?

As scientists now perceive it, the world of classical physics is an "artifact of the quantum world".[290] I am asking whether mimesis might be the space where the 'artifact' is actualized so that the mimetic structure exists as a kind of ontological opportunity of sub-atomic matter? I am not thinking of a causal force at work or of an interventionist "push" from beyond, but of something that takes place in a dynamic yet non-energetic mode like an 'imitative realization of potential'. Apparently, such phenomena are not totally unknown. For instance, molecular biology has observed an adaptive mechanism in DNA

[287] J. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World* (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 61

[288] Ibid., 25-26

[289] F. Dyson, *Disturbing the Universe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 251 cited in T. Peters , *Science and Theology* (Boulder Col: Westview Press, 1998), p. 51

[290] R. J. Russell, "Does the "God Who Acts" Really Act in Nature?" in Ted Peter (ed) *Science and Theology* (Boulder, Col: Westview Press, 1998), 77-102, p. 87

molecules that realizes specific genetic advantages through "amplification by replication".[291] To quote Russell:

> If nature is open to alternative possibilities, and the actual direction is not determined by nature alone, then the course of divine action working with nature is a kind of ... actualization of potencies.[292]

In a discussion of quantum logic in relation to the creation of the universe, Grib goes even further. He makes the explicit assumption of the existence of an observer who makes measurements of the quantum universe.[293] This assumption is not based on theological presuppositions, but is derived from the features of quantum mechanics themselves, namely indeterminism, complementarity, the role of the observer and the collapse of the wave packet. These concepts not just imply the presence of consciousness, but of a consciousness whose logic differs structurally from ours, because "quantum logic is not isomorphic with Boolean logic".[294] This means that the universe may be seen as the projection of a non-Boolean structure onto a Boolean one. In order to grasp this non-Boolean world, "a human observer must project the structure of the universe onto his or her mind and this projection causes the collapse of the wave function."[295] Consequently the universe we see and in which we live is a "participative universe", says Grib (following

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[291] Ibid., 91

[292] Ibid., 98 n. 20.

[293] It must be noted that Grib does not intend to identify God with the ultimate observer in quantum mechanics. He simply seeks to say that scientifically speaking it is not impossible that God created the universe, nor impossible for humans through original sin to spoil it and that the resurrection cannot be ruled out either [A. A. Grib, "Quantum Cosmology, the Role of the Observer, Quantum Logic," in *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature*, ed. R. J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, C.J. Isham, (Berkley and Vatican State: CTNS and Vatican Observatory, 1999), 165-184, p. 167-8].

[294] Ibid., 165-184

[295] A. A. Grib, "Quantum Cosmology, the Role of the Observer, Quantum Logic," in *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature*, eds. by R. J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, C.J. Isham, (Berkley and Vatican State: CTNS and Vatican Observatory, 1999), 165-184, p. 167.

Wheeler), for through our consciousness we participate in constructing it:

> The universe we see is the result of the projection of Ultimate Consciousness on human consciousness, and our consciousness is responsible for some features of this universe.[296]

In other words, to bring about the new, God works not by changing or manipulating objects or processes, but *with* and *within* creation at the most fundamental level, [297] even using human beings as "created co-creators" as Hefner has suggested.[298]

What we have said so far presupposes the existence of a 'live', yet indeterminate (chaotic) interface between the material and the transcendent realm. On the basis of this study, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to say that mimesis - as a pattern-forming structure of participation and mutuality - might offer hitherto unknown avenues of explanation. At the same time it might allow us to expand our hypothesis about the existence of a profound link between human mimesis and the image of God in man and relate it to the inner structure of the universe.

I may be criticized for having too frequently and too simplistically equated resonance with Girardian mimesis and by doing so to have flattened the Girardian triangle of the mimetic structure. This is not the place to discuss whether or not the integrity of Girard's theory is preserved in every detail in this study or in the above suggestion. While any serious study along these lines would have to take this issue into

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[296] A. A. Grib, "Quantum Cosmology, the Role of the Observer, Quantum Logic," in *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature*, eds. R. J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, C.J. Isham, (Berkley and Vatican State: CTNS and Vatican Observatory, 1999), 165-184, p. 167.

[297] Perhaps one could think of it as the Marian Principle of creation, whereby God's creation resonates with the same collaborative response: "Behold, I am the hand maid of the Lord. Be it to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

[298] Hefner, *The Human Factor*, 23-54

account, it seems to me that such a cross-disciplinary proposal may be worthy of further exploration; a place of risk, pitfalls and blind alleys, perhaps, but also a new frontier potentially.

CHAPTER 9   <u>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION</u>

This study began with the question what consonance might exist between Girard's mimetic theory and man's creation in the image and likeness of God. To answer it, we formulated the hypothesis that human mimesis is a creation gift from God to his creature and that mimesis is therefore both constitutive of what it means to be human and inseparable from man's response to God. Testing this thesis meant collecting theological evidence for the center of Girard's anthropology, viz. the phenomenon of human mimesis. We pursued this goal in two steps. In the first, we expanded our understanding of mimetic theory in relation to the hypothesis by exploring the work of recognized Girardian interpreters. In the second we searched for mimetic clues in three places outside the Girardian School, namely in the Genesis Prologue, in modern Trinitarian thought and in the life of Jesus. The findings and conclusions of this study are presented below.

According to Girard's theory, the self-understanding of a culture and the significance of its concepts are derived from its mythological base. The strongest influence falls to its symbols and religious images embedded in the stories of a culture's origins. Apart from offering cohesion and identity they explain the numinous and uphold a prototype for imitation. Further, a culture derives its mystifying power from its mythological ties to sacred violence or the scapegoat mechanism, for which the demythologizing influence of the gospel is the only cure.

Based on Bailie's understanding of mimetic theory we were able to show that mimesis, revelation and worship are profoundly connected. Under the influence of sin, however, humanity is now locked into a false transcendence that chains man's hunger for imitation to religious violence, the fiercest and most enthralling form of mimetic desire. If human mimesis is to resonate with the will of God, a transformation or conversion is required that delivers human consciousness from the delusion about the efficacy of violence as a peacemaker, which, we concluded, is achieved through the epistemological role of the victim.

We explored the dynamic of this transformation through the eyes of Schwager's "dramatic theology". God in Christ was so identified with human beings that he became their sin's victim and experienced in his own person its destructive power. Jesus tasted death not because the justice of the Father demanded the execution of the Son, but because he voluntarily embraced and exhausted in that embrace the universal victimhood of human sin. Now God's self-communication may come to man through the image of the victim (the focal point of the 'old order' founded on sacred violence) so that through this familiar symbol man may be 'infiltrated' with the true image of God. Under the prompting influence of the Spirit man's inner being may thus be reconciled with God. It involves a mimetic act that constitutes the actualization of man's original responsibility to respond in pacific and loving imitation to the Father, which is the very imitation of the Son in his surrender to the Father's self-communication. Transformed (converted) man thus receives a new identity rooted in Christ's identification with him as well as in the reality of sonship. Man now seeks to become like Christ by appropriating

his life so that Christ becomes man's model as well as his mimetic center enabling him to actualize his new identity in history.

Evidence from Alison's work further supported our argument. Humans were created to relate to God and to each other by peaceful imitation. But this non-violent relationality which God intended humans to have from the beginning was not accessible in acquisitive mode. They may posses it only by resonating with the love of God through radical self-surrender. Therefore, human mimesis may be seen as the relational structure and the dynamism of response by which such 'resonance' is achieved. Since humanity is 'fallen', it is captive to a death-dealing mimetic consciousness that has its origin in distorted desire. Yet, there is hope; for the revelatory impact of Christ's radical self-giving in the teeth of human rivalistic violence is capable of inserting into man's consciousness the knowledge of the absolute deathlessness of God as man's new "intelligence". It in turn subverts the distortion of the image of God as man's ultimate (vengeful) rival. This shift in consciousness allows humans to see with 'new eyes', namely the eyes of the crucified and risen victim. Since man now accepts and replicates the self-offering of the Other, a new possibility for peaceful mimesis opens up for him out of which a new sociality is born. It emerges as the ecclesial community whose (new) order exists side by side with the old as an eschatological testimony that the latter is going out of existence.

A review of the works of Bailie, Schwager and Alison allowed us to draw some provisional conclusions. God had laid into the cradle of humanity the potential for pacific mimesis that man might exist as God's image and likeness. Man's fall into sin had fixated human desire in

'acquisitive mode' which brought with it rivalry and murder. Through the scapegoat mechanism (the victimage of sacred violence) the perception of God was distorted by making him a God of violence and vengeance. However, through the Christ event man's acquisitive mimesis may be radically altered so that man may be released from his bondage to a death-dealing consciousness and enter into his potential for pacific mimesis. The evidence behind this summation strongly supported our hypothesis that mimetic anthropology stands on profound theological foundations.

To strengthen our conclusion we sought to bring to bear arguments that did not originate from within the School of Girard. At the same time we were conscious that objectivity would elude us as long as we kept using Girard's conceptual apparatus. In other words, the theory-laden character of our observations would remain, as the data we gathered would continue to be refracted by the Girardian lens.

Reflecting on God's inaugural movements in creation, we noted the immediate correspondence between God's desire (word, speech) and the emerging creation. This responsiveness we said followed an intrinsic order of regularity and purposeness. This responsiveness we perceived as a form of 'imitation' and its ordering principle (logos) fulfilled a similar function when transposed to the human level as wisdom. It was to align human desire with God's order by evoking a free response that emulated the response of the material universe. Furthermore, through the work mandate man was called and apprenticed 'to do what God does' and we concluded that man at his level was to replicate God's work of creating and maintaining. Man thereby followed the pattern God was laying out

for him including the seven-day structure of creation week. Such a correspondence between God's work and man's, we reasoned, was given so that man might imitate God in functional terms as partner and co-creator. It implied a relationship of intense mutual participation. Man was to follow after God as his model. Since God inspired this relationship with the aim of drawing man deeper into the divine life, we concluded that man's entire existence was to be lived out of a God-centered ecstasy in mimetically conditioned participation.

A survey of the *imago* exegesis showed that its contemporary reading was compatible with the above conclusions. As a species, man was created as God's counterpart and given the privileged 'iconic' position that was to be relational and mediatorial within the created order. In this role, human functionality was to be derived entirely from the relationship with the creator. Consequently, man's 'portrait' of God had to be consistent with the divine character, mirroring and replicating the divine life in creaturely existence. The necessary adaptation to the divine character was to be accomplished through the covenant in mimetic appropriation of the divine Being. Based on this interpretation we argued that the phenomenon of human mimesis was indeed rooted in God's original intent for man as the image of God. To be sure, man was to desire God and his ways for the sake of the Creator. At the same time such desiring was the only path to fulfilling man's role of giving tangible expression to 'who God is' through his free, mimetic participation in the divine life.

By tracing mimetic allusions in trinitarian thought we not only expanded the horizon of our inquiry, but also added more weight to our argument. Trinitarian doxology proved to be a fertile context. Here we saw, particularly in Jenson, that human mimesis may be associated with man's transcendental openness for the apprehension of liturgical patterns and divine beauty, and thus with man's capacity for worship. Thompson noted that in worship we imitate Christ, the true worshiper and for Moltmann doxology is "responsive theology". We saw in these references further confirmation for the intuition that human mimesis exists as a structure of resonance between God's love and human ecstatic response. In other words, the phenomenon of human mimesis exists for doxological reasons. When we examined the relationship between the economic and the immanent Trinity, we found further traces of the same idea. For instance, when modern theologians describe the inner trinitarian life, they employ concepts and language that reflect an intense relationality of mutual participation in the triangular desire of self-giving love thus alluding to the notion of pacific mimesis. This feature was particularly apparent in the work of Moltmann and Pannenberg.

Lastly, we examined the life of Jesus for the presence of mimesis. We noted its pattern and paradox throughout his ministry but it surfaced most notably in his temptation experiences. The key to Jesus' faithfulness to the Father's will lay not so much in the strength of his will-power but in the practice of a higher order mimesis based on an absolute yielding to the Father's desire. Even under the extremity of the cross, Jesus demonstrated that his mimesis was free of jealousy and

resentment. Through this utterly pacific imitation of the Father's love he released the fullest possible representation of God's will in a human life.

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Girard's theory is an attempt to enlarge the anthropological element without reference to theology. Assuming his theory is valid, it has significant implications for our reading of the Biblical text. It will lead inevitably to a desacralization of certain themes and of phenomena that have traditionally been associated with the supernatural. Needless to add that his approach may be misunderstood for it may be seen as a substitution of anthropology for theology. However, Girard is at pains to assure his readers that just the opposite is the case.[299]

In the pursuit of this study we have done something which Girard for reasons of his methodology has strictly avoided. We have deliberately married his anthropological concern with Christian transcendence from the start. We did this in an attempt to explore whether mimetic theory makes sense theologically if applied to the Biblical notion of the image of God after which the Scriptures say man is created. From our findings we believe to have shown at least in a preliminary way that the phenomenon of human mimesis is profoundly grounded in the theology of creation and redemption. And since human existence was conceived in Trinitarian Love to be its earthly counterpart, the conclusion is perhaps not unreasonable that human mimesis may find its ultimate origin in the relationality of the Trinity itself, as we have intimated in this study.

While Girard's theory postulates on anthropological grounds that human mimesis is the key to being human, the findings of this investigation suggest that there are also good theological reasons for the idea. From the angle of this study, mimesis is to be seen as the capacity through which man worships the Creator, appropriates his life and exemplifies in history the self-giving love of the triune God thereby fulfilling his calling as the image of God. In this sense, man's mimetic endowment may also be called a structure of hope. The presence of mimetic desire in every human being constitutes the space of an ontological opportunity or the possibility of an openness towards God and his future where the potentiality of man's destiny in Christ may be realized in the gracious out-working of God's redemption in history. In Christ we hope that ultimately man will become the perfect imitator and image of God when God will be all in all. Since the revelation of God in Christ casts an eternal vision for redeemed humanity, Christian anthropology is in the last analysis eschatological. "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is".[300]

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[299] See his *I see Satan Fall like Lightening*, p. 192
[300] 1 John 3:1-3

PART V   BIBLIOGRAPHY

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