

BE IMITATORS OF ME, AS I AM OF CHRIST

© Eric Vanden Eykel
Marquette University

The lives of René Girard and St. Paul, although separated by almost two thousand years of history, share striking similarities. Both men, as a result of profound conversion experiences, redefined their previously held views of religion and creatively incorporated their new perspectives in an effort to reimagine the meaning of faithfulness before the living God. At the heart of their models for community interaction are the notions of proper and improper mimesis as well as care for the marginalized members of society. In Girard's theory, this takes the form of exposing and renouncing the scapegoat mechanism, a subconscious channel for violence that has gripped humanity since its advent. Paul is obviously not aware, in the same way as Girard, of the specifics behind the forces that manipulate persons, but he is convinced that a community defined by the Gospel will uproot societal institutions and run full-force against the current of what was previously deemed satisfactory.

In this paper, I will show that Paul and Girard share the common goal of forming communities of peace, defined by the Gospel and animated by a properly directed mimetic desire. At the heart of their templates is the model of the crucified Christ, who voluntarily took on the role of scapegoat, suffered death as an innocent victim and exposed the scapegoat mechanism's inadequacy through His resurrection. This analysis will focus on 1 Corinthians as interpreted through the lens of Girard's mimetic theory, with special attention given to Paul's views on marriage and communal order, specifically how those institutions engender and cultivate proper mimesis. I will end with 1 Corinthians 15, in which I believe Paul depicts Christ as the paragon for proper mimesis. Before I present my analysis of Paul, I will attempt a broad sketch of the mimetic theory as presented in the work of Girard, fully acknowledging that any cursory effort to summarize the work of such a prolific writer will ultimately leave much to be desired.

THE MIMETIC THEORY OF RENÉ GIRARD -- At the foundation of Girard's theory is the notion that all human learning, especially desire, is mimetic. Persons are not born with the knowledge of what they should or should not desire, but rather they learn what to desire by imitating the desires of others. The desire that engenders the seeking of specific objects is what Girard calls "acquisitive mimesis." Represented by the "mimetic triangle," acquisitive mimesis involves three points: the subject (S) who desires the object (O) possessed by the model (M). Acquisitive mimesis is always focused on limited objects¹ and will often lead to rivalry and possibly conflict.²

Over time, acquisitive mimesis is transformed into "conflictual mimesis" when the desired object drops out of the equation, leaving a subject who has become obsessed with their model. At this point, the two stand in danger of becoming doubles. The chance that such conflict will occur is proportionally related to the height of the mimetic triangle, since a larger distance between subject and model indicates social, geographical, or even existential separation. To use an example from Girard's own work, we observe Miguel Cervantes' character Don Quixote who chooses the fictional Amadis of Gaul as his model. In this instance, the mimetic triangle is infinitely lofty because Don Quixote is real and Amadis is not. Don Quixote's imitation will perhaps lead to embarrassment, but never to conflictual mimesis.³ On the other hand, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, we find "two households, both alike in dignity." The Capulets and Montagues are victims of an "ancient grudge" that leads to "new mutiny."⁴ Since they have already reached the latter stages of conflictual mimesis, the original object of their desire has fallen from view and thus there is no end in sight for their conflict.

Conflictual mimesis is dangerous because it is communicable, and in spite of some society's efforts to prevent it from ever occurring, communities often find themselves in the midst of strife that

¹ The use of 'limited' here is broad and not necessarily limited to an object's immediate availability. Certainly, one could apply 'limited' to a neighbor's spouse or home, but a readily available object can also be considered 'limited' due simply to its cost, i.e. an expensive automobile, or the difficulty one must go through to attain it, i.e. mastery of a foreign language.

² In contrast to 'metaphysical mimesis,' which involves such things as happiness or fulfillment. Cf. Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2005), 22.

³ René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 4.

⁴ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 7.

is the direct result of doubling. Because the initial object of desire has been lost, the conflicted society will remain divided. It is in the midst of this endless dispute that Girard introduces an unfortunate remedy, the scapegoat mechanism.

The mechanism is primed by the society's unconscious search for a victim, often found among an already marginalized portion of the community. The scapegoat is innocent, but blinded by their conflict and their desire for a solution, the society becomes convinced of their victim's guilt and they proceed accordingly. Through their violent action against the scapegoat, usually involving exile or death, the society becomes reconciled to one another and unified in their opposition to the victim. Order is restored and even attributed to the scapegoat who will often become a sort of deity.⁵ In a desire to maintain unity, as well as to honor the original victim, sacrificial rituals attempt to recreate the murder of the scapegoat in a controlled manner. The practicing community, ignorant to the foundation that undergirds their ritual, celebrates the unity that their sacrifice has wrought.⁶

When Girard speaks of religion as supporting the scapegoat mechanism, he places Judaism and Christianity in a separate category. Although he acknowledges Judaism's sacrificial past, as well as the sacrificial "flavor" of Christian theology, he finds in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament a progressive revelation that attempts to move the people away from sacrificial religion.⁷ The Gospel message, he claims, "is the biblical spirit which exposes the truth of violent origins, takes the side of the victim, and works toward the overcoming of scapegoating as a viable means of social formation."⁸ Through the cross event, the scapegoat mechanism was "exposed, placed in the open, stripped naked and dismantled."⁹

⁵ René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 66-67, 72.

⁶ In the example of *Romeo and Juliet*, the Montagues and Capulets become united with one another only after Juliet and Romeo have died. The two families celebrate their reconciliation by honoring the two dead children, and the head of the Capulet house exclaims of them, "Poor sacrifices of our enmity!" Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 243.

⁷ Acknowledging that Christian theology has maintained sacrificial language through the years does not necessarily weaken Girard's theory. In fact, the reality that theologians continue to return to the language of atoning sacrifice only serves to show how powerful the scapegoat mechanism has become.

⁸ Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2005), 63.

⁹ Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 151.

In keeping with the notion that YHWH attempted to move the people away from the snares of scapegoating, Girard writes that even the Ten Commandments address the problem of mimetic desire. He writes, “If we ceased to desire the goods of our neighbor, we would never commit murder or adultery or theft or false witness. If we respected the tenth commandment, the four commandments that precede it would be superfluous.”¹⁰ The Corinthians, as understood through Paul’s letters to them, suffered from what can rightly be called conflictual mimetic struggles. 1 Corinthians is Paul’s attempt to speak order into the chaos that had infiltrated the community, and it is to this attempt that we now move.

1 CORINTHIANS 1-2: SALUTATION TO A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS -- Paul begins this letter by reminding the Corinthians of who they are and to what purpose they were called, expressing his desire that they would be in agreement with one another and that there would be no divisions (σχίσματα) among them (1 Cor 1:10). They had become divided in their allegiances to various leaders of the *ekklesia*, but Paul wishes for them to see that they are rightly defined as belonging to Christ, in a fellowship that resists division (1 Cor 1:12-13). The λόγος of the cross, Paul writes, is nonsense (μωρία) to those who find themselves outside of the *ekklesia*. However, for those who are being saved, it is the power (δύναμις) of God, which “will destroy the wisdom of the wise and reject the intelligence of the intelligent” (1 Cor 1:19).¹¹ The wisdom of the age, Paul claims, a wisdom that emphasizes worldly power and strength, is unable to comprehend the claim of a crucified Messiah, and in this sense, the cross is certainly “a stumbling block (σκάνδαλον) to Jews and nonsense (μωρίαν) to Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23). If we assume, as Girard does, that the world subconsciously believes in the unifying efficacy of violence against the weak, then asserting that Christ voluntarily became a scapegoat and sided with victims is indeed foolish. This is, however, exactly the claim that Paul makes when he

¹⁰ René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, 12.

¹¹ cf. LXX Isa 29:14 – Paul alters and intensifies this passage by replacing κρύψω with ἀθετέω.

writes, “we preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23) as “God chose what is weak in the world so that he might shame the strong” (1 Cor 1:27).

The wisdom of God, Paul continues, is “a wisdom in a mystery, hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory” (1 Cor 2:7). Similar to Girard’s application of “things hidden since the foundation of the world,” this wisdom is unavailable and incomprehensible to those who have not received the gifts of God’s Spirit (1 Cor 2:14). That which the wisdom reveals and enacts is so powerful and earth-shattering that, Paul writes, if those in power had understood it, “they would have never crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8). Those who crucified Christ acted in accordance with the scapegoat mechanism that God had been trying to move them away from and, ironically, their reliance on it, intended to unify and strengthen them, only aided in its dismantlement.

1 CORINTHIANS 3-4: CONSTRUCTION OF A MIMETIC CHAIN -- After his extensive outline of Christ’s work on the cross, Paul returns to the subject of division. He sees that the communal schisms take root in the members’ choices of different models, and if the Corinthians are to be spiritually wise, they must first become fools to the world, which involves the realization that they do not belong to any one person.

At this point in the letter, Paul begins construction of a “mimetic chain” that runs from the Corinthians all the way to God, and the first link can be found in the statement, “you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:23). In this declaration, Paul acknowledges the positive role that mimesis plays in human development and, since he considers the Corinthians to be “as babes (*νηπίοις*) in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1), leaving them to develop without a proper model would in a sense be irresponsible parenting. Paul also acknowledges that a chain ending with Christ would be too short and not of much value. At the start of chapter 4, he states that the Corinthians are to regard *him*, as well as those sent by him, as stewards (*οἰκονόμοι*) of God’s mysteries (1 Cor 4:1). In his definition, the *οἰκονόμος*, literally “one in charge of a household,” is one who must be considered trustworthy and judged only by God.

By cataloguing his own behavior, characterized by foolishness, weakness and disrepute, Paul attempts to elucidate those behaviors that help define a spiritual life. As children, according to Paul, what the Corinthians need more than ever is a father in Christ who will emulate proper behavior for them. In Christ, he writes, he has become that father figure because of the gospel (1 Cor 4:15).¹²

After placing himself in the position of one whose behavior is worthy of imitation, Paul writes to the Corinthians, “I therefore exhort you, become imitators of me” (1 Cor 4:16). With this statement, Paul has added another link in the mimetic chain that runs from God, through Christ to the Corinthians. However, he acknowledges that his absence makes imitation difficult, and because of this, he sent them Timothy, who is already his “beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (1 Cor 4:17). Acting *in loco parentis*, Timothy provides one more link in Paul’s mimetic chain, and it is this link that will allow the Corinthians to rightly direct their imitation and thus to learn the ways of Christ. Because the ways of Christ are not a limited resource, however, the Corinthians stand in no danger of falling into conflictual mimesis. Rather, their imitation is focused, through the desire and imitation of Paul and Timothy, upon the desire and imitation of Christ, who in turn imitates and desires God.

With Timothy and himself as models, Paul now proceeds to outline the ways in which the Corinthians are to be distinguished from the rest of the world, by their interactions with one another as well as with those outside of the *ekklesia*. The following two sections of this analysis will focus on marriage and communal order as institutions that serve to engender proper mimetic desire within the community.

1 CORINTHIANS 5-7: MARRIAGE AS A CHANNEL FOR PROPER MIMETIC DESIRE -- Paul frames his discourse on marriage with an obvious example of misdirected desire, the man living with his father’s wife. This type of *πορνεία*, he writes, is not found even among the Gentiles (1 Cor 5:1). His solution to the problem is to remove the guilty man from the community in order to quell

¹² ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα – lit. “for in Christ Jesus, through/because of the gospel, I fathered you.”

conflictual mimesis before it spreads (1 Cor 5:2). Just as a small amount of yeast is needed to prepare a lump of dough, the nature of conflictual mimesis is such that little is needed to contaminate an entire community. The Corinthians are to be a new lump, unleavened (ἄζυμοι), without the yeast of evil and wickedness (1 Cor 5:7-8). They are to accomplish this by avoiding association with those who are immoral (πόρνος), greedy (πλεονέκτης), idolaters (εἰδωλολάτρης), slanderers (λοιδορός), drunkards (μέθυσος) or thieves (ἄρπαξ) (1 Cor 5:11), and by casting out any in their midst who are found guilty of such behaviors.

After setting the foundation for right conduct, Paul begins his marriage instructions with the affirmation, “it is good for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Cor 7:1). He quickly acknowledges, however, that because of πορνεία, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband (1 Cor 7:2). Rather than ignore desire and risk further situations like that of the adulterous man, Paul allows for marriage to prevent the convergence of many desires upon a single, limited object. There are some, like himself, who are capable of exercising self-control without the institution of marriage and, although he wishes that all could remain single, he acknowledges that this is simply not the case.

Lest the Corinthians think that singleness is more valuable than marriage *per se*, or that those who are married should once again become single, Paul offers a short excursus on divorce. He does not mandate an outright prohibition of dissolving a marriage, but he does insist that those who are divorced should remain single or be reconciled to one another (1 Cor 7:10-11). The only exception to this rule is made for women whose spouses have died. In these cases, they are allowed to seek remarriage, although Paul maintains that it is better for them to remain single (1 Cor 7:39-40). Because marriage is intended to direct one's desire toward a single object, to allow for remarriage after divorce would be to nullify the original purpose by allowing the divorced to seek new objects of desire. In the

case of a spouse who is outside the *ekklesia*, Paul maintains that the purpose of marriage stands unchanged, as each person still benefits from having a single, concrete object of desire.

Many of the instructions offered here and elsewhere were not intended as permanent solutions, but rather as liminal bandages in a time between times. Paul admonishes the Corinthians to remain as they are, whether single or married, not because their present states are better or more valuable than another, but because in the near future, having a properly directed desire will no longer be an obstacle.

1 CORINTHIANS 11-14: COMMUNAL ORDER -- As if to remind the Corinthians of the mimetic chain he has constructed thus far, Paul begins his section on communal order with the statement, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). The verses that follow, specifically 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, which call for the veiling of women during worship, have been troubling for Pauline scholarship. Despite the obvious theological, social and textual issues of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, all of which have been documented to exhaustion, I maintain that it is possible for these verses to achieve a constructive purpose within the Pauline corpus. At their core is not the idea that women are of less ecclesial value than men, but to the contrary, the fact that Paul instructs women on *how* to pray and prophesy assumes that they *should* and *will* be praying and prophesying. The reasons he gives as to why they should cover their heads while doing so are twofold.

First, a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors (καταισχύνει) her head (1 Cor 11:5). According to Paul, *both* men and women are capable of dishonoring their heads, either by covering or failing to cover. If a man's head is Christ, and if man is the image and glory of God, then to cover his head while praying or prophesying would be to cover up the glory of God as well as dishonor Christ. If a woman's head is man, and she is the glory of man, then to leave her head uncovered during worship would be to allow the glory of man, instead of the glory of God, to dominate. By covering her head while praying and prophesying, the woman effectively hides the glory

of man so that the glory of God might be seen. For a more comprehensive exposition of this point, I would direct you to Morna Hooker's article, "Authority on Her Head."¹³

The second reason for the veiling of women, related to the first and perhaps more important for the purposes of this analysis, is the peculiar statement, *διὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους*, "because of the angels" (1 Cor 11:10). Joseph Fitzmeyer is wary of connecting these angels with the Sons of God in Genesis 6 or with the fallen Watchers of 1 Enoch,¹⁴ however in the context of so much discussion about misdirected desire, it does not strike me as suspect to assert that Paul was aware of such traditions and that he believed in the possibility of angels being lured by the beauty of women. If Paul did believe that angels joined the Corinthians in worship, which seems likely in light of verse 10, and if a central concern of this epistle is the ordering of desire, then in his milieu the veiling of women becomes absolutely essential. His instructions here serve to ensure that when women and men gathered to pray and prophesy, the glory of God could be seen and desired by all members of the *ekklesia*, including the angels who worshipped with them. This point certainly stands in need of further development, but Girard's theory may well present new insight to this passage that has been so elusive in the past.

As he moves on to speak of table fellowship, Paul again criticizes the Corinthians for being divided when they assemble (1 Cor 11:18). Because there are some among them who leave the table hungry while others leave drunk, Paul accuses them of hating the *ekklesia* of God (1 Cor 11:22). The power of the cross is, as Paul has already outlined, that "God chose what is low and despised in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1:27), and to proclaim the Lord's death in this sense, involves far more than simply remembering it. It involves pragmatically following the examples of Paul and the other *οἰκονόμοι*, who became weak in order to gain (*κερδήσω*) the weak (1 Cor 9:19). To properly partake of the Lord's Supper requires that one put aside thoughts of their own well-being and instead focus their attention on the needs of the marginalized (1 Cor 11:33). By siding with those who would

¹³ M.D. Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor. XI. 10," NTS 10 (1964): 410-416.

¹⁴ J.A. Fitzmeyer, "A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the Angels of 1 Cor. 11:10," NTS 4 (1957): 48-58.

otherwise be cast aside, by becoming weak and waiting patiently for one another before eating, true and right participation in the Lord's Supper becomes possible.

The communal order that Paul envisions finds its source in his famed discourse on ἀγάπη. Far from being a gift that only some are offered, ἀγάπη is presented by Paul as an indispensable force that serves to animate, unify and edify the body of Christ. In fact, he goes so far as to claim that the previously mentioned spiritual gifts are of no value if they are not fueled by ἀγάπη. Even with regard to ridding one's self of all possessions, Paul writes, "if I do not have ἀγάπη, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:3). The definition that Paul offers has become ubiquitous in contemporary churches, and anyone who has attended a wedding has likely heard the following repeated to exhaustion:

Love is patient, love is kind; it is not jealous, it does not brag, it is not haughty; it is not rude, it does not seek itself, it is not irritable; it does not recall evil, it is not happy about injustice but it celebrates the truth. (1 Cor 13:4-6).

Paul's sense of love rests on the foundation of the Corinthians as the body of Christ, and the behaviors associated with love echo what has already been said about order. Love is patient and kind, and thus encourages the Corinthians to practice self-control at their eating of the Lord's Supper. It is not jealous and it does not brag, and thus it encourages them to celebrate their individual gifts while acknowledging that all are given by the same Spirit. They should not direct their desires jealously toward the gifts of the other, nor should they brag of their own superiority. Love does not seek itself, and thus it encourages the Corinthians to seek and support the outcasts. It resists conflict by avoiding irritability and resentment, and by celebrating truth rather than injustice. With ἀγάπη as the driving force behind the Corinthian community's worship, all things must and will be done with the goal of siding with the marginalized, thus building up the body of Christ (1 Cor 14:26).

1 CORINTHIANS 15: THE RISEN CHRIST AS MODEL— As mentioned in the introduction, Paul views the risen Christ as the model *par excellence* for proper mimetic desire, and chapter 15 is his attempt at a systematic outline of the multi-faceted nature of the Christ event. Christ's resurrection brings with it the hope of a new life, one without mimetic struggles or inclinations toward disorder and

violence, and it is toward this new life that the Corinthians must strive in their attitudes and actions toward one another.

In opposition to those who would claim that Christ had not been raised,¹⁵ Paul writes emphatically, “Now Christ has been raised (ἐγήγεραται) from the dead, the first (ἀπαρχή) of those who have fallen asleep (κεκοιμημένων)” (1 Cor 15:20). Through his use of the perfect tense of ἐγείρω, he refutes the claims that Christ’s resurrection did not happen or that it had yet to happen. For Paul, the resurrection of Christ was a concrete event in the past, not something to be found in the future. Also, by claiming Christ as the ἀπαρχή τῶν κεκοιμημένων, Paul declares that the resurrection had initiated the liminal stage in which the Corinthians find themselves. The noun ἀπαρχή, literally “first fruit,” is used exclusively in the Pauline corpus to designate something that occurs with the assumption that something else will follow later.¹⁶ Likewise, the participle κεκοιμημένων, literally “those who have fallen asleep,” signifies the belief in death’s impermanence. The instructions offered through this letter aim to properly form the desires of an *ekklesia* that exists in the time of the “already but not yet.”

The *parousia*, according to Paul, will bring with it an end to the present age, and Christ will reign until “every rule, every authority and power” has been destroyed (1 Cor 15:24). Alluding to Psalm 110,¹⁷ Paul writes, “For it is necessary for him to reign until he has put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor 15:25). In Paul’s adaptation of the psalm, the role of conqueror shifts from David to Christ, and while the conquering itself is still the work of God, Christ accomplishes it by submitting to death as a victim rather than by inflicting it as a warring king. Like David before him, having conquered the powers and mechanisms of this age through his obedience, Christ will stand in possession of the kingdom as a conqueror, but the obedience fostered by his imitation prevents him from keeping it for

¹⁵ It would appear from the rhetoric present in Chapter 15, as well as the confusion elsewhere in the epistle, that some at Corinth were contradicting Paul’s previous teachings on the resurrection. For an analysis of the possible identities of these “teachers,” see: Martinus C. De Boer, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988)

¹⁶ Rom 8:23; 11:16; 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Thess 2:13.

¹⁷ LXX Psalm 109

himself. Instead, he continues to imitate the desire of God and, because God desires the kingdom, he delivers the kingdom to God (1 Cor 15:24). Through the mimetic chain that underlies his earlier instructions, Paul has urged the Corinthians to direct their desires toward God through the imitation of Christ, and the eschatological vision found here paints a vivid picture of what that imitation entails. Christ's obedience, stemming from his unwavering desire for God, is so powerful that it draws him constantly toward God and thus transforms and molds his own desires to mirror the desires of God.

CONCLUSION -- The parallels that exist between St. Paul and René Girard are striking, but to claim them as thoroughly in harmony with one another would be both irresponsible and reckless. Paul's solution to the situation of the adulterous man (exile), for example, could be construed as an example of scapegoating. As well, his pervasive language of sacrifice and expiation language has served to reinforce many of the ideas that Girard finds inconsistent with the Gospel revelation. Girard's solution to the problem of violence, the desacralization of Christianity, mandates at very least the redefinition of sacrificial language like that found in the letters of Paul. Certainly a task not to be taken lightly.

Regardless of their disparities, Paul and Girard find formidable compatibility in their visions for community as defined by properly directed mimetic desire and siding with the marginalized. Both acknowledge that mimesis can and must play a positive role in human development, and that many problems that afflict society are due to misdirected desires resulting from poorly chosen models. Paul's solution can be found in his mimetic chain, running from the οἰκονόμοι to Christ, which provides the members of the *ekklesia* with tangible, trustworthy models. Through their imitation of the οἰκονόμοι, as well as their attention to proper communal order and worship, the *ekklesia* learns the ways of Christ, whose desire is in perfect alignment and harmony with God's. Likewise for Girard, the ultimate paradigm for mimesis is found in the person of Christ, who sided with the marginalized until the point of death, and consequently testified to the fruitlessness of the violent scapegoat mechanism. Although

each holds to their own *interpretation* of the cross event, the *implications* are the same for both; true knowledge of the Gospel, as found in the crucified and risen Christ, affords a view of the world that was previously hidden from sight, and once conversion to this new perspective occurs, a return to previously held convictions or ideas becomes impossible.

A conversion of this sort, one that turns the *ethos* of the world inside out, not only involves a transformation of *belief* but also an alteration of *behavior*. Girard, like Paul, is writing to what he perceives as a liminal period of human history. Paul's sense of the *eschaton* involved the return of Christ as final conqueror of the world's powers, and the instructions he gave to his communities were intended to prepare them for the time when God would be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Girard's writings, although they certainly maintain a strong theological flavor, lack the theocentric eschatological substructure that one finds in the writings of Paul. Girard would certainly agree that "the end" is looming, perhaps in the not so distant future, but he would also contend that humanity as a whole, rather than God, is responsible for its arrival or prevention thereof. The world's "salvation" from destruction indeed comes through the person of Christ, for it is through his death and resurrection that humanity learns of the scapegoat mechanism's inadequacy, and it is through imitation of him that participation in its exposure becomes possible. If Girard's theory is correct, that the permeation of belief in the efficacy of scapegoating is leading the world toward its own, self-inflicted *eschaton*, then the only acceptable response is humanity's urgent, comprehensive desertion of violence. At this point however, the mimetic theory remains in a liminal stage of its own, yet to be proven decisively as anything other than a theory. The unfortunate reality of its status is, however, that if the theory turns out to be accurate, and the world as a whole fails to heed Girard's warning, there may be no one left to validate it.