



CFI Study Notes – Bukuru, Jos

Origins of Violence

... and what to do about it

A look at Rene Girard's *Mimetic Theory* and its relevance for our current world and its violence. What are some of the sources of violence? How do these things work in our lives today? How can we get to the kingdom Jesus spoke of, leaving behind our satanic rule of old?

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Introduction

Mimetic Theory was developed by Rene Girard. *Mimetic*, or *mimesis*, means to mimic. Girard traces the role mimicking plays in violence in our cultures, and how mimicking the kingdom of God can be our only solution.

Violence is a front-line issue in our world. We see it in so many areas. It occurs between races, between faiths, between nations, between political persuasions, between any people. People try to blame one of the above institutions, but the reason for violence is human behaviour itself.

Violence can be active or passive. It can do physical harm, or retreat from a world in need, ignoring our neighbour, just because he or she is different from ourselves, turning our back on structural injustices.

In a divided world, we are often called to violence, to stand for our cause, “to make the world a better place.” But this always makes things worse. Calls to violence serve instead to support someone’s ambition, their aspirations in leadership. These calls are not for sincere motives.

We need to be aware of the motives that work within us. Especially in our superior thoughts about our race, tribe or faith. These thoughts appear pure, as if we are stopping wrong doing in others, or bringing justice back to our world, but they are satanic and destructive.

This was the reason Jesus called us away from all forms of violence, to a new kingdom, that does things peacefully, with a new spirit. Instead of calling for divisions, he calls us to gather into one all who are weak, from all backgrounds. He calls us to overcome division and hatred with care for others, no matter their race or creed.

Peace isn’t only a negative issue – the violence we don’t do, the hatred we don’t speak – it is also a positive matter, the good we do, the healing we bring to those different to ourselves. Peace must be active and courageous, stepping into foreign and needy realms, or it won’t work.

People speak out with hatred against those who are different, or who have different views. Just a few minutes on Facebook will reveal this. God is calling us to serve, rather than to hate. Instead of participating in violence, and hateful speech, God has called us to recognize all forms of violence and heal those wounded by it.

In this book, we look at some of the views of Rene Girard, concerning the origins of violence in human culture, and how the same issues effect our lives today.

Rene Girard

Inspiration for this book is taken from the work of Rene Girard. *Wikipedia* says of Girard:

“René Girard (25 December 1923 – 4 November 2015) was a French historian, literary critic, and philosopher of social science whose work belongs to the tradition of anthropological philosophy. Girard was the author of nearly thirty books, with his writings spanning many academic domains. Although the reception of his work is different in each of these areas, there is a growing body of secondary literature on his work and his influence on disciplines such as literary criticism, critical theory, anthropology, theology, psychology, mythology, sociology, economics, cultural studies, and philosophy.

“Girard's fundamental ideas, which he had developed throughout his career and provided the foundation for his thinking, were that desire is mimetic (i.e. all of our desires are borrowed from other people), that all conflict originates in mimetic desire (mimetic rivalry), that the scapegoat mechanism is the origin of sacrifice and the foundation of human culture, and religion was necessary in human evolution to control the violence that can come from mimetic rivalry, and that the Bible reveals these ideas and denounces the scapegoat mechanism.”

Girard's Christianity

Girard was a Christian and he used his ideas to strongly defend the Christian faith. Though his ideas are sometimes mentioned in the context of evolutionary belief, they have nothing really to do with evolution. They just explain human behaviour in some ways, since the creation and fall.

I have listened to Girard a little on discussions about evolution, and from what I have heard he is unsure about how the creation/ evolution debate will ultimately work out. He spoke about biases and prejudices in science going through a process and being undone through new learning. I think Girard is unsure about Genesis as a genre and how exactly it is to be applied to history. In my own view, killing, selfishness, meat eating, originate in the fall of man, and not in the creation itself.

Girard spoke about myths. This referred to the pagan myths. But he also used the term to refer to ancient biblical stories. He didn't mean that the stories were not true history. By myth, he meant that the stories had taken on an iconic significance within human or biblical worldview. Myth refers to the importance of these historical events as symbols of reality within our cultures.

Girard also spoke of satan in the symbolic sense, as a characteristic within humanity, our propensity to blame and accuse others. Satan stands as the symbol of *accusation*, which brings our civilizations into rivalry and murder. We see scapegoating when others do it, but never when we do it. This is what is hidden from our eyes, about our conflicts, since the beginning, since the Garden of Eden. But this doesn't mean that a personal satan isn't driving this blindness within us.

Girard saw the significance of his teaching about the kingdom of God, and the coming of a new life to humanity through the gospel of Jesus Christ. He believed this new life would one day renew our world. Girard's teachings are about the concepts of the satanic kingdom and the contrasting love and care of Christ's kingdom, which has come to fill our hearts, behaviours and nations.

Girard's Publications

One of his latest books, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, is about this contrasting rule of the kingdom of God in our lives, coming to pass through the death and resurrection of Christ. *Wikipedia* gives the web links to several of his articles. Some of Girard's other books include:

Things Hidden Before the Foundations of the World

Violence and the Sacred

The Scapegoat

Deceit, Desire & the Novel

Sacrifice

Violent Origins

Mimesis and Theory

Pagan Myths

Girard studied many famous literary works, as well as histories of persecutions. In these sources, he found similar behavioural patterns, which he claims make perfect sense of the ancient pagan myths about their gods. He said these discoveries give a key to unlock and interpret the ancient myths.

In reading the ancient myths, Girard found consistent themes. He described these as memetic desire, scapegoating and violence. He claims that this process in ancient cultures, shows the ways in which these cultures and civilizations were founded.

When interpreted, the myths reveal a culture of violence. Girard believes that the pagan myths depict real history from the beginning of the pagan civilizations. The myths have been passed down in a form that hides the original violence, but Girard believes that when these myths are properly interpreted, the violence and true history is clear.

The foundation of our separate civilizations is violence. Girard shows the basis and reasons for this violence, that work within human behaviour. He shows how we continue to hide this from ourselves, and discusses our need to change, before our world comes to even more serious consequences.

Ending Sacrifice

Girard claims that the work of Jesus Christ, his teachings about the kingdom of God and his death and resurrection, reveal the violence of our world and the motives that are behind it. It is through the gospel that the hidden secrets of our violent cultures come out into the open. The gospel shows the scapegoating processes in action, and especially reveal them because of the innocence of the victim, Jesus Christ.

An example of Girard's memetic teaching is the story of Joseph and his brothers. The brothers sacrificed Joseph in their jealousy. Later Judah refused to sacrifice Benjamin, but offered himself instead. He showed the way we end violence, by our unwillingness to participate in it. This is what made Judah the lion. This is how Jesus ended sacrifice.

Here we see the biblical stories, unlike pagan myths, reveal the scapegoat to be innocent, the murderers guilty, and that the divine has no part in the violence. They reveal the violent origins of civilizations to be entirely human.

Awakening to Christ

Girard said there is a danger in our current day, that without sacrifice in our Christianised world, people who also don't follow the principles of Jesus, may escalate violence to catastrophic proportions. He believed that our refusal to talk about this possibility made it even more likely.

Girard's philosophy concerning human behaviour puts him at variance with most Enlightenment philosophers, who saw individuals as independent, rational actors, not at risk of mimicking and escalating dangerous behaviour. Girard wasn't as sure. He saw mankind as interdependent, whose mimetic actions can spiral into an extremism that is devastating.

If we are aware of this danger, we can act now to reverse the trend. One of our roles in this is to follow Christ as witnesses of his kingdom of peace, living that out today in our relationships with all our neighbours, from diverse backgrounds.

Pagan Murder

Rene Girard wrote about some aspects on the behaviour of communities. He looked at the development of sacrificial practices in ancient times and at how much of the rational of ancient communities still exists today.

Primary to this rational is that communities exist on the strength of murder. This means that murder is what holds communities together. Murder gives communities cohesion. It unifies the people and makes them a solid team, able to build together in their vision as a city or nation. This means that murder is the foundation of civilization.

Cain is a simple ancient example of this, the founder of the first city. Others like Lamech followed the same course, as did violent civilizations before and after the Flood.

This is the satanic way of building society. A society like this can never be whole. It will always be oppressive. As Jesus said, "satan cannot drive out satan." Jesus knew how satan and anthropology merged. His teaching and life was as much directed at transforming this kind of society, as it was about our personal lives.

Memetic Desire

Girard spoke of mimetic desire. Mimetic means to mimic, to copy someone else. The ability to copy others is good. It is how we learn many things. As children, we copy speech from our parents. We see what others are doing and we desire to follow them, to learn from them. This desire to learn from and copy others helps build community, because we desire to associate with what others are doing. It brings us together.

But this desire to copy others can also be the cause of friction. If we desire to copy others, we also desire to have what others have. We desire something because others desire it. We mimic their desire. It is because we see someone else with a thing, that the same item has value to us as well. We want it because it gives prestige to someone else. We want to copy that person, so we want the thing that they want.

Memetic Rivalry

If you see a young child playing with a toy in a room, what will happen if another child comes into the room? Even though there are other toys there, the second child will often want the toy the first child is playing with. The second child desires that toy, simply because the first child is playing with it. He is copying the first child. His desire is based on the first child's desire. This leads to conflict.

Or, if you go into a store and look at a pair of shoes on a shelf, another person may follow after you and look at the same pair of shoes. Sometimes rivalry can happen over this pair of shoes, even though many other good shoes are there. This is mimetic desire. It is desiring what we see others desiring. The fact that someone desires something, gives that thing value.

This is a picture of what happens within wider community. There are several conflicts going on within the community at once. Different people are desiring what other people have. Eventually the wider community is filled with many conflicts and the community tends towards chaos. So mimesis, that which was supposed to bring togetherness to the community, is now bringing disintegration.

Girard's theory explains what communities do about this threat of disintegration. How do they resolve this chaos? How do they get cohesion to return to the community? Once the community has its cohesion back, then the community can go on to achieve things together. It can become strong and compete with other communities. Maybe it can even become an empire and get riches. But it must have cohesion for this.

Scapegoating

How can a community, that has so many areas of friction, come together again? First of all, we see that the problem is satanic. It is friction based upon competitive interests and ego, that breaks down cooperation between people. Satan loves this. It is oppressive and harmful towards people. People cannot help each other discover and achieve God's purpose for themselves and for the world, because we are at variance with each other. The good purposes for creation are hampered.

But then satan gives a solution to this community's problem. If he didn't give us a solution, we might start looking to God. But satan's solution is more of the same. It is more violence and more killing. It is satan casting out satan.

Let's explain. What can bring unity to a group? When there is rivalry, conflict and negative energy with a group, what can solve this? There needs to be some way of channelling this negative energy, of dissipating and releasing it, that does the least damage to the community.

The answer is finding a common enemy. This common enemy will allow an avenue for violent energy to be expended. It will also be an opportunity to unite the competing factions in the community. Where do we get this common enemy from? It starts with one member of the community pointing the finger at someone who is different. This person has some characteristic that distinguishes them from the rest of the group. Then the person can be viewed as a fault and a threat to the community.

Whether the person is a genuine threat or not doesn't matter. What matters is that this perception unifies the community against a common enemy. The community stops seeing each other as their enemies and starts seeing this selected person as their common problem. All the hatred of the community, which they held against each other, is now focused on this other person. Before the person knows what is happening, he or she is cornered, condemned by the group and killed.

Unified Desire

The group now sees that its problems have been solved. They have identified the culprit, the one they said who had caused their problems. And when they killed that person they noticed that peace had returned to their group. Order had returned. They were no longer fighting each other. They think that this proves they were correct, that the person they killed really was the cause of their problems.

What really happened was that their mimetic desire changed. Instead of desiring what other members in their group had, they started desiring to blame the same enemy. When one member pointed at a potential victim to blame, every person then desired to blame that victim. The thing they desired, to kill someone at fault, became the desire of all the community, which they could all fulfil together. The whole community is involved in the death of that person. It is a desire they can all participate in at once, without conflict between themselves.

This is the reason stoning was a useful way of killing the selected victim. The whole group could participate in the event and find fulfillment and unity together in a common desire. Once the victim

was killed, those who participated noticed a new friendship among themselves. Their petty jealousies against each other subsided.

We see these themes in the ancient myths of pagan gods and the foundations of civilizations. There is commonly some crisis, followed by a murder and then the rise of a new great nation. The people are unified around a common victim to blame for their chaos and troubles. The reason to blame the victim may be partially true, or false. There may be claims about some evil the victim has done, like murder, or incest, or some other crime.

The victim is then tried unjustly, found guilty and put to death. In Greek tradition, the mob approached the victim together, slowly, until the victim was pressed off a cliff. This way, no one person was guilty for the victim's death, in case any family member of the victim wanted to revenge the killing. But normally a victim was chosen who was weak, who had no one to revenge them. A large group could participate in the killing of the "guilty person," and this participation would bring unity to the community.

Deified Victim

After the killing, the people noticed their rivalries stopped. The fighting in their city group ended. The people were unified and friendly. The common purpose of killing the "guilty person" had brought them together. They then believed that this was a great miracle. Eventually divine status was assigned to the "guilty person" whom they killed. They believed the victim had done a great miracle for the people, in bringing them together, and eventually making them a great empire. So eventually that victim became a god in their mythology.

Greek mythology is like other pagan stories in the ancient world, about how the gods came to be worshipped. They commonly started out this way, through the sacrifice and killing of an outsider, someone weaker, who later became venerated as a god in the new rising city/ empire.

This sheds light on why the gods have human like characteristics. The gods often do terrible things, like murder, or indulge in destructive sexual behaviours. Mankind makes gods in their own image. Whatever sin the victim was blamed for, when the community first accused and killed them, was carried into their divinity after the community was healed. When they started to worship the victim whom they had killed, they included the victim's earlier "sins" into their divine image.

This is how ancient gods came into being. They were the victims of community murder. When the community was healed, in time they wanted to commemorate the killing, as a way of bonding the community. By this time the victim had become a god, and they would make sacrifices to the god, reminding themselves of the original miracle, in how they had been unified into becoming a great nation. And these sacrifices continued to remind the community of how their future disputes would be settled: by murder.

Hiding the Murder

The mechanism works in this way: To alleviate the violence happening within a society, that violence is diverted to another object, person or group of persons. If the society can get enough mimetic desire working to turn the people in unity against another person or group, then the process will succeed. Those who lead the process will have their position over the society strengthened.

One of the clearest examples of this occurred in Germany, when after World War I, the nation was in great trouble. Hitler was able to unify the nation by appealing to its fears of Communism and the

fear of the Jews. This scapegoating very quickly gave rise to such a strong Germany, that it nearly defeated the rest of the world.

The key to this process is hiding the murder, or hiding the guilt of the murder. If the society can really believe in the guilt of the scapegoat, then its murder isn't seen as murder, but as justice. Scapegoating only works when the society believes in the guilt of the scapegoat, or in its own propaganda. This is why any person who casts doubt on the propaganda is maligned so quickly. Scapegoating only works when its real motivation is hidden.

This is how violence takes the ascendancy in our cultures. We participate in violence because we hide it as violence. We call it justice, but we are really participating in satan's cycle of destruction, which reigns over our nations and world. It leads us from one conflict to the next. It calls us to an escalation of violence in which we all hide our violence in the guilt of the other person or people.

Pagan Examples

Greek myths of creation show gods fighting and committing murderous acts, like eating their children, and overthrowing their parents. Other myths speak of victims thrown into water and becoming god like mermaids. Girard believed that all such stories depict human violence, with the accused victims later divinised.

In reality, and this is what is hidden, all the violence committed is human violence, not actually violence by the so-called gods. The myths are propagandised stories, invented to hide the violence of the murderers and victors, who went on to create the new world order.

We read the bible according to the time in which it was written. What was it saying to the people of its time, considering the background, the religious world of their day? The message of creation in the scripture, was written when the Hebrew people knew the creation myths of the pagan nations. The pagan myths in early Hebrew days, were just like the Greek myths: violent acts carried out by their founders, masked in the identities of their invented gods.

In contrast, the biblical account of creation contains no violence. The creation story in the bible isn't just history. It was telling the Hebrew people, in the day in which all pagan creation stories were violent acts, that God was calling his people to a non-scapegoating way of peace with our enemies. That is, to cast out satan without violence.

Creation is bringing cosmos (order) out of chaos. The creation stories of the pagans were really about the violent origins of their civilizations. But the biblical account shows that the rivalry of memetic desire isn't defeated by murder. The chaos of our communities doesn't come to order through violence, but by healing care, which reconciles. God brought order to the chaos without a single act of violence. The biblical text then could not have arisen out of our pagan societies.

The very ancient Egyptian creation myths that date before Moses, also depict sexual gods eating offspring and enforcing violent order out of the waters. These myths appear to depict human life between creation and the Flood, which has been deified. They seem to be more about the foundations of Egyptian civilization than creation ex-nihilo. Sumerian creation myths are similar.

Human Nature

Scapegoating is a complex human issue and it has many parts to it. Our reason for looking at this is to see some of the issues involved in the beginning and in the roots of violence in our human behaviour, so we can understand some of the ways in which people behave today.

First of all, I don't think that the original basis for this is what Girard calls mimetic desire. As we said, mimetic means to mimic or copy. This is very much a strong part of human behaviour, which, as we noted earlier, is a good thing. Mimesis gives us things in common, and helps us learn from each other, and this helps form us into communities. But it also gives rise to rivalry, when it brings about unhealthy competition among people, for the same items they desire.

Mimicking is part of the human nature, part of the way we are designed, for our learning. A such, it is a positive thing. But the mimesis Girard is describing, the mimesis that is derived from jealousy between people and which brings about competition, this mimesis comes about for a different reason. This isn't part of our human design, or the way God made humanity. This is part of our fall.

Idolatry

Girard notes this as well. It is derived from our idolatry. There is an emptiness within us, that we try to fill with other things. The idol is ultimately ourselves, and we try to fill our emptiness with self-praise, which is proven by our status among others, our being on the top, our having the things that other people want. Mimicking others comes about by our desire to fill the void and emptiness in our souls.

This mimicking behaviour then is a religious thing. It comes from our desire to worship. Worship means to believe in goodness. Our sense of goodness has been corrupted and focused upon ourselves. This comes out in competition for position, honour, righteousness and for material things and this produces the rivalry.

Judging Others

When this rivalry takes place, our solution for it is also religious. By pointing the finger at a common victim, and accusing the person, we fulfil our sense of righteousness. There is a sense of right and wrong in all our souls, and accusing someone else makes us feel better about ourselves, especially when we know inside that we have done wrong. Accusing someone restores our conscience and gives us peace.

As a community, we have a sense that we have offended the divinity. In our traditional religions, this often means there is a curse upon our society. We have also believed that if we offer this offended god a sacrifice, then they will be appeased. In this case, the victim/ scapegoat we offer doesn't have to have done wrong. Their fault may be just a way they are different. They may have a speech impediment, or be twins, or have some different physical feature, or be a foreigner.

Appeasement Killing

Their difference, or frailty, may be seen as an offence to the gods, evidence that the victim has been cursed. If they are cursed, then they are the reason for the problems in the community. They are bringing the curse to the group. If they are killed, then the curse will be appeased and the community will be healed. This is the pagan reasoning.

This is how offering a victim can bring peace to the whole community. It answers our collective conscience and our collective need to appease the gods for the wrong we know inside ourselves that we have all done. Sacrifice brings us inner and collective peace.

Sacrifice is Born

Sacrifice is a human invention. Because of our fallen conscience we think God demands sacrifice, and we transcribe this view to the gods in our idolatry. Sacrifice has its foundation in our human societies. First it was human sacrifice, then animals were substituted for humans. The requirement for blood didn't start with God.

We have misread God and the scripture in this way. God said he didn't ask Israel for sacrifice when he brought them out of Egypt (Jeremiah 7:22). The Prophets said God didn't want sacrifice. We have said God introduced sacrifice, but no text in scripture says this. The Prophets said, "God wants mercy, not sacrifice." That is, merciful care, not sacrifice, heals memetic rivalry.

Genesis 3:21, for example, doesn't say anything about a sacrifice. It says God clothed Adam and Eve. The clothing was woven cloth, always used for priests. It was clothing for their skin, not clothing of animal skin (Exodus 22:27). When we transfer the father of the Prodigal Son into Genesis three, we get an entirely different picture of who God is. This is what Jesus wants us to do.

Nor does it say that Abel killed his animal. They didn't eat meat then, so killing animals would have been senseless. Nor does it say God asked for offerings. These things came from our conscience, and God was pleased when they came from good will. But the gifts weren't for God, they were shared among the community. Violence and bloodshed does not originate with God.

God wants to transform our view of sacrifice, from killing, from punishment, from retribution, to restorative actions of peace and care. He doesn't want us to use satan to cast out satan. "I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices." All our religions have misunderstood God. We have read him from our fallen perspectives, from our own image.

Regulating Violence

The ancient people made conflict in their societies religious. When they killed a victim, it was a religious murder. They did this to appease their conscience. They did it to remove the curse they believed in. They also they did it to regulate and to limit the violence.

If their violence could be religious, if one, or even several victims, could appease a curse, then this would prevent a wider, disorganised, largescale killing. Making murder religious brought a kind of order to the community. The priesthood could make the rules, instead of everyone killing as they saw fit.

This limited violence, was to atone for anger and prevent a wider violence. It would prevent wide range revenge that was common. Whole villages could often be wiped out in retaliation for one murder. So a victim, a scapegoat, a sacrifice, could be presented to appease the wrath of the gods and the wrath of the community. This victim would be dedicated to the gods to regulate and pronounce the crime settled and appeased, thus stopping further bloodshed. This violence of religion would stop further violence.

So man was using violence to cast out violence. It works to an extent, but this violence then is always with us, always part of the human condition, something we can't get rid of. The scriptures show that God also adopted this form of violence, that was present in human culture, because he knew the vindictive, vengeful and violent nature of man.

In the Old Testament, it is called *charam*, “dedicated to God for destruction.” Here is the religious act of killing, to atone, to prevent widescale bloodshed. This is common in the Old Testament. It is human. It is not of God. It was necessary until God could bring us to Christ. In Christ violence is to stop. Christ put an end to sacrifice. But if we don’t follow Christ in peace, how will our violence be regulated without sacrifice? This is why we must learn to follow the ways of God’s kingdom.

Therefore, in ancient cultures the priesthood became a way of controlling the community, to prevent rivalry from breaking out into a completely chaotic degree. An empire had to have a priesthood to function, to maintain its cohesion and cooperation between its competitive members. Otherwise the people could not be governed.

Religion & Anthropology

This shows us that religion and anthropology (human culture) are intertwined. They make sense out of each other. If organised religion and sacrifice come out of our human fallenness and violence, and the bible shows this, not just secular studies, then the gospel must be God’s cure to this human condition, to our social need of new community.

The gospel is not a disconnected concept about our personal spirituality and heavenly salvation. It is to turn us from scapegoating, from sacrifice, to loving obedience. God has come in Christ to take away our violence, to replace sacrifice with service, as our redemptive, reconciling way of life.

God accepted Noah’s sacrifice because that was Noah’s faith. He didn’t command Noah’s sacrifice. God condescended to Abraham with sacrifice, because this was the culture, or the language Abraham spoke. This way, God could commend the sincerity of his intentions to Abraham’s mind.

God gave Israel sacrifice because they were under the law. They were already under the law, as were all human cultures under law of some kind, because this was our fallen condition. They already had their tabernacles and temples for appeasement of violence, long before Moses came. The law had filled our souls since the fall in Eden, along with its retributive violence filling our nations.

If Israel were under law, they would need sacrifice for the appeasement of that law, until Christ could come. God condescended to and adopted the same cultures of religion and killing, to limit violence, until he could change our hearts and lead us out of that culture.

But the systems were not of God. This is why Jesus said to those who wanted to follow them, that they didn’t know God, and that they didn’t know what spirit was filling them. This system of killing for peace does not come from God. God came in Christ to show us a new way, whereby we don’t cast out satan with satan. We don’t overcome aggression with aggression, but with forgiveness.

God is not Violent

This means we must re-evaluate the way we look at the cross, and at a lot of our other doctrines. Well, so did the Pharisees have to do this. The cross wasn’t a place where God demanded an offering for sin. It was a place where God, in Christ, gave himself for our violence, as the offering we demanded, and in return for our violence he freely extended to us his forgiveness. This calls us to an entirely different way of life, that we are not used to in our human cultures.

God came to take down our systems of control and manipulation, such as the priesthood, and put in their place a system of forgiveness and service for our neighbour. The priesthood is now a unique people, who follow the way of Jesus in his forgiveness of his enemies, without seeking any retribution or blood in return. This is how we are to answer the competition and violence in our

cultures. By neighbourliness, by loving our neighbour as our self. Not by the hierarchical systems of control, but by loving justice and care for all in our societies.

This is the way the kingdom of God casts out satan, and this is the real lesson of the law of Moses: Jubilee care for each other, for the poor, the widow, the foreigner, the one who is different, whom we in our religions said was cursed, like Lazarus at the gate, or like Job in his sufferings. Instead of casting the cursed out, we bring them to our table and seek their healing, and the healing of us all. This is our new kingdom. Our healing is that we stop following satan. He is no longer our father, as the murderer from the beginning.

Our Modern World

We can ask, what relevance does this have in today's world? We don't do sacrifice in modern Christian or secular cultures. Well, we do perform sacrifice, but it looks different. We have claimed to take religion out of our secular cultures, but the religion still fills them. Let's have a look at a few areas scapegoating thrives in our modern world.

Idolatry is the Same

We still have conflict within our modern societies, and this conflict is still because of idolatry. The idols don't often resemble ancient ones, but they are still things made with hands, and we still bow down to them. Anything that comes between us and love for neighbour is something we bow down to. Love for neighbour is the image of God. Anything else is a different image. Modern forms of idolatry are just as religious as older forms, and this false deity of self remains the cause of our conflicts.

Scapegoating is the Same

The innocent victim spoken of above is often called a scapegoat. Our modern societies still scapegoat others as a solution to our need for social cohesion. Nothing has changed in this regard. And we still do it for the same reason that ancient cultures did it. We do it to re-establish order, and we do it to appease our own collective conscience. The law still works in our conscience, which we seek to appease. This is religious, even though mostly we are unaware of the motivation.

However, modern cultures have been too impacted by Christianity for ritual sacrifice to openly happen. Sacrificing, or scapegoating, still happens, but it is hidden. It happens the same way as before, but now in secular clothing.

Let's look at some ways scapegoating commonly happens today.

In the Office

The office work environment is one that many people are familiar with. A group of people in an office gang up against one person who is different in some way. This so-called enemy gives the rest of the group cohesion, and a common identity. This is usually led by one person, who is using the process to enhance his/ her dominance over the group. For one to have precedence, someone must become a scapegoat. The satanic procedure is usually hidden from us.

The person leading this group may have ambitious desires within the larger organisation. Or the scapegoat maybe to distract attention away from the leader's own misdemeanours. Often our own motives are hidden from even ourselves at times like this, covered by a sense of "right doing."

At School

When I was a boy I was enrolled in a new school. The first day I found a boy with red hair. I remember thinking that because he was different to the other boys, he would be humble and he would accept me as a friend. So I sat next to him and we ate lunch together.

While we were eating our sandwiches, a group of big boys ran around a corner, heading towards us. They picked up the boy with red hair and they all started hitting him and wrestling him to the ground. Finally, they were satisfied and they all went their way.

As I sat there by myself continuing to eat my sandwiches, I looked up and the same group of boys came running around the corner again. This time, the red-haired boy was part of the pack, running with them. He had been included into the boy's order. I noticed they were running towards me. So I gathered up my containers, and ran away as fast as possible. Thankfully I managed to escape before I received my beating. My crime? I was new.

The boys had managed to restore order to the school playground. They had dealt with those infringing their collective righteousness. The red-haired boy had been punished and the new boy chased off. The group had their unified status and friendships intact, while their leader who was manipulating the entire process. Now they could go onto greater exploits, in whatever way the leader would decide, to use the group for whatever he wanted.

Beating up other people gave the leader power over his group. He had to have a ready supply of scapegoats to enhance his community's order. This is a very simple and startlingly clear example of how human affairs work in local and international levels. It a satanic way of forming civilization.

In Politics

It is common for one person in the public sphere to be selected for persecution. The ills of the community are placed at that person's door, and the politician who can take that person down in "justice" will be seen as the saviour of the nation. Sometimes, all the people focus their frustrations on that single person and call for their demise, as a way of making themselves feel more secure.

Bloodletting is a common activity in modern nations. With a collective sense of sin, we go after one person, or sometimes a group of people, in our society, and we vent our guilty conscience on them for our cleansing. This is highly religious, though we claim to be secular.

When I was growing up in Sydney, there was an ambitious project being undertaken to build an iconic opera house. The project was a centre of pride. It somehow summed up our identity and our sense of wholeness as a people. When the project ran into trouble, the city soon began to look for a scapegoat to blame. Politicians seized upon this opportunity. An architect was blamed and destroyed in the public eye. This returned a sense of unity to the community, and enhanced the position of the political party. It didn't matter that the person was blamed unjustly.

When a community has a collective sense of its sinfulness it will select scapegoats and pursue them on the media with bloodlust. It will be masked in a sense of "righteousness." It will select people who have done wrong and attack them without mercy. The community isn't really out to fix what was wrong, but just to hang someone for it. They are after the sense of peace this gives. It is a murderous and satanic group lynching.

The person who is scapegoated may not be literally killed, but his/ her reputation and career may be destroyed. This is the same as murder. The Apostle John said, if we hate a brother in our heart, that is murder. People are singled out and "murdered" to bring a sense of collective righteousness to the community, a unity that makes the nation strong. In war time it's called propaganda, necessary for the *esprit de corps*, for strength and unity of purpose to prevail.

Politics make use of scapegoats to enhance a party's popularity. The scapegoats may be one person, or a group the society fears. Anyone, or any group, that stands out as different to the society, can be used to build fear. It may be sinners, foreigners, poor, or people of other faiths. A politician gains power by seeing this anxiety within the community, and feeding the fear. The demise of that scapegoat becomes the cost, the sacrifice, for the party's success and the politician's career.

It is true that people in these groups who are scapegoated may be at fault. They may pose a threat to the society. But scapegoating the whole group kills many innocents as well. Targeting the group doesn't allow us to treat them as humans, preferring their restoration, salvation and healing. Restoration can avert cycles of hurt and violence, and war as well. But we still find this option a shock, just as the Pharisees did, who wished to scapegoat the woman caught in adultery.

Scapegoating in politics is extremely dangerous. As competition among politicians escalates, some leaders may stop at nothing to produce division and enmity between people or groups, to enhance their chances of power. Division between people is the fuel of political empowerment.

This is the satanic way of leadership Jesus pointed out in Luke 11. Satan divides, and the leaders of Jerusalem were dividing the population to enhance their own prospects. As the community continues to divide, one strong man after another arises to plunder the goods for himself. It's a process of scapegoating other people to conquer. Divide and conquer.

In contrast, Jesus said his kingdom gathers. It gathers in the sick and poor, from people of all backgrounds. It doesn't divide, but seeks healing for us all as humans. It gathers in those the community has scapegoated, treats their wounds and heals their diseases. Jesus said, "Whoever gathers is with me."

This is the way of the cross. We cannot guarantee our own safety this way. But it's God's way, as we saw in the cross of Christ. It's building through reconciling. We have joined the new way to do community. We have delivered ourselves from Satan's way of nation building. We build by healing, not by dividing and killing. We build by feeding our faith and hope, not by feeding our fears.

In Business

Recently we were in Wales in Great Britain, looking at a museum. It spoke of earlier years, when parliament took the land from the common people, and sold it off to the wealthy. This was to improve the agricultural quality of the land, which increased the food capacity of the nation.

But it wasn't improved on a community, cooperative basis. The people were divided, so the rich could benefit most. Land prices increased and this shut the poor out of the market. The rich could sell their improved land to people who had money through unfair economic advantages over others, at home, or in the colonies. The poor were scapegoated. They had nothing to eat and so they became "thieves" for stealing food to live.

This was the time of the *Industrial Revolution* in Britain. New factories were opening, which needed a large, cheap workforce. Because the poor no longer had common land, they couldn't farm crops or animals. They were completely impoverished, and needed jobs. The *Agricultural Revolution* made a strong ready workforce available for the *Industrial Revolution*.

Britain prospered and became a leading force in the world, by organising their poorer people in a subjugated way. Because the people didn't own land, they were also available for the army. Britain was ready to rule.

When you go through Wales today, you see the ancestors of those "common people," still in poverty. When the coal mines were closed some decades ago, large numbers lost their jobs, and exist today on government benefits. It's part of the ongoing brutal restructuring processes. As you drive through Britain, it is still clearly two nations.

We learned about the same business model when we visited Adelaide, in Australia. We read an old publication, in which a politician from Britain advised politicians in Australia. This was soon after the

British takeover of Australia and the new government had been selling land cheaply to European Australians to own and farm.

The British politician said the price of the land should be increased so people wouldn't be able to afford it. Then the people would be a cheap labour force. The Australian government followed that advice and increased the price of the land it had confiscated from the Aboriginal people. The people were made dependant.

People in modern nations are in the same predicament. Most people live in houses they don't own. Homes are owned by the banks. Prices are so high, young married couples cannot afford the deposit to buy a home. This is caused by speculative purchases, forcing up housing prices. Investors make money by buying many homes. Because the majority of the population never have financial security in their place of dwelling, they are continuously dependant on the labour market, even well past retirement age. This lowers the cost of labour in the economy.

All of this is contrary to Moses' Law. After the food crisis in Egypt, Pharaoh owned all the people from the top of Egypt to the bottom. God brought Israel out of Egypt to develop a new community, which cared for all the people, and scapegoated none. Land was owned by the people, and returned to them at Jubilee if they had lost it. Debts were forgiven. When we ignore God, we go back to Egypt. Pharaoh still rules, even in our modern societies.

Pharaonic economies, that scapegoat rather than serve the weak, produce injustice, and this leads to war. War is the inevitable outcome. You have to keep war happening abroad, to keep the people at home on your side. And this injustice abroad produces more instability, more terrorism and more war. But Pharaoh doesn't mind that, if he can manage the political fallout, and make war patriotic. He can sell more weapons and take more economic control over global regions.

In Pharaoh's economy, people go back to slavery. They must work for others all their lives and can never become free. This enables us to be easily manipulated by politicians, over our fears about interest rates. It is claimed that our bankers, politicians or large businesses are not at fault. Rather, it's another aggressor nation, refugees, or Muslims who are to blame. This unites us all at home.

This doesn't mean we turn to scapegoat bank personnel, politicians trying to do well, or business people trying to build community. And it doesn't mean that diverse threats to our society don't exist. But any form of scapegoating blinds us from our self-centredness and feeds the violent cycle. It harms many innocents and makes the world more unjust and dangerous. We can't participate in using and harming scapegoats, to bring legitimacy to our own lives and communities.

God wants to bring us out of this way of life, just like in the Exodus. This is the purpose of the gospel. Instead of scapegoating the poor, the different, those we fear, there is self-giving care, there is a rejection of propaganda, and a seeing of people as being like ourselves, people who need neighbourliness. God wants us to reject our political narrative about the enemy and reach out in reconciliation to heal our land. This is how we get to the "promised land."

In Britain of old, when the poor were being so badly dealt with, they were unified in part by a fear of their international enemies. This brought a cohesion to the British people, even as they suffered in their home nation. They also suffered greatly abroad in the foreign conflicts. Scapegoating has become far more refined now. We can target enemies with drones, keeping our home populations, economies and political aspirations intact. But this peace can't last.

In France and Russia, they eventually had revolution, to try to change the prospects of the lower classes at home. However, the revolutions just made things worse. They released more killing, which gave rise to even more brutal leaders. They tried to cast out satan with satan and it backfired.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Britain was blessed with Christian revivalists. People like John Newton, the Wesleys, William Wilberforce, Florence Nightingale, William Booth, and many Christians in general then, who cared for the poor and enslaved. They started a system of social change that eventually brought relief to large numbers of people. In those days Christians led the charge for social justice.

This shows how our nations can be set free. Not through revolutions, but through a wider church community who don't live for themselves, who don't join the scapegoating narrative, but who serve the poor and less privileged. This is the hope of our nations. We need this church back.

When people try to divide us to scapegoat others, we should not join in to punish them, even when we are called upon to scapegoat sinners. All scapegoating serves the interest of political, business, or church leaders. We should not join the hatred and alienation. Instead, we are called to serve. We are to love our neighbour, as Jesus called us to. Then our enemies can see the light, then our witness of Christ can be real and affective. Then our own hearts can be renewed.

In Nigeria

People call for divisions in Nigeria, based on Muslim/ Christian, North/ South, Fulani/ Farmer, Middle Belt/ Non-Middle Belt, Biafra/ Non-Biafra. Every time, there is someone's political career behind the call for division. Someone is trying to become a leader, by scapegoating, raising hatred and unrest towards another group. Division is accepted because it is in our nature. Once we start with division, it never stops.

There are corrupt people, who defraud the economy, and divert our attention to others by calling them our enemies. Scapegoating our enemies, allows them to go on plundering wealth, while they pretend to be on our side. And because of our prejudices, we easily believe and are effortlessly recruited for their cause. This is not said here so we will fight these corrupt people, but so that we won't answer their call to division and violence. It is manipulation.

Someone wants to divide us, so he can spoil the goods. They are all the same, no matter which group they come from. We are followers of Jesus, not of these divisions, and Jesus calls us to serve everyone in need, and to make no distinctions about who people are. We love and serve all as our neighbour, whether north or south, east or west. This is his teachings on neighbour.

The church is an example in this. We all become one, from all our tribal backgrounds. Yet even in the church, we have divided into our tribal groups. We have lost our witness of unity in our nation, because we no longer eat as one people at one table in Christ. We need to come back to Christ, and back to each. Then we can heal our nation.

There is pressure to join in the blame game, to mimic scapegoating, because other people do it. It becomes fashion. This mimicking is manipulated by those who desire control, whether in our work place, churches, or society. They use division to gain power, at the expense of a scapegoat. Someone must die for someone else to gain power. But the strong in Christ will forge a new fashion, of love for neighbour. It takes strength to love our neighbour when the world says hate.

Jesus calls us to a new mimicking, to mimic his cross, by which he forgave and served us all, friend and enemy alike. Forgive the scapegoat and serve them, revealing the gospel. Adopt a new

mimicking. Our community won't like it. It would be like loving the Jews in Nazi Germany. It's dangerous. Our community is afraid of it. But Christ didn't fear to do his Father's will.

In Ministry

We keep the above competition and scapegoating out of our lives and churches. The only memetic desire we have in our church families is the desire to follow Jesus in his community restoring and neighbourly ethics. This means those who have a difference are included and those who have a fault are nurtured.

However, mimicking the world is common in ministry. Preachers desire success in worldly terms and then they are also mimicked by others who desire that same kind of success. Preachers gain followings, finances, power and esteem. The other people desire the success these preachers have. The preachers will attract people who gather around them for "mentoring."

The preacher gratefully receives these mentors, because they can help build the ministry. They are volunteer supporters. But they are after "mentoring" because they want what the minister has. This desire eventually leads them into conflict. They can't both have the congregation. They can't both have the honour and reward of the top position. So eventually a kind of rebellion will take place.

The rebellion is covered over by scapegoating. But this time the leader becomes the scapegoat, so the new leader can bring "order" to the church. The rebellion is carried out "as an act of righteousness." The mentoree claims the mentor isn't leading well. He isn't keeping order. If the mentoree was in charge, he claims, he would make things better. See Absalom as an example of this.

Accusation is used when we desire what someone else has, especially in work places or in church ministries. Absalom accused his father, because he desired his place of rule. Sigmund Freud noticed this about father/ son relationships, and claimed it was unconscious sexual competition over the wife/ mother. But Girard went further, to say it is desire for the father's rule, memetic desire.

This is what we see in the pagan creation myths, showing again that these myths are derived from human history. The gods were scapegoated people. The myths match human behaviour.

The body of Christ is called to put accusation away. We are called to help those overtaken by a fault, not to overtake them our self. We need to be aware of our memetic desire and be ruled by the peace of God in our hearts instead. Any forms of competition for place, covered over by scapegoating accusations, need to be noticed in our motives. It is normally buried deeply.

Community ethics is to lead us, above all "righteous" reasons to point fingers at others. This means memetic desire, which isolates those who fail, can't work in a proper community. Instead, we try to bring each other along, restoring those that fall. We don't behave like the secular world, where one person's fall is another person's rise. It is, "One for all, and all for one."

Churches will often have mimetic struggles, not always as a testimony against the church, but against human nature. Churches, because they are places where people congregate, can attract people who desire power. They may not be transformed Christians, or may not be Christians at all.

This desire to have what the mentor has, to be the mentor, to take his place, can even produce sexual desires for the mentor's wife or husband. There is an unconscious desire to be the mentor, to be fully in his/ her position. All kinds of rivalries can develop, with the real motives being hidden, even to the perpetrator.

In Denominationalism

We overcome the violence in the secular world, rather than mimic it in our church families. We adopt a new strategy for leadership and relationships that are Christ orientated, as he spoke of serving the least, which means the scapegoats, failures and those overtaken by an error.

In older times, the church persecuted heretics. Physical violence then gave way to violence against the reputation of others. Those “in error” are still viciously attacked. Our desire to attack those “in error” is a memetic desire. We see a church building its respect and following by attacking those “in error.” We desire to have this respect and we follow this worldly form of violence, even within the body of Christ, pulling up tares and harming the wheat.

Memetic desire strongly worked in Peter, when he denied Christ, and when he drew away from Gentile believers in Antioch. He was following the violence in the world around him, by not caring for his gentile family in Christ, for those of different tribal backgrounds. When we feel strong memetic pulls to follow the crowd, we must obey Christ and love our neighbour instead.

Memetic desire works in denominationalism. We see a denomination successful in worldly terms and we desire to be like them. We launch out into memetic competition within the body of Christ. If another church builds near us, we fear they will attract our members. So we build walls to keep our members. These walls are accusations against the other church. “They have their doctrine wrong. If you go there, it may cost you your relationship with God.”

Pointing out the error of other churches becomes a memetic desire. A new believer sees church leaders “standing up against the error of others.” They admire this “non-compromising position” and see the respect and power this leader has with his followers. They want this respect themselves. Soon the ministry becomes a competition in finding “false gospels” and denouncing the faults of others.

Division is now a memetic desire, in which we “devour and consume one another” with accusation, trying to raise our ministry by killing the ministries of others. This was the mimesis that worked in the church at Galatia. We have seen this working in our churches since the Reformation.

As we take our message of division out into mission, we find it is welcomed. We preach against Catholics and other Protestant denominations and people like it because it chimes with their secular divisions. We are used to division in our tribal and nationalist groups. It makes us feel better about ourselves and gives us better prospects in possessing territories.

Division is demonic. Satan appeals to the self, to our church and our denomination, not to the cross. We use division to maintain control over others. Christ tells us to love our neighbour as our self. Anyone in Christ is our brother and sister and we must fellowship with each other freely. So who do we obey? Those who create division, or Christ? We obey Christ. And if there is a fault in our brother, or in ourselves, we seek renewal through bridge building, not through scapegoating.

Memetic desire works in almost all areas of our lives, in far more ways than we are conscious of. Like an academic joked, “The only thing two academics can agree on, is the bad paper of a third academic. This brings them into unity.”

In Commerce

Once I landed at Melbourne airport. We dove down the highway into the city. All the way into the city, lined all along the roads, are high sign boards, displaying people wearing and using things. They wear new clothes. They drive new cars. They buy new houses.

This is a shock, after being out of the country for a while. I am not used to having my senses so assaulted by advertising. It is intrusive. It bullies you into submission. It's like the signs are saying to you, "Look at what these people have. What is wrong with you? Why don't you have these things?" After seeing all these sign boards, you begin to think you aren't a complete person. "What is wrong with me? Why aren't I like these people?"

So you begin to think how you can catch up. You start feeling the anxiety of lack, of not having enough. You don't have enough money. So you wonder about getting a bank loan. Maybe some people think of stealing, or scamming other people in some way, to make the money you "need."

Here is an economy that is predatory. It feeds on fear, anxiety of lack. It enslaves the population in debt. It enslaves them in constant work, so they can pay the debts and the interest. They are never free. They never have enough. This breaks the whole Law of Moses. It breaks the whole purpose of creation: sabbath, wholeness, good, peaceful living. Pharaoh rules the commercial world.

Our Choice

We are told advertising is good, "It produces jobs." The main ethic in modern culture is advertising. It's our sacred cow. You wake in the morning and go to the kitchen. A radio is on in the background and within five minutes you have heard about 15 things you don't have. "Your life is incomplete. Your neighbour has these things. He has quality of life. He is better than you. You are not a whole person."

People must learn to desensitise to this world of advertising. But then we also desensitise to the news of the world in suffering. It too assaults us daily. The advertising wins out. We learn to shut out the bad news, and tune into the good news, the products we can enjoy. Not just enjoy. The products we must have to be whole, to have respect from others.

We remember the ethic, the value of our society, the justification, "Advertising is good, it is what makes our economy work, it provides jobs, wealth." We are helping others by buying for our self. But how can advertising be good, bringing the society into servitude, driving us to focus on ourselves? Something is wrong here. It is out of sync with Moses' Exodus, Jubilee life.

Wouldn't a higher minimum-wage help people more? Wouldn't lower housing prices and lower debts help more? Wouldn't a backtrack on speculative investing help more? How can our societies produce a Jubilee/ sabbath ethic? Isn't this what God wants? Wouldn't returning land to those who lost it be in line with what God commanded us?

Modern economic theory gives us a new set of values. It says market economics develops a nation. So if we spend, we are helping the world, even with our disconnection from the poor. Wouldn't an economy that invested more in developing refugees than on entertainment, have a better chance of keeping us from war? Wouldn't this economy prosper more, by building everyone in as an active participator? Wouldn't this prosperity be more holistic?

However, it is memetic desire working through advertising that is more compelling. The economy makes the products our advertising calls for. As mimesis escalates, we all must have the latest and greatest. Tension rises in our communities, as some people have and others don't. Gaps between people groups aren't closed. There is no incentive to heal those in need Advertising doesn't care about these people. Society becomes more fragmented at home, and internationally.

Something must win out here. Either we stop the advertising onslaught and attend to the healing of our divisions and hurts among our communities, or we blame those parts of our communities and continue to shun them. We can't do both.

If all our attention is given to advertising and consumerism, then the tensions and hurts of others can't be addressed. If they aren't being addressed, then we must scapegoat those people, to preserve unity and continuity in our society. Scapegoating is a necessary part of a consumerist community. The society cannot be sustained without it.

There are much more sinister issues at play that we may not admit enough. As business, media and political interests merge, then a message that brings stability to the market economy will begin to dominate. This message must divert rivalry away from the market area, to other spots in the globe. "The enemy can't be within our market economy, which needs cohesion, it must be someone else."

This message is appealed to by a sense of patriotism. To deny our commercial-interest message, is to deny our loyal responsibility to our group. We then also become a scapegoat within a society struggling to maintain its bottom line of profits.

The outcome so far, at the date of writing this, is that the five richest people own as much wealth as the "bottom half" of the world's population. We are returning to a world where inherited, dynastic wealth begins to dominate, and this doesn't bode well for democracy.

In a mimesis controlled world, first we rival each other for the goods that advertising tells us we need, then we copy each other's violent postures in a mad escalation towards war. Mimesis produces escalation. The Sermon on the Mount seems the only way to retract from this. The Sermon outlines a non-self-justifying contentment, that instead of copying violence, responds with reconciling acts.

And to respond to the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, we need to do this together. We need growing groups, in early days called churches, in which people live out the teachings of Jesus, encouraging each other to do so, in a counter-cultural love and care. Advertising encourages us to live as individuals. As individuals, we can have no impact on a world that is slipping away. We can only challenge the status quo as a collective, a collective witness of good.

Jesus Murdered

Mimesis is one of the central themes woven into the Gospel of John. Here we look at just a few of the highlights.

In the days of Jesus, Jerusalem was filled with division. The separate groups, like the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Scribes, the Lawyers, the Essenes were vying for position and rule. They also vied against Herod, and against the Samaritans. They were also divided against Rome.

The Threat

This was about position, self-preservation and covetousness. It was mimetic, each one wanting what the others had, and plotting how they could obtain it. They couched their desires in religious justification. We can see this clearly in how they tried to deal with Jesus.

Jesus was a threat to them all. If his kingdom of care for others came in, it threatened to take away the unfair advantage they had built up over others. John described the rise of the popularity of Jesus through the miracles he performed, especially through the miracle of the loaves, the man born blind who was healed and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Great numbers of people believed.

Dealing with the threat of Jesus was the one thing that could unite all the factions, and give the leaders a consolidated power over Jerusalem and its wealth.

The Method

The way the leaders came against Jesus followed the usual scapegoating strategy. They used faith and a sense of righteousness, godliness or morality against him. They claimed he had broken the sabbath, while this wasn't true. The sabbath was about freeing people from economic slavery, the kind Pharaoh kept the people in. Jesus freed people on the sabbath.

They said that if they didn't deal with Jesus, the Romans would come and take away the temple and the nation. This "sanctified" anything they may do to Jesus to prevent it. It gave them a patriotic and a holy reason to act. They would be "saving the temple and saving God's holy people, Israel."

But they weren't truly concerned for these things. They cared about their positions and the riches these positions gave to them. This repeats itself in our own time. We come against the "enemies of God," in an end-times kind of battle, when our true aim is nationalism and economic control.

Jesus was also a safe person to scapegoat. He didn't have high connections, with powerful people who could act on his behalf. He didn't have an army on his side. He was weak and vulnerable, a perfect person to scapegoat. They could kill him and his followers would scatter, just like they did to other people who had threatened them.

They called their violence holy. This was their blindness. Their violence was actually self-serving, led by a satanic principle of rivalry. When Jesus challenged them about this point, they refused to accept it.

John traces the mimetic desire in Jerusalem from the beginning of his Gospel. At first, they wanted to make Jesus king. This was for the same reason that Israel of old wanted a king: someone to go before them in battle, to mimic the nation around them, to take control over the riches. This is the kind of kingdom Satan offered Jesus in the temptation.

But Jesus replied in John 3, that instead of being king, he had come to be lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness. This meant to be crucified. He wouldn't do the scapegoating, but he would be the non-violent scapegoat. In saying this, Jesus lost his early following.

If Jesus wouldn't give them the riches they fought for, then they could still make use of him. They would use him to consolidate their power over the people. They would kill him to "save the people from God's curse." They would blame him for the rivalrous divisions in Jerusalem, diverting attention from their own unjust rule.

The Slavery

Jesus perceived their plans. In John eight he said they were going to kill him. They denied it. When we gang up against someone, we also deny our ill intent and claim to be acting righteously. We claim to be saving the church, but we don't save the true church this way. We are really saving our own position. Jesus said they didn't care for the weak as a true shepherd, but were self-serving. (John 10)

Jesus said their form of government was satanic and it brought the leaders themselves into slavery. They were serving the satanic impulses of rivalry. They said they were children of Abraham and were free. They meant they were free in the sense that they still had the temple and nationhood under Herod. Rome had not overcome them fully.

Jesus claimed they were in bondage to mimetic desire. They desired the honour of man and the positions and wealth it gave them. They desired to be the greatest among the people. This brought them into bondage, to a continual cycle of scapegoating and murder of others.

So long as they were led by the wrong kind of desire, they would be caught in the snare of satanic violence. They had to exchange their desire, for a desire to please God, not because God has this need, but because God directs us to love our neighbour. This alone frees our heart from self. Freeing our heart from self, frees us from violence, which frees us from satanic control.

The Pharisees denied their slavery to satan, but immediately the proof of what Jesus said was there. They tried to trap him with the question about the woman caught in adultery. It was a scapegoating snare, to give them an excuse to act violently, not just against the woman, but also against Jesus, by showing that Jesus was against the law, and therefore accursed by God, and punishable by death.

They couldn't free themselves from this satanic slavery, so long as their desire was to be exalted among their colleagues. This desire enslaves us into a life of offering our neighbour on the altar of our progress.

The Scapegoat

We see their scapegoating again with the man who was born blind. He was cast out of the community, considered unclean due to his physical condition. This was routine in their religious culture. Human religion was actually a mask for the process of eliminating others. It ritualised the process of the expulsion and murder of the weak.

Even Christianity can be used in this way. It can be used to alienate and cast away others. Religion can become our covering for building a wall around our community that excludes others. The kingdom of God comes to reverse this process, to lead us to include and heal the weak and sinner.

Religion in Jesus' time was the routine of excluding the poor, the sick, the sinner, the foreigner, the woman and the unbeliever. The prayers and worship of the people cleansed them in their acts of separation, and thus active or passive violence, against others. Religion was the legitimisation of

their murder and self-service. The gospel of Christ came to eliminate our religious myths, by exposing them, and showing us the real value of other people we scapegoat.

Father of Lies

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44)

This shows the principle that has held civilizations in bondage since the very beginning. It also shows the satanic nature of our religions, when we use them to hide and sanctify this killing process. God worked with us in our religions, but at the right time he sent Christ to expose the lie imbedded in sacrifice and renew our lives towards his real kingdom of peace.

From the beginning, murder has been the satanic way of organising our leadership. This began with Cain. The lie is that there is some self-justifying, some righteous or holy cause, for this kind of leadership. This was the lie satan told the Pharisees. This was the lie Jesus was pointing out. This is the lie he backs violence up with today. The cross of Christ reveals satan to be father of all who tell this lie of violence.

It's Better They Die

The rulers used the law to condemn others, which brought unity and cohesion to their own group and plans. Their sense of righteousness in condemning others, gave them a legitimacy to rule. It strengthened their position.

Those cast out paid the price for the leaders' positions and enrichment. The ones cast out held the receipts of payment for the unity of the city, which God will honour in the resurrection. “The last shall be first.” Satan comes in the guise of religious purification, but the agenda is really to “kill, steal and destroy.” (John 10:10) Now this act of purification, this act of killing and sacrifice for the good of the group, for the good of the civilization, would turn against Jesus the Christ.

“As the High Priest put it, killing him would ensure the salvation of their people. “Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish?” (John 11:50)

In other words, it is always better for the weak person to die, than for us to lose what we have. It's better that the weak perish on the oceans as refugees, than they come here and spoil our nation. It's better that others perish in our international arms trade, than we scale down our arms industries and the profits from sale. It's better that farmers in poor countries suffer, than we allow their products to be sold in our country. It's better... it's better...

This is how our nations work. The High Priest put his finger on the button, “It's better an innocent die for our wellbeing.” This is how things worked since the beginning, the hidden principle of our pagan myths, now exposed in the gospel of Christ. This exposure works as leaven, renewing our treatment of the weak, turning us from violence to nurture the outcast.

People Became One

John eighteen and nineteen trace out the mimetic murder of Jesus. Starting and from Judas and then moving to the false trial, which was necessary to kill an innocent victim. They showed Peter being drawn away by the memetic gravitational pull of the crowd. They showed the mimetic force building in the crowd, that finally called out in unity, “Give us Barabbas.” They showed the unity of the

leaders of Jerusalem, which had previously been divided in complete rivalry. They show Pilate handing over a man he knew to be innocent. They showed that the killing was public, like a stoning. The whole crowd cried out, "Crucify him."

In every case above, people were giving up an innocent man for the sake of their own agenda or safety. Clearly, just like with any scapegoat, Jesus died for the people. They killed him to save their own careers and backsides. The act brought unity to the crowd and once again strengthened the leadership of the people, both the Jewish and the Roman leaders.

All were forced to succumb to the mimetic control of the crowd. Even a great governor of Rome had no choice but to yield. Only Jesus was free from this satanic mask. Only he was free from the guilt, whether active or passive, of condemning the innocent. This is how Jesus took our sin. He bore our guilt of condemning an innocent man, without retaliating, without joining in the violence.

And this act of Jesus showed us another way. He forgave us. He showed this is how we deal with rivalry. We conquer rivalry with reconciling actions. He showed us to bring in the innocent and the outcasts, not to accuse and kill them. When our civilizations have this new non-pagan heart, our world becomes like the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God ousting the kingdom of satan.

The Exposure

Those who study ancient pagan myths show that all the myths depict a guilty person dying, later becoming divinised in the mythology, due to the miracle of reconciliation among the people. Many scholars agreed with this and added that Christianity was just another myth, just like all the others. They claim that Christianity is just one more myth of a guilty victim, whose death brings a sense of reconciliation to the people's lives and so Jesus has been divinised, just like the past gods.

But Girard disagrees, and this is what led him to Christ. After studying the pagan myths, Girard finally turned to scripture. What he saw in the scripture was the complete opposite of the myths. The bible exposed the innocence of the victim. And the death of Jesus was the same. It exposed the guilt of the community and the innocence of the victim. It did the opposite of all the pagan myths. It revealed our human violence, by showing our guilt in victimizing the scapegoat.

Before Christ, we got away with our demonic form of leadership. But this didn't work with Christ. This is part of what Paul meant by Jesus' death "making the powers of this world naked, putting them on a public display." We could scapegoat others, and blame them for our sin, but with Jesus this didn't work. He didn't have any sin.

Nobody accused Jesus of sin. None of his disciples did. The Roman governor said he was innocent. The biblical account consistently revealed his innocence. This makes the bible unlike any of the pagan myths. The resurrection proved his innocence. God overturned the false trial of Jesus, by raising Christ from the dead. This revealed the real motives behind our pagan scapegoating. Only an innocent victim could reveal our heart. The innocent victim had to be God in the flesh, as no one else is innocent enough. No one else could reveal our paganism.

Innocent Victims

The death of Christ revealed the innocence of the victim. This transforms our civilizations. Wilberforce saw the innocence of the slave. This had never been seen by our pagan cultures before. This is a complete opening of our eyes, which completely transforms our way of treating others.

In the early church, the weak and vulnerable, would have a protection and a voice equal to others. To kill a weak person was to kill Christ again. This transformed their style of leadership. They served the weak, the outcast and the sinner, bringing a new kingdom to light in their lives.

The process by which Jesus was killed is repeated every time we use “righteousness” as an excuse to isolate and harm others; every time we use “righteousness” as an excuse not to serve those of other races, faiths, or political persuasions; every time we use righteous anger as an excuse to hate, to act in active and passive violence, and fail to be our neighbour’s keeper; every time we blame the homeless for their plight and leave them outside.

Every time we use our “righteousness” as an excuse not to serve the person on the road to Jericho, or not accept someone different to us as our neighbour; every time we reject a sinner; every time we fail to reach out to refugees; every time we fail to bring justice to the poor and foreigner; every time we fail to speak for those afflicted by war; every time we fight people in the name of Jesus; every “righteous cause” by which we fail to love our neighbour as our self, is crucifying Jesus again.

An event that influenced me as a youth, happened when a group ganged up against a weak boy, tied him to a tree and set off low-powered fire crackers against his flesh. Like Paul, I was there, holding their garments. I saw the tears coming down the boy’s face. I saw the innocence of the scapegoat. It struck my heart. I thought, “Why are we doing this?” From that day on, I tried to identify with Jesus, who was the scapegoat, not with those doing the scapegoating.

This must have effected Paul greatly. As he watched Stephen being stoned to death, having his vision of Jesus in heaven, forgiving and not hating his enemies, it must have struck Paul’s heart. “Is this the way to bring about righteousness,” he must have thought, “killing those who don’t conform to our faith?” Soon, Paul’s entire world was turned around. He left behind this pharisaical, satanic, sacrificial ritual of punishing sinners, and started washing their feet, following the one he loved.

New Works

“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:1-2)

The reason why someone is born blind, and cast out as a sinner, is not because he has sinned, or his parents. God is not punishing them. We are the ones who punish others, or we punish ourselves. When we see those who suffer, it’s a chance to shine a non-pagan light into the world, “so the works of God may be revealed.” What are these works? Bringing the person in and caring for them, acting oppositely to the satanic powers of the world, whether the person is a friend, foreigner, sinner or enemy. These are the works of God.

Mimesis rivalry ends in service.

Mythology & the Gospel

Girard points out the differences between the gospel story and the ancient myths. It was discovering these differences that led him to Christ.

The Mythology

In the ancient myths, the scapegoat is killed and then later transforms into a divine status, when the nation becomes unified and strong. But the scapegoat remains “guilty.” The violent sin of the people for killing the scapegoat under a false charge is never exposed. Their true motives in using a satanic strategy are never revealed. The reality and guilt of their religious ritual never comes to light.

This is the reason why violence continues to play an important part of social cohesion. So long as the guilt of our scapegoating practices is never plain, then the process will continue to be used in bringing peace to our rivalrous relationships. So long as we are blind to it.

Since the divinised scapegoat remained guilty, it carried its former “sins” over into its god status. This is why the pagan gods had sinful characteristics. They were incestual, murders, eaters of their children, ambitious, jealous and self-glorious. These were likely false charges against earlier scapegoats, but the charges stuck and the subsequent gods were said to have these same features. This shows the entirely human origins of these gods.

In this way, the guilt of the society for killing the scapegoat was covered. Since the charges of sin against the scapegoat stuck, even when the scapegoat became a god, the false accusations of the community against the scapegoat were never revealed. Their murderous cultures were never faced for what they were. This allowed their violence against other weak people to continue as though it was righteous. The community as a whole was “righteous.” It was the scapegoats, and also the gods, who were sinful.

Having these “sinful gods” was perfect for the community. The leaders could blame the gods for the evil things that happened to their communities. The gods could also bless extreme violence, the sexual activities and the ambitious careers of the oppressors. The gods were truly made in the image of fallen man.

The Gospel

Scholars of ancient myths have noticed what the myths have in common. The victim receives divine status after it is realised that the victim’s death brought a sense of reconciliation to the community. Scholars have suggested that the gospel is just one more of these myths, the same as the others. Jesus was just another victim of the society, and after his death, his disciples sensed his sacrifice brought them restoration with God and with each other. They then believed Jesus must have been God.

Girard claimed the scholars had missed the obvious point of the gospel. He said that the gospel exposed the false claim of all society, that the victim is innocent, and that it is the society that is at fault for its violence and greed. Girard therefore believed that the gospel has done what no myth has done. It has demythologised all myths. It has removed our blindness and showed the myths to be human fabrications. It has revealed the true nature of sacrifice, not as noble, but as human violence.

The Scriptures

After Girard studied the mimetic desire in famous literature, in historical records of persecutions and in ancient myths, he then turned to the scriptures. It was in the scriptures that he saw the difference. The scriptures revealed the innocence of the victim. Joseph was “murdered” by his brothers, and again by Potiphar’s wife, but he was innocent. It was the gang and the covetous that were guilty. Girard saw that the scriptures were honest, they revealed what was really happening, they were on the side of the innocent.

Girard saw in the scriptures a plan of God. God was setting out to deconstruct human violence, by showing it for what it is. The scriptures were God’s way of revealing the oppression of the weak and bringing to light the violence and self-centredness of paganism. Girard saw that God’s plan was to renew our hearts and cultures by the gospel, to take the violence out of our lives and nations. But to do this, God had to have a perfect scapegoat.

Innocent Victim

It was in the gospel that Girard saw what God was doing. He saw God coming in the flesh brought a perfect innocent into our paganism. Someone who would not contest the mimetic desires of our communities. Someone that would stand out and be different, and would thereby shed a light of correction on our rivalry and greed.

And because this person would be so different, he would finally become our scapegoat. He would receive the violence of the community directed upon himself. This was the mistake of satan. In focusing the violence of paganism upon Christ, it could now be exposed. Satan’s hand, his way of managing and ruling over humanity, would now come out into the open.

Because Christ was wholly innocent, his victimisation was openly revealed as scapegoating. It was the scapegoating of the ruling powers and of the religious authorities, those groups in charge of justice, and therefore who have the most power to harm. This is not peripheral, but it goes to centre of our cultures. It speaks to our courts, and systems of justice, our churches and everything we hold to be sacred.

The cross of Christ exposes our guilt where it is most important for us to see it: in our corridors of power. Not someone else’s power, but the power in our own lives, our conscience, where we judge others. This is where the courts and the religious systems centre in our lives. How do we respond to the weak, to the one our group judges, to the one who has wronged us, to the one who needs restoration?

Dismantles Mythology

So for Girard, he saw in the gospel the undoing of pagan mythology. It alone exposes the false use of power and the need of the innocent. It alone calls us to renew power and to use it to serve those in need, rather than cast them out as cursed. It alone brings us into condescension, calls us away from our mimetic greed, and calls us to live instead for others. It has replaced the myth of paganism, which is a myth of the self at the centre, and now puts the neighbour, the stranger at the centre.

When Girard saw this about the scripture and about the gospel, he became a believer. He grew up in a Catholic church, but he wasn’t then a believer. It was his studies in paganism, and then his studies in the gospel, that brought him to a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. This is a good way to come to faith. It isn’t coming to faith in a god who will fight for you, but in the true God, who calls us to lay aside fighting and to serve.

The scriptures clearly show the innocence of Christ. It shows the sham trial, the fact that none of his disciples held any sin against him, even the Roman governor could find no guilt in him. The resurrection showed his innocence, God overturning the verdict of the human courts.

A New Rule

And the peace and reconciliation Christ brought after his death and resurrection wasn't to the powers that killed him. It wasn't the powers of the community that called him blessed and who divinised Christ. Unlike all previous scapegoats, this one had exposed those powers. They would not divinise him. Doing that would destroy their power over the people.

It was the weak, the sinner, the women, the foreigner, all those whom the powers hated, the ones they were against in mimetic rivalry, who saw the resurrection. And this is what makes it so distinct from the pagan myths. Christ rises from the dead, not to affirm the old powers, but to overthrow them. He rises to begin a new power, a new creation, one where "the gods" have no violence, no human lust, no greed or oppression, no self-centredness, but only care for others.

Unlike the myths, that affirms the status quo, the gospel of Christ has come to challenge it. It is not of this world. It doesn't affirm this world. It can't be human. It overthrows all that is human, in the fallen sense, all that is pagan. It couldn't have come from us.

Anthropology & the Gospel

The gospel of Christ stands out as real history. The way Christ was taken and killed matches exactly with human behaviour. It matches exactly with our anthropological studies of culture. The way the rulers took and made scapegoats throughout our history, was exactly the same way they dealt with Christ.

We would therefore expect the gospel to fit in with the myths in this way. The myths describe real human history. They show how humanity behave. If the gospel of Christ didn't match this, then you would expect it to be a false record. But it does match our history, the history of human religious power. The gospel comes into our pagan history. It comes into our mythology and at its centre it exposes and renews it.

The scriptural record and the anthropological record of human behaviour merge and concur. They are not separate realities. The gospel isn't some strange gnostic thing that suddenly appears from heaven and snatches us all away to the clouds. The gospel comes into our anthropology, our human mythology, our systems of sacrifice, our violence, our hatred, and from there it gives birth to a new reality, a new anthropology, a second Adam.

Divorcing the gospel from our history and our mythology robs it of its power. It leaves our eyes closed to our social need. It leaves us unrenewed, still carrying out our scapegoating violence on a world in need. Seeing the gospel in the context of our history, of who we are, reveals the gospel's call to us. It calls us to lay aside satan's kingdom, of satan casting out satan, and to launch out into a new kingdom that gathers and heals the stranger.

In the gospel, we see the innocence of the one we condemn. This leads us into a new life of restoring one another, of restorative, rather than retributive, justice.

Things Hidden from Creation

“I will utter things hidden since the foundations of the world.” Matthew 13:35

This refers not just to creation, but to the foundations of our civilizations. The founding of the Roman culture sounded a little similar to the story of Cain and Abel. Romulus killed his brother Remus. Both Cain and Romulus founded the culture that rose out of their murder. Romulus’ murder became a sacred story in Roman culture that justified its violence and forms of justice.

Cain’s violence was carried over into his city building also, and this violence has become part of the myth of human civilization ever since. The bible exposed the innocence of Abel and the truth about the violence, but human culture has covered this over. The Roman culture stood on its narrative of righteous brutality. The gospel is very much a story of Christ replacing this narrative with one of peace. The path to peace is peace, not violence.

This is clearly seen in the New Testament when we know the history of that time. Rome claimed their Caesar was the Son Man in Daniel seven, that ascended to heaven to rule over the nations. This claim was commonly known by all in that day. Paul refuted this in his letter to the Roman church, in the first chapter.

Jesus reflected on Rome’s claim when presenting his kingdom. “The kingdoms of this world rule over the people. My followers will rule by serving the weakest.” Then in Matthew 25 he spoke of his ascension to power at the Father’s right hand. This passage in Matthew is a direct comparison with Rome. His kingdom rules by, “I was hungry and you fed me. I was an outcast and you brought me in.” Nations, including our modern nations, that don’t rule this way, harden their own heart, which leads to their own self-destruction.

What has been hidden is our violence, which we claim is how kingdoms and nations are built and preserved. Jesus has come to undermine this very idea at the foundation of our cultures. Since the beginning, cultures have been founded and carried forward by violence. What is hidden is our guilt, hidden within our propaganda, and the true nature of God, whom we claim to be following in this violent process.

We may ask, doesn’t God call nations to save the weak by force? We call it *Just War*. Romans 13 says such nations are the servants of God for our good. This was referring to Rome, and to Babylon, when Jeremiah warned Israel not to resist their power, for God had sent them. But both Babylon and Rome were also destroyed. God is calling the church to renew these powers, so their rule is genuinely just, not a brutality that is hidden in our national narratives.

Jesus’ Parables

Matthew said the parables of Jesus revealed the things that were hidden since the beginning. The central focus of the parables was the kingdom of God. It was about how a new kingdom was breaking out and would displace the former reign of Satan and slowly fill the earth like leaven fills a lump of dough. One of the main parables of this new kingdom was about the sower, who sows new seed. The seed is hampered by the conditions of this world, but it eventually brings forth fruit.

The parables reveal the true nature of God and of worship. It angered the Pharisees that Jesus was visiting sinners. They thought such people should bear the brunt of religious punishments. This is where Jesus gave the parable about the Prodigal Son, to show God’s nature of love towards people.

This was hidden from humanity. They had religions of sacrifice and death, which they thought were in line with the character of God. But the Prodigal Son's father was not at all like this.

The parable of the Good Samaritan showed the irrelevance of the temple sacrifice to the real need of Jerusalem and the real healing of the society. While they left the outcast suffering on the street, and the foreigner outside their orbit of concern, their society had no hope of repair. The religion, or church, that God wanted was our worship on the street, where the suffering is.

The things that they thought were religion and pleasing to God were destructive to the community. Isolating the sinners and the foreigners could only bring further injustice and anger to our societies. Instead, God sends us among them to heal. This is what was hidden: what God is truly like, one who doesn't come to condemn, to punish, but to heal. All of our religions had been built on the opposite.

The parable about the mustard seed completely removes from us any notion of scapegoating the weak. It challenges our whole culture of mimetic rivalry, which was the dominant culture in Jesus' day. The mustard seed grows into a large bush and the birds of the air find rest and protection under its branches. The birds then referred to Israel's enemies. This was an unbearable message to those who wanted to punish the guilty. Jesus said we are to build societies that seek the healing of those we accuse.

So this is what Jesus' parables were unveiling. The arrival of a new kingdom, that would unmask our blindness. It would change the way we saw God and change the way we saw those we punish. It would open our eyes to a new way of building society, a new way of responding to our rivalries. This would build a social cohesion that is just and merciful.

Our Blindness

This is what was hidden from the Pharisees. They were expecting a messiah who would punish their enemies. We still read the story of Israel in that way today. We still think God is doing that to Israel's enemies. But this isn't God.

This was how the Pharisees read the prophets of the Old Testament. They were blind to their message. All the woes of Jesus against the Pharisees were about their blindness. They didn't see the real value of religion. Its purpose wasn't to make sacrifices to God in the temple, or in church buildings, but to bring in the sick and to heal those Satan accuses and treads down.

Jesus said they build the tombs of the prophets, while claiming that they wouldn't have done those things to the prophets, if they had lived in the days of their ancestors. It's like us, reading the prophets, and applying them to God's destruction of our enemies. It's like saying that we honour the prophets, but not hearing their message and not doing what they said. Their message was mercy to our enemies, to all those who are refugees, to all those who don't have homes, to all those who aren't as fortunate as ourselves.

Maybe Cain thought Abel had taken God's favour away from him. He blamed Abel for this. He wanted that favour back. In killing Abel, he could take out God's favourite. It's like sibling jealousy in the family. He could get Abel's divine favour, in an occultic sense, becoming the master of religious ceremonies. He built a city, based on violence and an occultic view of God. And this deadly view of God and of social life permeated human culture.

Jesus came to expose it. "This isn't what God is like. This isn't what worship is like. This isn't how cities should be built. This isn't how the weak should be dealt with. This isn't how we respond to

trouble, with more violence. But instead, we live reconciling, self-giving lives, planting the seeds of a new world. This is the seed of the kingdom we sow in our societies.”

What is Hidden

Girard believed that the thing that was hidden to man since the beginning of our civilization was our propensity to build society on the sufferings of those we blame and cast out. And we build a story to justify it, which becomes the myth of our nation.

These myths still rule our national narratives today. Our nations are founded on the myth of our own goodness. We see the rise of nationalism today, which bases its justification on the same myth. We don't see our own faults. We don't see the peoples we have trodden down. We don't see ourselves through the eyes of our scapegoats. These myths stop our world from coming together, from us seeing ourselves as our neighbour's keeper.

Maybe other nations are worse, and we feel a justification for our own myths. Maybe our myths are partly true. No doubt this is what Paul believed, when he went about prosecuting those who challenged his Jewish nationalism. He thought he was bringing order to the world.

But God stopped him in his tracks, and instead called him to build a common table, where there is no Greek nor Jew, no male nor female, no slave nor free, no rich nor poor, no Barbarian nor wise. We build a table at which our myths are not welcome. They are exposed by the self-giving love and forgiveness of Christ.

What is hidden is the inaccuracy of our myths. They are lies that we don't want to see. They stand in the way of the kingdom of God, just like they did in first century Israel. The thing hidden is our own scapegoating of others. We can see scapegoating when others do it, but not when we do it. Christ came to reveal this to us, by asking us to take up our cross.

And what is hidden from us is our false view of God. Like the pagan, who had sinful gods to excuse and cover their own sin, we also worship a God whom we can blame for our sin in the world. We have a God we can call sovereign, whom we claim punishes sinners, and therefore the God we often claim is responsible for the evil and suffering in the world.

We have an angry, warring God, especially our “last-days God,” just like the pagans, and this “takes away our sin,” our complicity in the violence.

But this is to blind us from our own actions, the consequences of our own scapegoating upon the sufferings of others. We too can sweep these things under the mat of “the God who works in mysterious ways,” instead of laying aside our nationalism, our neglect, our resignation and going out to heal our brother.

What Girard saw about the bible was that it was written to succour the innocent in their sufferings. We started out as the suffering, the “people who were not a people,” and now we must remember those who are suffering, whom the gospel is for. We were in bondage in Egypt. Now we must remember those in captivity in this world, and not blame those who are excluded, when they threaten us.

Source of Religion

And we were all blind to the fact that sacrifice wasn't God's will. The idea that man invented sacrifice to compensate for his guilt and to offer others for our guilt was hidden to mankind. We invented religion to govern our sacrifice and prosecution of others for our sin. The reason for this is that we

took on board the law, to join satan as accusers. The law filled our hearts at that point, and for this reason there must be sacrifice.

And this spoiled the whole meaning and purpose of the priesthood. The original plan for the priesthood was that it brings shalom and sabbath to the whole creation. But then it became a religious purpose of officiating over the sacrifice and prosecution of others for our sin. This is what human religion made the priesthood and we were blind, thinking this was from God.

God never meant us to have these human forms of religion, but we thought they came from him. He meant us to have love for one another, which brings shalom to creation. God just wanted us to have life.

It is in Christ that we return to the true form of priesthood. The Sermon on the Mount outlines a life that is self-giving, marking out a reconciling, redemptive community for our enemies. This is the sabbath, shalom, sacrifice-free living. The priesthood in Christ is self-giving, as Christ did. The original purpose of priesthood is restored, as sacrifice is finished in Christ.

This is what was hidden since the fall. The Prophets tried to reveal it, but the people didn't understand. That is why they said God wanted mercy, not sacrifice. It's only in Christ that our eyes are open. And they are opened, because when they sacrificed Christ for their sins, Christ forgave them for it. He didn't accuse anyone. He didn't demand any sacrifice in return. The killing and violence ended with him.

Apocalypse

This means to unveil what is hidden. It is to reveal, as in the title of the book of the Revelation. What is revealed is the nature of God, over against the nature of man and his human cultures. God reveals himself in Christ, in a way that is completely unexpected to humanity.

In Christ, God forgives man. He doesn't mimic man's violence. In Christ, God unveils his own nature, as one who forgives, who even heals his own enemies. He doesn't seek vengeance against his enemies, but instead lays down his life for them, to show them his forgiveness and love.

This is the revelation, the unveiling, the apocalypse. It is how God fights. How he overcomes evil. How he rules. How he breaks the cycle of violence and hatred. The things that are hidden, that Christ revealed in his parables, and in general incarnation and gospel, are related to the nature of God, that is contrary to everything we naturally think about power. In God, power condescends and forgives the enemy. In God, power serves, it doesn't compete.

The apocalypse is the person of Christ, who unveils that God isn't like us. Instead, he is the opposite, and he has come to make us like him.

And what is unveiled is our own unrighteousness. Like in Romans 1:18, Paul says that in the gospel God's wrath is *unveiled* against *all* ungodliness. The emphasis here is on "all," that is, regarding both the Jew and the gentile. This is Paul's theme in Romans. It isn't just the gentile who has sinned, but the cross unveils all own sin. This breaks down any boast we have against the "other." It cuts off our "otherising" people different to ourselves. Paul's aim was to build one new community, where we receive and care for the other. This ends scapegoating, because the things hidden about our own sin are revealed in Christ.

The Ten Commandments

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (Exodus 20:2-6)

Interpreting the Text

This sounds like the local deities of ancient times, who were said to be personally offended if their people didn't worship them. It was like a competition between the local deities of each tribal group. If they weren't worshipped, they would get angry and punish the people. This is the gods made in the image of man, with our human egos.

This isn't what the text above means. There are difficult passages in the Old Testament, which scholars interact with differently. Girard may explain some difficult passages in ways that I can learn from, but that I may not fully agree with. Girard wasn't a liberal. He had great respect for the scripture, for God, for the historicity and values of the gospel and for the church. But his scholarly background wasn't Fundamentalist.

Passages like this in the Old Testament reflected the consequences of sin, not God's direct punishment. It was the “sowing and reaping” concept that Paul often spoke of. In the Passover, it says God smote the firstborn, however it wasn't God, but the “angel of death.” The scripture reveals that the Passover means that God, in Christ, stands between us and the destroyer. He isn't the destroyer.

In the Wilderness, it says God destroyed sinners in his wrath, but Paul reveals in Corinthians, that this destroyer was satan, not God. Paul also revealed what the wrath and judgement of God meant. It meant God handed people over to their insistent choice and finally allowed them to go their way and bear the consequences. He took his hand of protection from them. This is God's anger, punishment and wrath, allowing people their way. “Our desires lead to sin and sin, when it is grown up, brings death.” (James 1:15)

We see this kind of language in Job. Satan challenges God and God allows him access to Job, with the exception that satan could not touch Job's body. Then satan went out and caused havoc, through the instrumentality of violent people. The text says, “Fire came down from God in heaven.” This clearly meant, in the language of the people then, that God allowed it, or passed the judgement, by removing his hedge. But satan did it, through his own motives, accusation and desire to destroy. None of this motivation or action came from God.

The passage above tells us that God is jealous. The Prophets later told us that this meant God didn't want harm to come to people. His jealousy was love, not ego. He is jealous for our genuine wellbeing. His anger at sin, isn't personal offence, but care for his creation.

When it says he punishes sin to the fourth generation, it means the consequences of removing his hedge, what sin will do, what the outcomes of it will be, if it is allowed to run its natural course. God's care here is about our children and their children. Our sin affects their lives also, and God doesn't want that to happen.

It is also apparent that God condescended to the Hebrew people in their worldview and the time. His language was the language of the day, in a way the people then could understand. Many of the stories related to the pagan myths of that time, but there was a transformation involved, that led the people to the values of the real God. Like in the law: God is jealous that we worship him, and we worship him by sharing Jubilee love with our neighbour.

There are many other points about the alleged “violence of God” in scripture, some of which I address in my book *Violence in Scripture*. The bible does not depict the God of Israel as violent, when we allow the text to reveal its view and plan. It reveals a God who is actively working against the violence of humanity, to bring about a new creation.

The Image of God

The first issue God had to deal with when he brought Israel out of Egypt was the matter of the image of God. We see God’s full image in Christ. It is from Christ that we are to interpret all scripture. Christ shows who God is, where in the cross he gave his life for his enemies, rather than retaliated against them. He overcame mimetic rivalry with forgiveness.

When Israel came out of Egypt, the world was filled with false images of God. Idolatry was the common occurrence with all Israel’s pagan neighbours. God’s issue with idolatry wasn’t jealousy, as humans experience jealousy in mimetic rivalry. God wasn’t in a mimetic competition with other gods. God’s issue with idolatry was the false images of God the idols portrayed.

Bowing down to idols gives people wrong ideas about God. The idols represented self-centred ideas about human life. The gods represented sinful human life styles. They encouraged mimetic rivalry. Encouraging these ideas in our hearts fosters destructive communities. The weak people are prey. It is the strong who survive and everyone else is trodden under foot. This was the way before the Flood and this was the way in Egypt.

The image of God also represented the call of humanity. Adam and Eve were made in God’s image, and called to reflect that image into the creation, bringing wholeness to human community and to the environment. This image of God is his self-giving image we see in Christ. It is dominion by service, that we see Paul outline in Philippians two, when speaking about the cross. Man was to reflect this image, rather than the covetousness of the idols, ancient of modern idols of commercialism.

But Pharaoh assumed the whole image of God into himself. This means he was a dictator. He allowed no form of imagination from other people. Other people just had to follow Pharaoh’s vision of empire, or die. No one else was permitted to contribute creative imagination to community, according to their different gifts and talents, walking in the image of the creator God.

This is what commercialism does to us today. Advertisements provide an image of life. They paint a life of individualism, that becomes so persuasive, it is difficult to imagine a life of community, that can build something better into our nations. Commercialism breaks down any coming together of people, or churches, in any meaningful way, beyond our individualistic visions. The image of God isn’t reflected in individualism, but through male and female, through humanity as community. Idols, old and new, call for individualism, which is destructive of neighbour and foreigner.

The Ten Commandments strike immediately at the central purpose of creation: God made humanity to reflect his goodness into our nations, through our cooperative, loving encouragement of all our giftings. Idols destroy this community, bring people into slavery instead, destroy, rape and pillage

the world, rather than build wholesome lives in sustainable environments. This vision of wholeness must come to the centre, rather than a vision of empire, or a vision of commercial enterprise.

Israel though did not imbibe this vision of the true image of God. They wanted to be like the nations around them. They eventually took a king and took on all the traits of empire: building fortresses, amassing wives, armies, horses, weapons, wealth, worldly knowledge and pride. They took in slaves to expand their building programs.

Israel ended up like Egypt, demeaning the image of God in women and the rest of humanity. And they got all this from the self-promoting idols of the nations. Mimetic desire from their idols worked in them to build kingdoms of rivalry. Therefore, God judged Israel, for the sake of the human being and for the sake of his creation.

The Sabbath

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”
(Exodus 20:8-11)

This is beautiful: the care the passage shows for those we have a potential relationship of power over. It is to limit power and to make sure power serves. It demands care for our children, servants, animals and foreigners in our communities. It brings leaders into accountability towards the weak. It says that mimetic desire will not govern relationships, but the people’s own interests are paramount. This care is an immediate contrast with Egypt.

The teaching of sabbath is set within the event of creation. God made the world and rested on the seventh day. This is to show how creation is to work. It shows how creation exists in wholeness. Contrary to the pagan myths of creation, where creation comes about through mimetic force and violence, the real creation exists on the basis of rest and wholeness.

The sabbath reminds Israel how it will exist and perpetuate in the land in which it is going in to inhabit. If they take up this land on the narrative of the pagans, then eventually “the land will spew them out.” That is a false narrative about occupation and wellness.

Creation is built on wisdom. Wisdom holds it together in a fine ecological balance. Upsetting that wisdom brings the downfall of the creation around us. It brings our civilization into eventual collapse. This sowing and reaping issue plays out in our social fabric. A society that isn’t nourished by the sabbath, eventually eats itself up and breaks apart.

There was no sabbath in Egypt. They worked for Pharaoh and his glory seven days a week. There was no forty-hour working week, no trade union, no annual leave, or public rest days. In empire and in our modern commercial world, the sabbath gets squeezed out. People and resources of the environment become slaves to the bottom line of the amount of wealth that can be produced. If we don’t produce enough wealth, we can’t compete against our global rivals.

Sabbath was built into the whole of the Hebrew community. They had long feast periods, frequently, throughout the year. We look at them like just religious festivals, but they were also important rest and recreation periods for the families. Israel came together for extended periods of relaxation and

sharing of food. These events were built into Israel's life as creational harmonisers, to de-Pharaoh their relationships and economic structures.

Every seven years the land had to be rested. Sabbath is about how we treat our natural resources. It shows us that commercialism, or mimetic greed working in our competitive nations, must not damage environmental sustainability. This was serious in Israel's law. Sustainability was built in many of their laws, about how they treated their land.

But, as Paul said, "Were these things written for the oxen's (or land's) sake, or for our sakes as well? For our sakes also." (1 Cor 9:9-10) He meant, does God just care for land and animals, or for people also? If God cares for land, and shows how we should care for it, so it keeps yielding for us, then how much more should we care for each other? If we wouldn't hurt our precious land as farmers, then what does this show us about how we treat people?

Therefore, on the land sabbath, Israel had to set free its slaves. And every seven land sabbaths, that is, every fifty years, Israel had a Jubilee. It was a major celebration after seven sabbaths: the sabbath of sabbaths. In the year of Jubilee, all debts had to be forgiven, all land had to be returned to its original owners. All families who had undergone tough times, had to be restored financially. All economic contracts that had brought people into misfortune had to be dissolved. The wellbeing of the person, not the wellbeing of the economic data, was the first ethic of the community.

This would stop the failure of a family perpetuating in poverty throughout the generations to follow. The Jubilee would intervene in and reverse the "to the fourth generation" consequences of our sin, that we spoke of above. The sins of the parents, that impoverished the family, could be turned around for the coming generations, if Israel followed the Jubilee. This is how God wants us to view those who sin, fall and come into ruin. Not to punish them, but to seek ways to restore them.

All of these are sabbath, creation renewal, creation wholeness principles. These principles were carried through all of Israel's law. Relief for the widow was a carry over the sabbath idea. It was to give her rest in her affliction. Relief for the orphan, the poor, the foreigner, the refugee, the stranger, and the homeless, were all sabbath ideas.

They give humanity a rest from the harshness of empire and economic realities. They restore creation to wholeness and rest, as we see it in the beginning. They enter our mimetic rivalry and bring healing to those cast aside. Politics was not allowed to hinder this sabbath. No matter the "side" the person was on, they must be fully helped in their need.

Jesus claimed Solomon, at the height of Israel's conquest of its neighbours, was not dressed as well as one flower in the field. He compared Solomon's empire, its slaves, its wisdom and dominion, to his own refusal to enter mimetic rivalry with his enemy, portrayed in the Sermon on the Mount. This contentment would bring the world peace. This is the advice from the Prince of Peace himself.

The Pharisees turned the sabbath into a legalism that excluded others from love. This was the exact opposite of what the sabbath was designed to do. It isn't about a day. It is about our care for people and for our environment, and not allowing our desire for things to override our desire for the welfare of our neighbour. This is to be the governing principle of our economic theory.

Mimetic idolatry brings war to our world. It brings an arms trade and an arms race. It holds debt over the heads of millions of people in poorer nations. Sabbath brings release. It forgives debt. It brings in the outcast for care. It heals the poverty of our communities. It puts people ahead of our own commercial desires. It builds fair trade. It cares for the stranger, no matter his or her faith or tribal/

racial background. This is the worship God is calling us to. A worship that is relevant to our nations and to healing our future.

The Ten Commandments show us that mimetic desire and rivalry will destroy our creation, but sabbath will rebuild our creation, both in its environmental conditions and in its social fabric. This care for one another is what brings atonement to our relationships, washing away the hurt, bitterness and hatred that fills our world through injustice. This is the Jubilee the gospel brings to us. God forgives us and he asks us to forgive and restore our neighbour, spiritually and economically.

Covetousness

“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour’s.” (Exodus 20:12-17)

The Ten Commandments bring us out of paganism. They reveal the mimetic rivalry that builds up in idolatrous communities, until a destruction comes to our lives, even to the fourth generation. God’s answer for this mimetic rivalry is a sabbath orientation of care towards the weak. This is the image of the true God we are to follow, to replace the image of our rivalrous idols of commercialism. It is putting our desires for dominion to the side, and instead building a society that cares for others.

Someone said, “A civilization is judged by how it treats its weakest member.” This is like saying, with Isaiah, “A little child shall lead them.” This means the government of Messiah is one that is led by the interests and needs of the most vulnerable. The needs of the weak leads our leaders, not mimetic competition.

Coveting what belongs to our neighbour, leads our communities into strife. It is the foundation issue in this group of commandments. It leads us to false witness, to scapegoat, which is murder. It leads us to adultery, to steal what belongs to someone else, and to disobey our parents in rivalry in the home.

Covetousness is what destroyed the image of God in man in Eden. It destroyed the sabbath, the rest and harmony of creation, and filled it with a self-orientated violence. These are the three issues in the Ten Commandments. Through Christ, God is inviting us to follow him, to renounce self-centredness, to live in a sabbath care for our neighbour, reflecting this true image of God into our global community.

This certainly means taking up our cross to do this, to live in self-giving, reconciling acts towards the stranger and enemy, rather than the mimetic desire that puts our own survival and interests first. It takes doing what Christ did, when he gave himself for us all. This is the discipleship God calls us to, to renew his creation.

What To Do

The issue seems to be about overcoming the individualism. Whether it's the mimetic rivalry of ancient paganism, the individual ambitions of Pharaoh, or of our advertising centred world today, it is a matter of the idol of self. This idolatry militates against the image of God in which we were created, to reflect God's self-giving love into community and into creation itself.

God's purpose then is to restore this original priesthood. Not the human corrupted priesthood, that officiates over the sacrifice of others, but the priesthood of Christ, who offers himself in our stead, and takes upon himself our violence, to open us all up to the possibility of sharing God's forgiveness and Jubilee. We are priests of this true image of God. And as the true priesthood, we are also kings, servant/ rulers over a new creation, that is recovering through sabbath.

So how does this happen? What can we do? How can this recovery take place? We say we are insignificant. We are only one or two people. We are not in the corridors of power in this world. We don't have the important positions. We have limited influence and impact.

The gospel shows us that change is from down, up... not from up, down. Jesus didn't impact the world from the top. He came down, lowered himself, and impacted all things from the bottom. He became a slave to make the change that would renew everything.

He said that the rulers of the world impact things from above, on top, from being over the people, but we rule from underneath, from the bottom, serving the least of the people. This is where change happens. The rulers over this world can't change the world.

Sinai, the law, retribution, war in the Old Testament, was from the top, down. The gospel is from the bottom up, God coming off the mountain and into the child at Bethlehem. The law and its punishments work on the outer man, the gospel works on the inner man.

Grassroots

One thing we have noticed through experience is that change comes from the grassroots. If we are talking about peace, peace doesn't come just through holding talks at high levels, through dialogue about the differences in our faith. Peace isn't about merging our faith ideas so we don't fight.

Peace doesn't come through talking, but through doing. And the place "to do" is at the grassroots level. We need to get to the place where people are suffering, where the common person is in need. This is where the hurt is. This is where the bitterness in our nations is. This is where the potential volatility is, the anger, the strife.

Peace comes to our community as we meet together at a community level and begin to reach out to each other, form relationships and address the structural and daily needs that affect people's lives. Without this there can be no peace, no sabbath, no rest for our communities and nations. This is where the rest and healing comes from. If it doesn't happen here, it can't happen at any other level.

The good news about this is that this is something we can all do. We can all be nation changes, because it is at this most simple level than change comes to our nations. This isn't about electing the right person to office, because when governors see us living this way, they will follow. It will catch on, no matter who is in office. Paul called this the church bringing the wisdom of God, of the cross, to the powers of this world. This is what he meant.

Our nations can't do this unless we come together, breaking down our ghettos of separation between racial and economic groups, and begin to intermix to form relationships and serve. Unless we do this, we can forget about any real change, any harmony coming to our world. This is the place where our problems exist, and this is where they are healed.

It isn't terrorism, healed by force. It is fractured lives, healed by shared lives. This was the message Jesus preached. This is the message we try to say he didn't preach, because we like a private message of private religion, that is irrelevant to a world in distress, that tries to fix the world through punishing others, rather than finding out the need.

The first thing needed is sharing our lives with our neighbours at the grassroots. Restoration comes to those who suffer, through human care, mercy, shared at the grassroots. This is what the church should be looking to live out.

What is Church?

The early church was like this: A Roman soldier, a banker, a farmer, a slave, a Greek, a Jew, a Barbarian, an Asian, African, European, all came together to break bread. As they ate together, the banker asked the farmer, "How was your day?" The farmer said, "Not good. Our crops failed and we can't pay our interest rates this year. The bank is taking away our farm."

Then the Roman soldier asked the Jew, "How was your day?" And the Jew answered, "Not good, a soldier brutalised our village and wounded my father." These were the kind of conversations that went on, until they began to know each other, in a way that their Roman world didn't permit. They began to understand and serve each other, repairing what the brutal world had done, restoring their relationships, lives and communities.

But after some time, things began to change. The bankers became embarrassed and they withdrew from the common fellowship and formed their own churches called, "Bankers for Christ." This is what the Africans, Europeans, and farmers eventually did. Now we have Christian individualism. This isn't what God meant us to have. We must get back to the plan for the church, as it was in the beginning. We need to eat together, to form common communities, not separate suburban lives.

If we want peace, and not war, this is how we get there. We break down divisions. The hatred we have between nations, races, tribes, people of faiths, people of different economic or political groups, settled people and refugees, people at peace and people at war and in hunger. Instead of scapegoating these groups, we must overcome our fear and condemnation of others and overcome evil with good. If we don't do this, we "will bite and devour each other," and our teeth these days are nuclear.

Neighbourliness

Jesus gave us the solution. It was about our neighbour. The lawyer, like the devil's advocate today, asked, "Who is my neighbour?" trying to limit his involvement, his orbit of care for others. Neighbourliness is the solution for our world. Living like neighbours, like we all live in one African village, where we have a duty of hospitality and care towards our common man. It's what Paul talked about, "If one member suffers, the whole body suffers." This is the lesson the church brings to the world, rather than the pagan solution to our problems, which is violence and scapegoating.

We can't say that the problem in another part of the world is "their problem." It also our problem. If any part of the body is sick, it spreads to us all. Hurt and anger in one place spreads to us all. We are all in this together. We must help heal each other. Jesus called it, going into all the world. If we say

the world must repent, then show them what repentance is. Show them what Christ did for us, by sharing the same love with others. We have this obligation to our neighbour, whoever they are.

When we go out to the road to Jericho and we see someone lying there naked and unconscious, we don't give them a questionnaire to fill out. "Please fill in the personal details below. What race or tribe are you? What nationality? Do you believe in Mary worship? Can you please explain the Trinity? Are you Muslim? What are your moral beliefs?" A wounded person is a wounded person. A hungry stomach is a hungry stomach. What if the person is our enemy? "Love your enemy."

Stop Turning Our Backs

We must find a way of healing our communities. We can't just leave the poor behind. Jubilee forbids this. The poor who lost their land, must have it returned, and their debts forgiven, no matter the complaints of the "self-made" business man. No one is self-made. The Jubilee says we cannot turn our backs on others and expect shalom in creation. Creational wisdom does not work that way.

If coal mines are closed, those who worked in them must be restored into a new livelihood. They can't just be cast aside. The economy must be restructured, the people retrained. We can't just try this, we must succeed at it. These things matter a lot. Our wholeness depends upon it.

There are many things we could address here, but we close just by considering one of them. That is, about education. We can see in the example below, how scapegoating works and leads us to a fragmented and dangerous future. We see this happening in our own day and place. It has happened over many years in modern nations, and has often gone unnoticed. We don't know we have participated in this process. But we all have, in different areas of life.

Children's Education

The way we educate our children is just one example in practical terms. Just say, there is a lack of good education in an area and parents come together to discuss what they can do for their children. They pool their little resources and start some classes. The families and the teaches work hard and over time the school develops. It gets more books and equipment and the standard of education starts to rise.

The parents believe in excellence and in providing the best opportunities for the children's future. So they press on to develop the school the best they can. They aren't rich people, because the parents didn't have great opportunities when they were young. But they want their children to have a better future. Slowly the school increases in its facilities and quality of teachers. The exam results also rise and the school starts competing with the best school in the region.

The standard of school uniforms also begins to improve. At the beginning, the children wore their home clothes. Then, simple school uniforms. Now they want their children to improve in the discipline of their dress and appearance. This is all done out of the parent's love. They just want their children to succeed anywhere in the world. The bible says we are to be the head and not the tail. "If Christians are to impact the world for good, we must be at the top."

By this time, the nature of the school begins to slowly change. It isn't led by the initial group of parents, who knew each other and were friends. The school now has professional management, to make sure the developed school is properly run. Things starts to become impersonal. The management says that some of the old philosophies and ways of doing things will have to change. The administration just has to adjust to economic realities, if the school wants to rise to the top.

A letter goes home to the parents, saying that the improvement in the quality of the uniforms means the uniform fee is increasing, again. Some families can't afford this and eventually their children must drop out of the school. Fees continue to increase, to maintain all the equipment the school now has, like science and music equipment, an art studio and a well-equipped library, computer and sports centres. The school begins to attract the best paid teachers in the state.

More and more of the poorer children drop out of the school. Their parents no longer have relationships with the parents of the children still in the school. Over time, the population in the area starts to split up. Those with children in the school move into a suburb closer to the school. Housing prices there increase, and the other families need to move out, into areas where housing is cheaper.

In the following years, poorer children start to become a threat to the school. Some break in at night and steal things. So the management must increase security. Walls are built and surveillance equipment is installed. The higher costs increase school fees even further. More children have to drop out of the school.

And because the parents want their children to have the best moral and ethically education, they decide that non-Christian pupils can't enrol. They don't want their children to mix with families of other values. Relationships in the wider community continue to deteriorate, even along racial lines. Separation becomes more entrenched. A wider gap starts to develop between the richer Christians and the poorer families and between the Christians and the non-Christians.

The parents of the children still in the school understand the reason for their success. It was the work ethic they dedicated themselves to. They learned this ethic from their faith, and through this ethic they built a strong and successful school. It is now the best school in the city.

But because of the separations being built into the society, the practice of scapegoating slowly begins. First, it's against the poorer children, who had been stealing from the school. These children are the descendants of the children who had to drop out of school years earlier. They are called thieves and the police, who, in effect, work for the wealthy people, arrest these children. Now the children have a criminal record, their prospects of entering a good school or finding a good job are depleted even further.

The wealthier Christians respond by lecturing the poorer families, and the families of other faiths, on their lack of Christian values. These other people aren't doing well in life "because they lack these better values." The gap between these groups of people continues to grow.

When this happens on an international level, with different languages and cultures also added to the mix, and the different shades of scapegoating that now become available, the eventual outcome is war.

This is the city I grew up in. Our home was between several elite schools. This social dynamic outlined above describes the life I knew. This also describes the country in which my wife and I have worked for many years. These issues, that can be seen plainly in the schools children may or may not be able to attend, have contributed significantly to the terrorism we have lived through for years. The scenario described above is played out before our eyes every day, in all parts of the world.

We know it isn't easy. Economic realities impact us when we try to provide for our children. Raising up a quality school is important. We love our children and their education and nurture matters a lot. How can this be done in a way that is inclusive of the whole community?

These are tough questions that need answers, if we are going to be ruled by community ethics rather than by the economic bottom line. We have a bottom line, and it isn't economics. Our real bottom line, is that we must live as community, or perish in division, misunderstanding of each other, pain and hostility.

And the way our Christian ethic can be known isn't by lecturing at those who have dropped out. It is by including them back in. The Christian ethic is shown by sharing, by serving, by building a community that cares for us all. This is the Christian ethic: "God has blessed us, we want to share that blessing with you, so you can see where it comes from, so you too can be saved by faith."

These people may have dirty shoes, bad attitudes, bad behaviours, but so did we when God took us in. Missions pays the price of love and patience and helps people come up to your level. We all need to serve and help each other, because without the other, we are not complete. This is the incarnation. God came down to bring us up.

As Christian parents and as teachers, we have tried to pass on the Christian ethic. We have seen this ethic mainly as the work ethic, the moral ethic. "Work hard and be morally faithful to your family." These are great ethics for building our lives and becoming successful. Discipline and moral virtue are two of the greatest things we can give our children. This is what our Christian schools of the past have been built upon. These have become the greatest learning centres of the world today.

But the greatest Christian ethic is the community ethic. This is what we have not built upon. This is why our societies are divided. This is why there is so much suffering in our world. This is why we have terrorism. This is why we are going to war today. This is the origin of violence.

And another ethic that is vital in our world of judgement, rejection and separation, is how to handle those who fail. Our ethic isn't about everyone measuring up to some discipline and moral standard. The moral standard is love, which is bringing us all forward together when we fail. Our ethic is healing. It is restoring each other in love. This is the essential community ethic for us to nurture, in our families, among our divergent groups, and between our cultures and faiths.

This isn't being said to blame private schools. This isn't being said to blame anyone. None of us are to blame, and yet we are all at fault. I am just using our schooling as one example of how we can include others and work to build in a community style. This community healing is the essential thing.

We must build a society that doesn't leave people behind, a Jubilee society. At least as much as possible. This is the proficiency we must strive for, in practical ways, that reach out to others at ground level. People left behind will always become scapegoats. There are no simple answers to this. Working to bring us all forward together is difficult for many reasons, social and economic. It is very difficult.

But we have a choice. Either we learn and grow in this kingdom of God way of living, or we continue in Satan's way, of divide and conquer. We cast out Satan by Satan, or we cast him out by the gospel of Jubilee. Which way is more difficult? I guess that depends on how great our potential to destroy each other is. The more technologically advanced we become, the more innovative and dangerous our weapons, the more important it is that we pay attention to the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and learn to do them.