

example, imagine that being in Christ is to already be in prayer? But Y. does not exploit this line of understanding and leaves the reader to make what he or she will make of it. I suspect that Y. sees there is so much more to learn about Jesus' union with his Father before venturing such personal applications.

John C. Haughey, S.J.
Colombiere Jesuit Community, Baltimore

Die Rehabilitierung des Opfers: Zum Dialog zwischen René Girard und Raymund Schwager um die Angemessenheit der Rede vom Opfer im christlichen Kontext. By Mathias Moosbrugger. Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 2014. Pp. 398. €39.

This revised dissertation examines the status of the victim in the work of René Girard and Raymund Schwager, the Innsbruck theologian most responsible for bringing mimetic theory into Catholic theology. Having researched the soon-to-be-published letters from the Schwager archive, Moosbrugger carefully and painstakingly reconstructs the different stages of both Schwager's and Girard's intellectual development. He conclusively shows the impact Schwager had on Girard: he argues that Schwager, rather than simply being a translator of Girard into theology, already had a theological vision that helped him conceive how Girard's theory of religion could renew an understanding of the cross and the theological usage of *Opfer* (both "victim" and "sacrifice" in German).

Many critics of Girard have concentrated their concerns with mimetic theory on his nonsacrificial understanding of Christianity. Unlike the religions that deem sacrifice necessary, the victim culpable, and place God on the side of the persecutors, Girard famously claimed in *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (1978) that the Gospels overturn this system entirely: the sacrifice is arbitrary, the victim innocent, and God is identified with this victim. Such a total revolution in religion led Girard to conclude that Christianity was essentially nonsacrificial, and that texts like the Letter to the Hebrews represented a return to sacrificial logic and thus missed the whole point of the Gospels.

M.'s book does not overturn what readers of Girard already know about his opinion concerning sacrifice. His 1978 claims underwent a reversal: first in his 1993 interview with Rebecca Adams, where he admits that he was wrong about Hebrews, and then in his 1995 *Festschrift* article for Schwager he acknowledged the latter's central role in this reversal (this article was not translated into English until 2014 in *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*). The Christian revolution consisted not in a rejection of sacrifice, but in the willingness to sacrifice oneself in place of another, free of all violence. M. offers a blow-by-blow account of how both Girard and Schwager came to understand what was at stake in this question of victimhood. M. reconstructs how Schwager had admitted a "désaccord avec [Girard's] thèse" (239) already in 1977, a year before they both published books (*Things Hidden* and *Must There Be Scapegoats?*) applying mimetic theory to Christian theology. This discord was eventually bridged, largely

through Schwager's efforts, although M. admits that the epistolary record produces no smoking gun to date definitively the point of Girard's shift (295).

M.'s extensive acquaintance with Schwager's archive also yields a compelling picture of Schwager as a theologian. He corresponded extensively with Balthasar, to whom he introduced Girard's corpus. In addition, he wrote two different heads of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—including Ratzinger in 1984—with the specific intent of belying any notion that Girard's theory was unorthodox. Schwager also corresponded with such critics as Adrian Schenker and Robert North. Indeed, Schwager, as M. shows, was so convinced that Girard's theory of the scapegoat mechanism—as a kind of sociology of religion—could be compatible with Catholic doctrine that he saw it as an almost essential proposition to convince Girard that this was the case (296–97). To do this, M. unfolds how Schwager, long before his encounter with Girard, was guided by his study of Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* (162–79). This study led him to consider what it meant for Jesus to have faith (212), and how the Letter to the Hebrews describes this faith (5:7–10). Schwager sought a better explanation of how the cross could be salvific, and violence redemptive. This search led him not only to Girard but also to Balthasar, and his 1990 book, later translated as *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*, constitutes a novel synthesis of Balthasar's dramatic project and Girard's mimetic theory applied to the Gospels.

M.'s book, which won the 2013 Karl Rahner Prize for theological research, is a landmark achievement. Among works in mimetic theology, perhaps only Wolfgang Palavar's monograph on Girard matches M.'s learning. I know of no source that recapitulates so deftly the different debates about Girard that have been carried out in German, French, and English over the past 40 years. M. offers an overview of Girard's "three steps" that integrates the progression of Girard's thought with the critiques that it engendered (41–139). Rather than giving a one-sided presentation of the material, M. lets other voices enter, helpfully pointing to critiques as well as conversations, including important conversations in the 1990s about the question of *Opfer* among German scholars of religion (we also learn that none other than Karl Rahner authored the entry under "Opfer V. Dogmatisch" in the 1962 edition of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*). M.'s book demonstrates how studies of contemporary figures can be scholarly, and how questions in constructive theology can incorporate historical rigor.

In addition to a faithful recovery of Schwager, this book may be the finest study of Girard to date. Packed with detail, it never loses its narrative thread; meticulously researched, it is clearly written and intelligently organized. M. also shows a deft hermeneutical hand in explaining how Girard's and Schwager's *désaccord* arose from the preconceptions that carried them to the question of *Opfer*. Although no easy slog for non-natives, this book, from a younger theologian with great promise, is too important to ignore.

Grant Kaplan
Saint Louis University