

**REDISCOVERING THE MEANING OF JOHN 6:53:  
The Two Ways, the Lord's Ambivalent Table, and Mimetic Theory**

by  
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS  
in  
The Faculty of Graduate Studies  
(Religious Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
(Vancouver)

April 2012

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## Abstract

The focus of this thesis is the meaning of John 6:53: “So Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you’” (NRSV). This verse is the *crux interpretum* of John 6:51-58, and of the midrash this passage concludes (John 6:31-58). It is also a verse that many Johannine scholars agree remains to be understood in context. The verse expresses language of sanctioned violence and cannibalism, language of gaining life through devouring a fellow mortal. Should Jesus’ statement be taken literally, metaphorically, or both? Does Jesus refer only to himself with the term ‘son of Man’, or to mortals generally, or both? Does the literary background alluded to in this verse and its context shed light on these questions? The close and broad socio-literary contexts should help the reader with these interpretive decisions. René Girard’s anthropology of violence and religion was formed to address the matter of sanctioned violence and the language used to articulate it. It is therefore the tool employed here, in combination with the subverted combat myth tradition of the Hebrew Bible, to address the question of the intended meaning of John 6:53. Reading through the lens of mimetic theory, I propose that this verse as part of a Passover midrash expresses a contrast of two types of *modus vivendi* (e.g. John 6:27), or the biblical theme of the ‘two ways’. These ways complement two types of ‘imitation’ for gaining ‘being’ as described by Girard’s mimetic theory: internal mimesis as a way of death, and external mimesis as a way of life. In John 6:53, Jesus describes both ways in one breath as part of a test for his audience.

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Statement of the Problem and a Proposed Solution .....	1
1.2 Review of Four Dominant Interpretive Currents .....	4
1.2.1 <i>Eucharistic Reading</i> .....	4
1.2.2 <i>Sapiential Reading</i> .....	5
1.2.3 <i>Mixed Eucharistic-Sapiential Reading</i> .....	7
1.2.4 <i>Sociolinguistic Reading</i> .....	9
1.3 Conclusions.....	11
<b>Chapter 2: Methodologies.....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Synopsis .....	14
2.2 René Girard’s Anthropology of Violence and Religion.....	14
2.3 The Awareness of the Combat Myth Cycle, or Internal Mimetic Cycle, Ascribed to Jesus in <i>John</i> .....	24
2.4 Empirical Evidence for Mimetic Theory.....	26
2.5 External Mimetic Triangles of Desire .....	29
2.6 The Bible’s Two Ways and Girard’s Two Logics – Synergies to Better Understand the Two Ways in the Hebrew Bible and Their Deployment in John 6 .....	31
<b>Chapter 3: Background to John 6:53 – the Broad (intra) Socio-Literary Context .....</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1 Synopsis .....	34
3.2 Introduction.....	35
3.3 The Heraclitean Logos and the Sacrificial Combat Myth Tradition.....	35
3.4 The Two Types of Logos: adding the Anti-Sacrificial Reflection Narrative or Johannine Logos .....	42
3.5 Allusive Synergy in John 6 – The Working Together of Multiple Biblical Themes .....	46
3.6 Previously Identified Texts of Mimetic Revelation in the Bible .....	48
3.7 The <i>Type</i> of Mimetic Rivalry occurring between Agents of Opposing kinds of Logos .	50
3.8 Triangles of Desire in Biblical Texts of Mimetic Revelation.....	52
3.8.1 <i>In the Aetiological Genesis Material</i> .....	52
3.8.1.1 Four-fold Fracture, Four-fold Reparation .....	53
3.8.2 <i>In the Exodus Narrative</i> .....	54
3.8.3 <i>In Ezekiel – the Son of Man Narrative</i> .....	55
3.8.4 <i>In the Hebrew Wisdom</i> .....	57
3.9 The Biblical Articulation of Two Essential Phases of the Internal Mimetic Cycle – Scandal and Metaphorical Consumption – Central to John 6.....	57
3.9.1 <i>The Biblical Notion of Scandal (B  B<sub>1</sub> of the Mimetic Cycle – Table 1)</i> .....	57
3.9.1.1 An Aetiology of Scandal in <i>Genesis</i> .....	61
3.9.1.2 Scandal in <i>Exodus</i> .....	63
3.9.1.3 Scandal in <i>Ezekiel</i> – the Son of Man Narrative .....	63

3.9.1.4 Scandal in the Hebrew Wisdom.....	64
3.9.2 <i>The Biblical Consumption Metaphor for Violence (E  E<sub>1</sub> of Mimetic Cycle – Table 1)</i> .....	65
3.9.2.1 The Consumption Metaphor in <i>Genesis</i> .....	71
3.9.2.2 The Consumption Metaphor in <i>Exodus</i> .....	76
3.9.2.3 The Consumption Metaphor in <i>Ezekiel</i> .....	76
3.9.2.4 <i>Ezekiel's son of Man and John's son of Man</i> .....	77
3.9.2.5 The Consumption Metaphor in the Hebrew Wisdom.....	78
3.9.3 <i>The Two Key Phases Featured in John 6</i> .....	79
3.10 The Two Ways (Bread versus Flesh) in the Hebrew Bible.....	80
3.10.1 <i>In the Exodus Narrative</i> .....	80
3.10.2 <i>In Ezekiel – the Son of Man Narrative</i> .....	82
3.10.3 <i>In the Hebrew Wisdom</i> .....	84
3.11 Early Christian Precedents – the Lord's Ambivalent Table before <i>John</i> .....	86
3.11.1 <i>In the Synoptic Gospels – the Son of Man, Flesh versus Bread, and the Lord's Ambivalent Table</i> .....	86
3.11.2 <i>In Paul – the Lord's Ambivalent Table</i> .....	90
3.12 Conclusions.....	91
<b>Chapter 4: John 6:53 – A Redemptive Return to the Pattern of Myth, as well as Its Overcoming</b> .....	<b>93</b>
4.1 Synopsis.....	93
4.2 Introduction to the Complete Integration.....	93
4.3 Triangles of Desire – As in <i>Ezekiel</i> , So in <i>John</i> .....	97
4.4 The Mimetic Cycle in <i>John</i> – the Combat Myth Subverted by the Scapegoat Lens.....	100
4.5 John 6:51-58 in Close (intra) Socio-Literary Context – the Two Ways in Terms of Flesh and Bread (Word, Spirit).....	101
4.5.1 <i>John 5:16-23 – A 'Dragon' brings Chaos to Cosmos, and Violence is Sanctioned Against Him (C  C<sub>1</sub>)</i> .....	102
4.5.2 <i>John 5:24-29 – Going Forth from Graves of Internal Mimetic Desire</i> .....	103
4.5.3 <i>John 5:30-47- The Desire of the Father and the Desire of Fatherless Humanity</i> ..... .....	105
4.5.4 <i>John 6:1-6 – Buying Bread without Price (or Gaining Life without Sacrifice?), A Test of Choosing Flesh or Bread</i> .....	105
4.5.5 <i>John 6:7-15 – The Feeding of the Mob (Pack of Wolves or Flock of Sheep?)</i> .....	107
4.5.6 <i>John 6:16-26 – Flesh from the Sea</i> .....	108
4.5.7 <i>John 6:27-29 – Doing the Deeds of God the Father, Imitating an Externally Mimetic Being's Desire for Externality</i> .....	109
4.5.8 <i>John 6:30-33 – The exegetical starting point for Jesus' Passover Midrash</i> .....	109
4.5.9 <i>John 6:34-40 – A Son of Man and Son of God as Metaphysical Food and Drink</i> .....	110
4.5.10 <i>John 6:41-50 – Metaphysical Death, Metaphysical Life</i> .....	111
4.5.11 <i>John 6:51-52 – The Internal Mimetic Treatment of a Son of Man by Subjects of the Judean, Galilean and Roman Cosmoi</i> .....	112
4.5.12 <i>John 6:53 – Articulation of the Choice between the Two Types of Mimesis, by Subverting the Consumption Metaphor for Violence (Reflection Narrative)</i> .....	113

4.5.13 <i>John 6:54-58 – Voluntary External Mimesis, the Way of Life in Terms of the Subverted Consumption Metaphor</i> .....	115
4.5.14 <i>John 6:59 –Passover Midrashic Homily in the Synagogue at Capernaum</i> .....	115
4.5.15 <i>John 6:60-63 – Scandal</i> .....	116
4.5.16 <i>John 6:64-71 – The Many Reject Their Own ‘Flesh and Blood’</i> .....	117
4.6 Conclusions .....	118
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusions</b> .....	<b>120</b>
5.1 Overall Analysis and Integration of the Research and Conclusions in Light of Current Research in the Field .....	120
5.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Approach and the Findings.....	125
5.3 Significance and Contribution of the Findings, as well as Potential Applications .....	128
5.4 Possible Future Research Directions in the Field, Drawing on the Work of the Thesis	130
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>131</b>
<b>Appendix A – the Passover Midrash of John 6:31-59 (NRSV)</b> .....	<b>137</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1</b>	<b>Mimetic Rivalry between agents of Opposing Logics.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Table 2</b>	<b>Voluntary External Mimesis.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Table 3</b>	<b>The Traditional Combat Myth and Internal Mimesis.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Table 4</b>	<b>Scandal in the Scriptures.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Table 5</b>	<b>The Consumption Metaphor in the Scriptures .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Table 6</b>	<b>The Scapegoat Lens (Reflection Narrative) on the Sacrificial Combat Myth ...</b>	<b>100</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1	Triangle of Desire: External Mimesis .....	16
Figure 2	Triangle of Desire: Internal Mimesis .....	17

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Dietmar Neufeld for his depth of insight, great patience and generous flexibility. Much gratitude also to the committee members: Drs. Dietmar Neufeld, Robert Cousland, Gregg Gardner, and Daphna Arbel.

Much thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for providing funding for this thesis, as well as to the CNERS Department for their generous support.

Thanks to my fellow graduate students, you know who you are, for offering yourselves as ‘sounding-boards’ to help me disentangle my thoughts.

And most importantly, my enduring gratitude goes to my dear wife for unflagging support and encouragement of this work, and the many sacrifices she has made for my academic pursuits. I am also very grateful to our three dear children for patience with dad’s studies. Hopefully one day they will understand why I did it. Sincere thanks also to my father and mother for constant support and encouragement, as well as for serving as dialogue partners. I also thank my brother and sister for their support and dialogue. If this thesis is of any insight or use, it is due in great measure to the support and learning I have received from my family.

~

*For the children of Adam and Eve dwelling in the grave of internal mimetic desire that is cosmos versus chaos. And for the awakening that calls one forth from this death:*

Genesis 4:7-10:

וַאֲמַם־תִּיטִיבִשְׂאֵת נֹאֵם אֶת־יִטִּיב לַפֶּתַח חֹטְאֵת רִבְזָן לִי תִשְׁקֹחַ וְנָתַתְּ הַתֵּמָשׁ לִי־פֶ: וְאָמַר קִינָא־לִהֲקַל אֲחִיו וַיְהִי בִּהְיוֹתָ מִבְּשָׁךְ הַ וְקָם קִינָא־לִהֲקַל אֲחִיו וַיְהִי גֵהוּ: וְאָמַר יְהוָה אֶל־קִין אֵי הֶקְבֵּל אָחִי וְאָמַר אִידַעְתִּי הִעֲמִיר אָחִי אָבִי: וְאָמַר מִהֲעֵשִׂיתָ קָלִיד־מִי אָחִי צַעֲקִים לִמְוִהֶאֱדָמָה:

Numbers 11:33-34:

הַבָּשָׂר עָדְנוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם מִיכָּרַת וְאָף יְהוָה חָרָה בָּכֶם וַיִּפֹּקֶה יְהוָה בְּעַם מִמֶּהָרָה בְּהַ מֵאָ: וַיִּקָּר אֶת־שְׁמֵהֶם לָקֹם הָהוּא קָבָלְתָּהּ אֲוֶה כִּי־שָׁם קָבָר וְאֶת־הָעֶסֶת מֵתָ אוֹיִם:

Ezekiel 37:11-14:

וְאָמַר אֶל־בְּנוֹאֲדָם הָעֲצָמֹת הָאֵלֶּה כָּל־בְּיֹתֶשֶׁךְ אֵלֶּהָ הִנֵּה אֲמַר יָם יָבֹשׁוּ עֲצָמֹת יִבְנוּ וְאָבְדַתְּ הַתְּקֹנֹת נֹו נִגְדָה נֹו לְנוֹ: לָכֵן הִנֵּבֵאֲמַר תָּאֵלִיָּהֶם פִּה־אָמַר אֲתִי יְהוָה הִנֵּה אֲנִי פִתַּח אֶת־קְבֹוֹת יְכֻסְיָהֶם וְעֵלִיתִי יָאֵת כְּסִמְךָ קְבֹוֹת יְכֻסְיָ עִמְיָהֶבֶאֱת יָאֵת כְּסִמְךָ ל־אֲדָמַתְשָׁךְ אֵלִ: וְדַעְתָּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּפִתְחֵי יָאֵת־קְבֹוֹת יְכֻסְיָהֶם וְעֵלִיתִי יָאֵת כְּסִמְךָ קְבֹוֹת יְכֻסְיָ עִמְיָ: וְנָתַתִּי רוּחִי בְכֶם וְחַיִּיתֶם וְהִנֵּחַתִּי יָאֵת כְּסִמְךָ ל־אֲדָמַתְשָׁךְ מֵתָ כְּסִמְךָ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּרַת יִעֲשֶׂשׁ יִתִּי נֶאֱמַר־יְהוָה:

Habakkuk 2:4-5a:

הִנֵּה עֹפֶלֶה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל נִפְשׁ פִּנְצִדִּיק בָּא מוֹנֵחַ יִחְיֶה: וְאָף כִּי־הִיָּין פִּגְדָה גָּבַר יְהִיר אֶת־יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוָה שְׁוֹדֵה־חַיִּיב כִּשְׁאֵל נִפְשׁ וְהוֹאֲכֵמוֹת אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

John 5:24-25/28-29:

Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν. ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ὅτε οἱ νεκροὶ ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀκούσαντες ζήσουσιν. μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα ἐν ἣ πάντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκπορεύσονται οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς, οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως.

1 John 3:12a/14:

οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ.

~

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem and a Proposed Solution

The problem facing readers of John 6 has long been how to understand verse 53:<sup>1</sup> “So Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you’” (NRSV). This small verse and the context in which it resides present a number of problems. Up until this verse – or rather, until verse 51c that introduces this verse – it is fairly easy for the hearer and reader to assume that this midrashic homily<sup>2</sup> of Jesus serving as a Passover Haggadah (Brown AB29 1966, 290), begun in verse 31 and based on Exodus 16:4/15<sup>3</sup> and used to explain the initial image proposed by Jesus in 6:27 (Kilmartin 1965, 116), concerns in and through whom the ‘bread of life’ is found. It is quite apparent that, in keeping with the program of this Gospel outlined in its Prologue (John 1:17), Jesus is contrasting what he offers with what many of his contemporaries suppose that Moses offered (John 6:32). Yet both offer a type of life via the word of God (identified as *two ways*),<sup>4</sup> and therefore it at first seems safe to assume that the life that Jesus offers is gained by reception of a sapiential teaching that Jesus asserts is found in and through himself. But John 6:53, the heart of verses 51-58 that constitute the final section of this midrash, clearly upsets the sapiential assumption by introducing language of a violent consumption of the Son of Man. How is this apparent incongruity to be accounted for?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Much of Johannine scholarship regards this verse as the *crux interpretum* of John 6, and a central conundrum to be resolved for the Gospel entirely, as it stands at the ‘grand central station’ of the Gospel according to John (Anderson 1997, 1). Scholars who have identified this problem include: Brown 1966, AB29, 272; Barrett 1982, 43; Koester 1990, 419; Vassiliadis 1996, para. 20; Harrill 2008, 133.

<sup>2</sup> Borgen’s study has demonstrated that, “John 6:31-58 [is a] midrashic exegesis within the framework of a homiletic pattern common to Judaism and the early Church” (1981, 55). He explains, “... the same homiletic pattern is found in Philo, John, Paul and Palestinian midrash. ... this homiletic pattern was commonly used in Judaism and the early Church both within and outside Palestine in the first century of the Christian era” (1981, 54). Borgen provides all aspects of the pattern on page 51. See Appendix A of this thesis for a complete English translation of John 6:31-59 (NRSV).

<sup>3</sup> Borgen 1959, 1963, 1981; Kilmartin 1965; Brown 1966 AB29; Dunn 1971; and others. Kilmartin (1965, 100) and others note that the quotation does not seem to be a quotation, but a paraphrase of a statement found in several places throughout Tanakh (also Psalm 78:24 and Neh. 9:15. Extra-Tanakh: WisSol 16:20-21).

<sup>4</sup> The contrast between two ways to gain life – two kinds of food/bread, one that gives temporary/half/non-life (living-death) and another that gives true/ever-life – has been well recognized as a central, if not *the* central topos of John 6. An example is in Anderson 1997, 200. This theme is not unique to John 6, nor to this Gospel. It occurs in other NT works, and is a continuation of a Hebrew (practical) Wisdom theme, e.g. Proverbs 9. In fact, it occurs throughout the Hebrew Bible in various forms, I would suggest.

<sup>5</sup> Note that redaction – popularized as an explanation of the composition of this passage by Bultmann especially (1971) – was a common solution, but is now increasingly discounted (e.g. Borgen 1981, 58; Dunn 1971, 329-30; Culpepper 1997, 253).

The problem posed by John 6:53 is how to reconcile the distinctly sapiential run-up to verses 51-58 and the undeniably cannibalistic or eucharistic<sup>6</sup> content of this last section, especially the unavoidably direct verse 53. Until John 6:53's intended meaning is satisfactorily determined, the meaning and purpose of the entire midrash (verses 31-58), and by extension chapter 6 as a whole, remains unclear.

I suggest the solution to this problem may be found by exploring the background to the language of John 6:53, working back through its alluded-to antecedents.<sup>7</sup> As it contains cannibalistic language denoting sanctioned violence enabling life via sacrifice of the Other (e.g. Léon-Dufour 1987, 269; Schnelle 1992, 204),<sup>8</sup> René Girard's anthropology of violence and religion will serve as a guide on this exploration.<sup>9</sup> This method, hopefully resolving the problem of John 6:53, enables a reading of this passage that reconciles the seemingly contradictory sapiential and eucharistic topoi, enabling an understanding of the intended coherent meaning of Jesus' midrash according to *John* in chapter 6.

A number of interpretive currents regarding John 6:53 have taken form over the years. I will dialogue with representative works of four dominant trends: eucharistic, sapiential, mixed eucharistic-sapiential, and sociolinguistic.<sup>10</sup> Principle sources consulted for identifying these four main readings are recent surveys of scholarship-to-date on John 6:51-58 by Raymond E. Brown (1966), Craig R. Koester (1990), Petros Vassiliadis (1996), and R. Alan Culpepper (1997). Dialogue partners for the particular currents will be restricted to notable representatives.<sup>11</sup> Raymond E. Brown supports a eucharistic reading of John 6:51-58 involving

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<sup>6</sup> The cannibalistic connotation of John 6:53 relates to the eucharistic reading in that the assignment of either term to the verse supposes the view that the ingestion of the person is done for the appropriation of improved life of some kind and in some manner. The verse clearly states as much.

<sup>7</sup> C.K. Barrett notes that the Synoptics' Last Supper passages have 'son of Man' in close proximity (1982, 45). The present study will investigate whether there is a shared antecedent in the Jewish authoritative literary tradition (Mainly the Hebrew Bible, in order to limit this thesis, among other reasons).

<sup>8</sup> Scholars who recognize the eucharistic and/or life-giving sacrifice as referred to in John 6:53, also view the life gained as implicitly the same 'eternal life' Jesus has been describing throughout his midrash. I will assert, however, that in Jesus' description of two ways of gaining life, is also a distinction between 'life' and 'eternal life'. The first is implicitly temporary (John 6:27, 49-50, 58), and not the true life everlasting that Jesus is offering. Verses 27 and 58 are ultimately the book-ends of Jesus' teaching on the bread of life in chapter 6, and they both assert this essential contrast.

<sup>9</sup> The details of Girard's anthropology are given in the methodology in chapter 2.

<sup>10</sup> Each of these currents goes by various names. Other names for each of these broad currents include: 1) for eucharistic: sacramental, magical, mystery, realistic, literal; 2) for sapiential: spiritual, christological, metaphorical, allegorical, ethical, wisdom; 3) for the mixed reading: redaction, successive, harmonized, simultaneous, evolution; 4) for sociolinguistic: factionalism, anti-language, Sondersprache, grammar of hate/violence, hate/violent language, anti-Judaic.

<sup>11</sup> Inclusion of all scholarship is impossible here.

the redaction of this section (1966 AB29, 281-94). Hugo Odeberg offers a sapiential reading of this section of the midrash (1974, 235-69). Xavier Léon-Dufour contends that both the sapiential and sacramental aspects run in equal measure throughout John 6:51-58 (1982, 248-77). More recently, J. Albert Harrill has asserted that John 6:51-58 ought to be read as not mainly concerned with these traditionally assigned meanings that seem to have left the problem unresolved, but rather as transvalued invective for a growing Jewish faction's boundary formation (2008, 156). The first three scholars have been selected for dialogue here because they are regularly noted by scholarship as champions of their respective readings.<sup>12</sup> The last scholar mentioned has been included because his recent article on the matter is to my knowledge the most focused and thorough reading of this passage from a sociolinguistic perspective.<sup>13</sup>

Research will proceed by reiterating the differing representative views on interpretation of this verse outlined above. Three research chapters follow this review. The next addresses matters of methodology. Thereafter I turn to exploration of the biblical background to John 6:53, its broad (intra) socio-literary context.<sup>14</sup> With the background thoroughly formed, I engage John 6:53 in its immediate socio-literary context as described in *John's*<sup>15</sup> narrative, from the perspective of René Girard's anthropology.<sup>16</sup> Conclusions follow, situating my reading amid the readings reviewed here. It may be useful to note that, if my approach to the text was to be categorized in terms of the established types of biblical criticism, it would most likely fall under the heading of narratology.

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<sup>12</sup> As per the surveys listed and other scholarship on John 6.

<sup>13</sup> Other notable proximal readings include Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh's Commentary (1998) and Adele Reinhartz's broader treatment in *Violence in the New Testament* (2005).

<sup>14</sup> By 'socio-literary' I mean the social world described in the selected texts with special regard to the descriptions of the psycho-social interactions of the characters.

<sup>15</sup> It is cumbersome to continually qualify authorship of this Gospel, since none has been identified with greater certainty than that held by tradition. I therefore will follow Borgen's method of referring to 'John' when speaking of both the book and the writer, without any assumptions implied as to the author's actual identity (Borgen 1981, 1).

<sup>16</sup> Anthropology in the literal sense of a discourse on the nature of humanity.

## 1.2 Review of Four Dominant Interpretive Currents

### 1.2.1 *The Eucharistic Reading*<sup>17</sup>

Raymond E. Brown asserts that John 6:51-58 is exclusively eucharistic in content, separate from the sapiential material that precedes it in verses 31-50 (1966 AB29, 284). He insists that Jesus' words of eating and drinking in this passage can in no way be metaphorical for receiving his revelatory message (1966 AB29, 284). Brown engages in a brief but insightful review of iterations of similar language of devouring in the Hebrew Bible, but ultimately concludes that it cannot possibly be the background to Jesus' words here, and therefore cannot possibly be the road to the solution to our present conundrum:

'To eat someone's flesh' appears in the Bible as a metaphor for hostile action (Ps xxvii 2; Zech xi 9). In fact, in the Aramaic tradition transmitted through the Syriac, the 'eater of flesh' is the title of the devil, the slanderer and adversary par excellence. The drinking of blood was looked on as a horrendous thing forbidden by God's law (Gen ix 4; Lev iii 17; Deut xii 23; Acts xv 20). Its transferred, symbolic meaning was that of brutal slaughter (Jer xlvii 10). In Ezekiel's vision of apocalyptic carnage (xxxix 17), he invites the scavenging birds to come to the feast: 'You shall eat flesh and drink blood.' Thus, if Jesus' words in vi 53 are to have a favorable meaning, they must refer to the Eucharist. They simply reproduce the words we hear in the Synoptic account of the institution of the Eucharist (Matt xxvi 26-28): 'Take, *eat*; this is *my body*; ... *drink* ... this is *my blood*.' (1966 AB29, 284-5)<sup>18</sup>

Certainly the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper, as well as Pauline material on this rite, share a common background with John 6:51-58 (Matt 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1 Cor. 11).<sup>19</sup> But by deferring interpretation of this passage to the more clearly (and more 'classically understood')

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<sup>17</sup> Craig R. Koester (1990) notes other clearly sacramental ('eucharistic') readings of John 6:53. It is present in the writing of Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444), as well as a homily of John Chrysostom (d. 407) (Koester 1990, 419-37). In the Middle Ages, Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1340) expressed a clearly sacramental reading (he also espoused a form of transubstantiation, an extremely literal sacramental reading which is not directly related to this study). Later, Lutherans including George Calixtus (d. 1656) and Johann Albrecht Bengels (d. 1752) continued the tradition of interpreting John 6 sacramentally, which was in opposition to Luther's own view. Hermann Olshausen (d. 1839) also insisted that the chapter was the Johannine foundation of the sacrament. Nineteenth and twentieth century scholarship, with the rise of historical-critical scholarship as well as the Religionsgeschichte Schule, saw the continuation of this strain of interpretation with notions of redaction (though this implies that these scholars supported a mixed view, which was in fact the trend) in addition to literal readings of cultic meals in hellenistic mystery cults. Contemporary scholars who may be categorized as holding this literal (sacramental/eucharistic) position include (in no particular order) Loisy, Tobac, Buzy, Cullman, Van den Bussche, Bonsirven, among others (this list is by no means exhaustive).

<sup>18</sup> One is left wondering whether the desire for a 'favorable meaning' - Brown's stated reason for rejecting the violent background he identified - is sufficient justification for rejecting that avenue of explanation.

<sup>19</sup> This view has been espoused by Borgen (1981, 91-2), Barrett (1982, 45), and others. *Didache* is also noted by Barrett as sharing background.

eucharistic accounts in the New Testament, Brown side-steps assignment of any clear meaning to *John*'s supposed eucharistic variant.

Brown concludes that verses 51-58 are redacted by a later Johannine editor, although he notes that Peder Borgen and others have a strong argument for viewing the entire midrash as a compositional unit (1966 AB29, 294).<sup>20</sup> The redactional solution has been all but ruled out, in fact (Culpepper 1997, 253). In light of the strong argument for narrative unity, a solution to how the sapiential and eucharistic units co-exist in this passage, and the meaning of that unity, must be found.

### 1.2.2 *The Sapiential Reading*<sup>21</sup>

Hugo Odeberg begins his discussion of John chapter 6 by affirming the general consensus as to the central problem posed by this portion of *John*, as I described it above.

Odeberg writes:

The difficulty of the present discourse may be said to centre in the problem of the relation between the conception of the '*Celestial Food*' (the 'bread from heaven', the 'bread of Life') and the conception of the '*Flesh and blood of the Son of Man*' and since the two conceptions, or complexes of conceptions, dominate each their own sections of the discourse, the said problem is at the same time a question of the literary relation between those sections. (1974, 235)

In addition to reiterating the same essential problem that this thesis has set forth to resolve, Odeberg questions Brown's conclusion that the two aspects identified in the midrash of John 6

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<sup>20</sup> Anderson also argues for the unity of composition of verses 51-58 with what precedes, but from a different tack than that of Borgen (1997, 67, 211).

<sup>21</sup> The purely allegorical reading of this passage of John occurs from very early on. Again, I turn to Koester's survey to frame the beginning of- and continuity of this reading (1990, 419-37). He cites first Clement of Alexandria (d. 211-215) and Origen (d. 254) as sources of the strictly allegorical reading of John 6:31-58. Origen and also later Eusebius (d. 339) conclude that the flesh and blood of Jesus are his words and discourses. This is certainly the beginnings of the sapiential reading. Augustine (d. 430) continues this reading, when he illustrates the opinion that if a passage of scripture seems to condone a 'crime' it must be read figuratively, by means of reference to the passage under analysis here (verse 54 in particular). Augustine affirmed, essentially, the allegorical reading that had preceded him. He made a careful distinction between the sacramental or literal reading and practice of the rite, and the figurative reading and practice of the rite (Later, in debate with Pelagius, Augustine changes his tune, and has therefore been used as a source for both readings by subsequent interpreters) (Koester 1990, 421-22). Augustine did not seem to recognize the critique the eucharistic rite itself was making of human violence as exemplified in the Cross event (this message is consistent with the allusive content of John 6:53, as is argued here). In the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) continued to interpret this passage and the rite of Eucharist spiritually, carefully avoiding the moral problems a literal reading could cause (Koester 1990, 422). Martin Luther (d. 1546) was adamant that eating and drinking Jesus simply meant believing. John Calvin (d. 1564) too, asserted that this passage does not refer to the Lord's Supper. Luecke (d. 1855) and Tholuck (d. 1877) continued Luther's position on the matter, and the sapiential or non-sacramental reading was also perpetuated among the English with B.F. Westcott (d. 1901). Contemporary scholars who support a sapiential-only reading include Godet, B. Weiss, Bornhaeuser, Odeberg, Schlatter, and Strathmann (among others).

are mutually exclusive. Instead, Odeberg's proposed solution is that there is nothing eucharistic whatsoever about any aspect of John 6, leastways of verses 51-58 (1974, 239). With regard to the meaning of John 6:53, then, Odeberg essentially concludes:

The belief is the acceptance of the teaching of Jesus. The teaching is called 'the celestial bread'. But the teaching is no external doctrine after terrestrial manner. It is itself the everlasting life and spiritual reality brought home to man. And since the spiritual reality is the Son, the teaching may be said to be the Son. "I am the bread!" Eating the celestial bread, thus, is the same as, or the continuation of, the believing. It is the assimilation with, the absorption by the spiritual organism of, the Divine Life, of the great spiritual organism: 'the Son'. (1974, 260)

Odeberg continues by accounting for a number of phrases that could be raised to refute his reading. He asserts that *John* is intent to make clear that the 'spiritual organism' is as real as the 'earthly organism,' and thus uses the phrase 'flesh and blood' to indicate as much (John 6:53). He then qualifies a second time that, in order to make clear that it is the spiritual reality and not the earthly reality that is meant by the term 'flesh and blood', *John* adds that it is the spirit that gives life, not the flesh (John 6:63). In this way Odeberg formulates a coherent reading that would exclude any reference to the sacrament and its implications in John 6:51-58.

Odeberg's position, that John 6:51-58 is sapiential rather than sacramental, is thoroughly argued. At very least, Odeberg's analysis confirms that the passage contains this salvific sapiential aspect.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Odeberg does not appear, however, to indicate whether this also rules out proleptic reference to the Cross scene, though this aspect is normally tied to a eucharistic reading. It appears to be only the sacrament that he deftly argues to be unsupported in this passage.

### 1.2.3 Mixed Eucharistic-Sapiential Reading<sup>23</sup>

Xavier Léon-Dufour offers a solution to the stand-off between the two seemingly irreconcilable aspects of this passage. He wisely suggests that what many readers wish the term ‘sacramental’ to denote may not be an accurate conception of the intended meaning of this idea for the writer(s) of John’s Gospel (1987, 249). Léon-Dufour considers it patent that, whatever the intents and emphases, “John was familiar with the early Church’s sacramental practice of baptism and the Lord’s Supper; it is therefore possible that this or that episode or statement of Jesus was deliberately chosen in order to call these sacraments to mind” (1987, 249). The intent to call the institution to mind, however, does not necessarily discount Johannine opposition to the classical conception of the Eucharist.<sup>24</sup>

Léon-Dufour summarizes the way he sees the eucharistic and sapiential aspects of John 6 as interdependent:

... Chapter 6 is a eucharistic catechesis only in light of the discourse of Jesus of Nazareth on the Bread of Life. This discourse is a key for the interpretation of the fourth gospel as a whole, since it has to do with the mystery of the Lord’s presence. (1987, 252)

My hypothesis... claims that the text of the discourse can be read as sacramental in its entirety and as spiritualistic in its entirety. If there are two successive interpretations, the succession is not in the text when we move from the first part to the second, but in the mind of the reader.<sup>25</sup> (1987, 266)

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<sup>23</sup> Scholarship that has espoused a mixed reading of the sort that views verses 51-58 as a redaction of exclusively eucharistic content, and also views what precedes verse 51 as exclusively sapiential, includes Wellhausen, Lagrange, E. Schweizer, Menoud, Mollat, Mussner, Bultmann, Bornkamm, Lohse, and implicitly Dodd and Barrett (as per Brown and Vassiliadis). Schweizer, Menoud and Mollat also fall under the banner of the successive reading. Perry’s ‘evolution’ reading likely falls into the more general category of successive reading (as defined by Brown AB 29 1966, 272). Léon-Dufour and Schuermann read both the sapiential and the eucharistic aspects as running throughout the passage, as does Jeremias in a different form than they in which a redaction is still supported (but is considered of little moment). To my knowledge, however, the complete integration supposed by the last three scholars mentioned, did not result in a coherent explanation for *how* the two aspects coordinate one meaning. Brown and Feuillet espouse a rather complex arrangement, where verses 31-50 are more sapiential than sacramental, and verses 51-58 are both redacted and exclusively sacramental. Contemporary scholars who espouse a mixed reading of a kind while rejecting redaction include Menken, Anderson, Painter, Kysar and Culpepper (Culpepper 1997, 253). A more recent commentary is likely to be included in this last group, that by Herman Waetjen. Waetjen proposes that John 6:51-58 denotes a second (new) Passover meal, and only secondarily the Eucharist, if at all (2005, 213-14). He mainly expresses a sapiential reading (2005, 204-22). The last several scholars mentioned seem to represent the hermeneutic that most closely approaches my own, and yet a number of critical elements are outstanding.

<sup>24</sup> The classical conception is apparently defended by Brown. For example, see the quote of his reading on p. 3. Léon-Dufour also makes the significant insight that *John* was likely intent to defend the early Christian concept of Eucharist from slipping into the perspective of many of the sacrificial mystery-cult rites of Greco-Roman traditions round about: “[John] must ward off the danger of magical thinking that may well threaten sacramental practice in a Hellenistic environment” (1987, 251). This anti-magical concern is likely related to defense against slipping into gnostic dualism and/or Docetism, which have been widely recognized as Johannine concerns (Brown 1966 AB29, lxxvi-lxxvii; Borgen 1981, 148; Koester 1990, 427; Udo Schnelle 1992, 204-5; Anderson 1997, 218).

<sup>25</sup> This conclusion is supported by Borgen’s analysis that concludes: a midrashic unity (1981, 45).

For Léon-Dufour, *John* provides in chapter 6 an interpretation of what the sacrament of the Lord's Table is intended to convey to the participant. The actual rite is not the concern, but how the rite is to be understood as expressing the notion of how a person abides with- and partakes of the bread of life.

Before reiterating Léon-Dufour's interpretation of John 6:53 itself, his understanding of the symbolic nature of this Gospel needs to be stated. Léon-Dufour recognizes that *John* uses symbolism in the literal sense of the term as two conceptions thrown together dialectically (1987, 261-66).<sup>26</sup> He writes:

The language of the evangelist is intended to be doubly ambivalent (this is one aspect of his genius): it is meant to reflect, *at one and the same time*, the Jewish milieu in which Jesus lives and the Christian milieu which enlightens John in his interpretation of the past. These different milieus, which overlap in the text, make it possible for *one and the same* reality to have a twofold symbolic relationship... The same referent can thus be the basis of two interpretations, and the symbolism at work can be twofold. (Léon-Dufour 1987, 263)

He suggests that this dual-aspect of *John* is in large part the cause of the two main interpretive traditions of John 6. Readers feel compelled to choose one or the other, despite the clear presence of both. Léon-Dufour surmises then:

John's purpose in fact is not to suggest *two* possible interpretations of the words and actions of Jesus, one 'historical,' the other post-paschal. His purpose is quite different: to lead his readers to a recognition of the essential relation *linking* the Jesus of the past to the Lord of glory: 'These things have been written down so that you may believe that Jesus the *messiah* is the *Son of God* and that by believing you may have life in his name' (Jn 20:31). (1987, 264)

When Léon-Dufour comes to dealing with John 6:53 in particular, and the passage of verses 51-58, he seems to return to a sacramental reading, though he insists it need not be read as the classical sacrament, but as "faith in the saving value of [Jesus'] death" (1987, 271). It is not clear to me how this differs from the mystery sacrament, which ultimately presupposes that the Father intended the Son to suffer a violent death to save the world, which presumption takes us into the realm of the sacrificial theology of the Cross and its sacrament of remembrance.<sup>27</sup> Léon-

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<sup>26</sup> This aspect of John is critical to the method I espouse below, which regards John as articulating via his symbolic approach a polemic between two opposing worldviews regarding human violence. Both sides of the polemic can be – and I would say are – present in a single statement. It remains to the reader to choose between them. I view this choice as part of what Paul N. Anderson has called "the Johannine exhortation of the two ways" (1997, 210). Therefore, John 6:53 might best be described in Girardian terms as "... a redemptive return to the pattern of myth, as well as its overcoming (Girard 2001, 31).

<sup>27</sup> I will assert that, as René Girard holds, the death of Jesus is not 'intended' as a saving sacrifice for the preservation of the world, though Jesus does suffer in this capacity as a scapegoat selected by the rulers of the Jerusalem cosmos. That is, the cosmos intends his death to serve such a purpose, but Jesus himself dies for another

Dufour concludes his reading of John 6:51-58, then, by stating that eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the Son of Man need not be read sacramentally, but is certainly to be understood sacrificially (1987, 268-70). He contends that this is but one side of *John*'s ambivalent symbolism here, however, and that the eating and drinking also denotes metaphorical consumption of the life-giving word of God, the bread of Heaven.<sup>28</sup>

#### **1.2.4 The Sociolinguistic Reading<sup>29</sup>**

J. Albert Harrill views the preoccupation with the question "eucharistic or not" as a dead end toward deciphering the meaning of this passage. He writes, "The exegetical debate on John 6 goes, therefore, back and forth rehashing old proposals without a resolution in sight" (Harrill 2008, 134). In response, Harrill offers a reading of John 6:52-66 from the perspective of factionalism as developed in studies of Greco-Roman societal unrest, what Harrill terms the "polemics of factionalism" (2008, 136). He focuses in on the violent language of John 6:51-58, recognizing it as the key to the decisive interpretation of this passage that is generally recognized to remain lacking (2008, 135). He writes, "The offense of the saying [in 6:53-56, presumably] triggers the decision by the Jews to kill Jesus (cf. 7:1; 8:18) and the desertion of 'many disciples' (6:66)" (Harrill 2008, 135).<sup>30</sup>

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purpose, which is precisely the revealing of the evil of the cosmos' violent purpose and practice. It is a chiasmus of meaning, therefore, expressed in a single phrase (John 6:53).

The term 'sacrifice' is never used in the Gospels to describe the nature of Jesus' crucifixion. Though, as John 6:51 indicates, Jesus will be sacrificed by the world in order to save itself. That this is the way the reader should understand Jesus' execution will hopefully become clearer as this paper progresses.

<sup>28</sup> My reading agrees with the idea of ambivalent symbolism, but rather than being both sacrificial and sapiential, it is instead anti-sacrificial by means of its practical salvific wisdom.

<sup>29</sup> Three significant examples of what may be categorized as the sociolinguistic approach to the problem of John 6:53 include a commentary on John's Gospel by Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh (1998), a chapter in *Violence in the New Testament* by Adele Reinhartz (2005), and an article by J. Albert Harrill (2008).

<sup>30</sup> Malina and Rohrbaugh have taken a similar view, asserting that Jesus' statement in John 6:53 is used to incite anger in the leadership, due to the language suggesting deliberate contravention of Jewish dietary laws, in order to sow a schism (1998, 135-6).

Harrill reads the cannibalistic language on the tongue of Jesus as not originating with Jesus or *John*, but with rival factions opposed to the Jesus Movement (and the Johannine community).<sup>31</sup> He asserts that, like the Cynics (Harrill 2008, 154), the Jesus Movement has made a negative accusation positive (transvaluation) for boundary formation of their community, faction, or cosmos (Harrill 2008, 155, 157). Harrill notes that invective of cannibalism is regularly used to ‘Other’ social and political opponents in the ancient Mediterranean world. He therefore suggests that what we read in John 6 is the same phenomenon:

The Jesus-inspired division of a Jewish community may have been a local crisis, but the Gospel represents it in totalized, cosmic terms, a theme that fundamentally belongs to the ancient literary imagination of anthropophagy and which may very likely have used ritual as a point of Otherness. The polemics of cannibalism functioned to alienate dissidents outside the civilized (orderly) world (οἰκουμένη, κόσμος). In John, the alienation’s cosmic dimensions include also accusations of demonology (10:20). Interestingly, the Johannine Jesus fires this cosmic representation of Otherness back upon “the Jews” themselves (8:44-49), which turns the tables on what we might call hate language. *We should interpret the cannibalistic language in John 6:52-66 in the social context of this firing back and forth of invective between the synagogue authorities and the sectarian Johannine community.* (2008, 156; italics mine)<sup>32</sup>

Harrill, then, reads John 6:53 as not original to the historical account, as not genuinely a part of the revelation Jesus is articulating in his midrash in John 6, and as not representing real violence, which the Gospel as a whole contains as a central topos of the narrative. Rather than being a part of the enfleshed word of God’s revelatory and salvific message for humankind, John 6:53-56 is an “...anthropophagic saying of the Johannine Jesus function[ing] in an anti-missionary way, to steer outsiders away from the community and to encourage unworthy insiders to leave” (Harrill 2008, 157).

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<sup>31</sup> Harrill espouses the view that John’s Gospel is written in two layers of drama: 1) the ministry of Jesus and 2) the Johannine community, with much of the content tailored to address issues in the latter community (Harrill 2008, 150). This reading is elaborated by J. Louis Martyn (2003, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). A number of scholars have concurred with and qualified Martyn’s reading, which is among a number of similar approaches to the Gospels in that a divide is made between an account of a historical Jesus, in which there was no rivalrous escalation and violent end, and a later redaction that inserted these things. In the case of Martyn’s proposal – and supported by Harrill – the violence is inserted as a projection of factionalism in which the Johannine community is engaged, but which is purportedly absent historically.

<sup>32</sup> Harrill admits implicitly that there is no evidence in the text to suggest that the supposed invective identified in John 6:53-56 originated with the Jewish authorities, or therefrom, that Jesus and his movement transvalued the accusation’s negative denotation. Harrill’s argument, lacking any real evidence from John’s Gospel, remains conjectural (2008, 154-55).

### 1.3 Conclusion

It is necessary to identify a number of aspects of John 6:51-58 and its literary context that did not receive adequate attention from the readings just summarized in my review of representative works, but that are nevertheless significant aspects that must be recognized in order to develop a decisive reading of this passage. Perhaps the most obvious topos of chapter 6 that is regularly identified,<sup>33</sup> but to my mind never adequately explained as to how it works and what it means, is the contrast between two types of food (or bread versus flesh), two ways of eating, two types of life – one temporary and one everlasting.<sup>34</sup> Does John 6:51-58 have more to say about this essential contrast? The antecedent(s) of the patently allusive ‘bread of heaven’ is always thoroughly considered and adequately identified, but strangely the antecedent(s) of the equally allusive hendiadys ‘flesh and blood’ paired with ‘son of man’ is not satisfactorily determined. Whence do these paired terms originate, and what does that say about their intended meaning? And significantly, how does that origin and meaning bear upon the recognized relationship of John 6:53 to the mounting rivalry and violence in the Gospel of John?

Harrill’s sociolinguistic reading proposes a solution to this question by means of adopting the “two-level drama” reading of John as well as ancient Mediterranean factionalism and its use of invective of cannibalism. This solution, however, remains conjectural without clear supporting evidence in the Gospel itself (Harrill 2008, 154-5). The three traditional approaches reviewed either steer away from the violence in the text, or as in the case of Léon-Dufour, attribute it to the salvific sacrifice of the Son for the life of the world (cosmos). Léon-Dufour’s sacrificial reading of Jesus’ death, proleptically described in John 6:51-58, only raises more questions as to the origin of the violence that ultimately takes Jesus’ life. Does the Gospel actually portray the violence as intended by the Father of Jesus? Or does it instead portray that violence as humanity’s?

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<sup>33</sup> A significant study of the Manna Tradition that recognizes the two ways in terms of ambivalent food, one that brings life and another that brings death, is Bruce J. Malina’s dissertation, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition* (1968). Another study of this tradition that recognizes the essential contrast but does not explain its meaning, is F.-K. Wong’s dissertation “Manna Revisited” (1998; unpublished).

<sup>34</sup> As mentioned, Paul N. Anderson is one of a number of scholars who identify this topos, which Anderson calls “the exhortation of the two ways,” and views it as roughly equivalent to a similar contrast in the *Didache* (1997, 200). Brown, Odeberg, Léon-Dufour and Harrill all recognise this obvious central theme of John 6 as well, in some fashion or another. Bruce J. Malina, in his PhD dissertation on the Palestinian manna tradition published by Brill, also notes this essential dichotomy in John 6: the ‘bread of death’ and the ‘bread of life’ (1968, 105).

In order to understand John 6:53 in its literary and social contexts the topos of sacred (sanctioned) violence should be considered as an historical reality (not simply invective) described in *John*, and a psycho-social phenomenon with real implications for the interpretation of this passage. The social context described in John's Gospel has Jesus being hunted by the religio-political leaders (John 5:16) who have begun to view him as a rival for the affections of the people (John 7:25-52). The literary context of John 6:53 has two striking features that are important to bear in mind for the next chapter: 1) ongoing use of interpersonal (mutual abiding) language (e.g. 6:56-7), and 2) use of language alluding to sacred violence, which is recognized (though not adequately explained) as allusion to the Hebrew Bible (e.g. 6:51-4). This language occurs paired with the term 'son of man' in 6:53, which is considered to be closely associated with notions of an eschatological banquet (Barrett 1982, 45-9), which is a shared background for all the eucharistic passages of the New Testament. This last biblical topos helps guide the exploration of antecedents in the Hebrew Bible, which in turn will aid in narrowing down Jesus' intended meaning in John 6:53.<sup>35</sup> A 'scientific' reading of the violence of John 6:53 that accounts for the events of the complete narrative and its alluded-to foundational texts is needed.

The approach that I would suggest accomplishes what is needed takes into account three aspects, which form the three parts of the methodology I propose in the next chapter. The three elements are: 1) the mytho-sacrificial (combat myth; for a definition and illustration see table 3) Logos articulated in John 6:53 that governs the participants in the events of the narrative,<sup>36</sup> 2) the anti-sacrificial Hebrew reflection narrative (for a definition see section 3.4)<sup>37</sup> that is redeployed in the midrash of John 6:31-58, and both of these 3) viewed through Girard's scapegoat lens that enables the interplay of the two types of Logos<sup>38</sup> to be perceived and understood.

Three research chapters follow. Chapter two includes René Girard's theory and selective evidence for it, and a description of the two Types of Logos in terms of the 'braided'

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<sup>35</sup> I say 'Jesus' intended meaning' because, even if the reader endorses the view of two Jesuses and therefore the idea that much of the Gospel is not historical, this particular verse would be exempt from being cancelled from the historical record even by the criteria of the two-level drama or historical Jesus readings, since it possesses all the trappings of those readings' criteria for qualifying as a 'saying of Jesus'. Ayers, for example, reflects on how this verse represents a genuine saying of Jesus, and the problems that poses for the notion of a two-level drama (1986, 16-18).

<sup>36</sup> As Léon-Dufour also suggests, I view this verse and a number of others as ambivalent in intended meaning. Therefore, the mytho-sacrificial law (stated in other terms by the High Priest in *John* - 11:47-50, 18:14) is but one of the two potential meanings. However, I do not agree with Léon-dufour as to what the two meanings are. Rather, I view the two meanings as roughly equivalent to Anderson's two ways.

<sup>37</sup> It is this subversive program of Jesus that guides the ambivalence of verses like 6:53, and forms the choice.

<sup>38</sup> Or the two ways – one to temporary life and one to everlasting life. See the methodology in chapter 2.

methodological approach. The third chapter is an exploration of the background to the language of John 6:53 that makes possible the fourth chapter, which is the reading of John 6:53 and its context in light of Girard's mimetic theory. I propose that the two types of Logos are equivalent to the two ways already identified there, though presently lacking clear assignment of origin and an explanation of the ambivalent symbolic dichotomy. Following the research chapters I conclude with a review of what was done here, including a critical evaluation of the work, and a discussion of potential applications of the findings along with avenues for research moving forward.

## Chapter 2: Methodologies

### 2.1 Synopsis

Mimetic theory may be rendered into a narrative sequence of events with six phases, and illustrated with a classic love-triangle that aids in visualizing mimetic reality. This triangle helps anticipate the internal and external triangles of desire identified in the biblical narratives revisited from the purview of mimetic theory in the research chapters, which form the background to John 6. Empirical researchers' recent discoveries in developmental psychology and neuroscience support the assertions of mimetic theory, and these discoveries suggest the possibility of profound complementary insight in the biblical literatures into humanity's mimetic nature and its resultant psycho-social proclivities. René Girard's description of the differences between the two types of mimesis (arising out of social-cognitive mimetic bipolarity), and that dichotomy's complementarity to the biblical contrast of a way of the Lord and a way of sin, is striking. While the Bible speaks of two ways, Girard speaks of two types of Logos.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.2 René Girard's Anthropology of Violence and Religion<sup>40</sup>

In the main, mimetic theory is the identification and scientific articulation of a periodically recurring psycho-social pattern in human groups, a pattern that both begins and ends with the violent expulsion or murder of an individual (or recognizably differentiated lesser group). Groups (or lives) that are founded and maintained by this process, which both begins with and results in sanctioned (sanctified, 'good') violence,<sup>41</sup> are by definition governed by an ordering principle that Girard variously terms the Heraclitean Logos, Logos of violence, and Logos of myth, among others (1987a, 267 and 273). This logic is able to reign and continue to govern a cosmos by keeping its actual nature in the blind spot of its agents and practitioners. Girard asserts that human groups (and individual members) remain in large measure

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<sup>39</sup> Taking his cue from Heraclitus of Ephesus, Girard seems to suggest that 'Logos' may be defined as the underlying principle guiding all human interaction within a given culture, or human group, which may be comprised of two, or two million (see 1987a, 263ff).

<sup>40</sup> Girard develops his monumental theory over half a century and many volumes. See the Works Consulted for a selection.

<sup>41</sup> Girard roughly equates this process with the idea of the 'eternal recurrence/return' and *amor fati* (Nietzsche), which is nothing more than the dark alchemy of sacrifice (1987a, 382).

mythological insofar as they continue to be governed – continue to derive life, order, peace, and transcendence – by means of the Logos of violence.

To be ‘mythological’ is to have one’s violence<sup>42</sup> covered over with self-delusion, by regularly casting responsibility for one’s violence and the social plagues that arise from it onto an Other’s back (or head).<sup>43</sup> Both individuals and groups scapegoat in this way regularly, and their nature is therefore describable by means of a consumption metaphor for violence (in the Bible, sometimes including the metaphor of the Grave, Pit or Tomb). I suggest that these quasi-theoretical (involving symbolism and metaphor to describe metaphysical psycho-social phenomena) images<sup>44</sup> are a part of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures’ preferred repertoire of tools for describing the nature of ‘violent’ or ‘sinful’ humans.<sup>45</sup> Girard has noticed some of these quasi-theoretical images in the Gospels and their complementarity to his mimetic anthropology.<sup>46</sup>

One place to begin a schematic summary of the psycho-social mimetic pattern of events is with René Girard’s rejection of the still-popular Freudian assumption that desire arises out of an autonomous self.<sup>47</sup> This supposed given is a critical buttress of the notion of human individual

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<sup>42</sup> Girard has a very broad definition of the term violence, of which I was reticent initially, but have since come to appreciate as necessary for articulating the sacrificial (of the Other) preference that characterizes the behaviour of internal mimetic humans, and as consistent with the Bible’s use of the term in connection with its ideas of sin (e.g. Gen 4:7-8, Gen 6:11, etc.) and faithlessness (e.g. Hosea 6:7, Malachi 2:10-16, etc.) toward God and neighbour.

<sup>43</sup> This is why the metaphor of the grave is so appropriate for describing an interindividual. Graves are full of corpses of others, and are covered over with earth, such that often people are not even aware that they are walking over them (Girard 2007, 41-42).

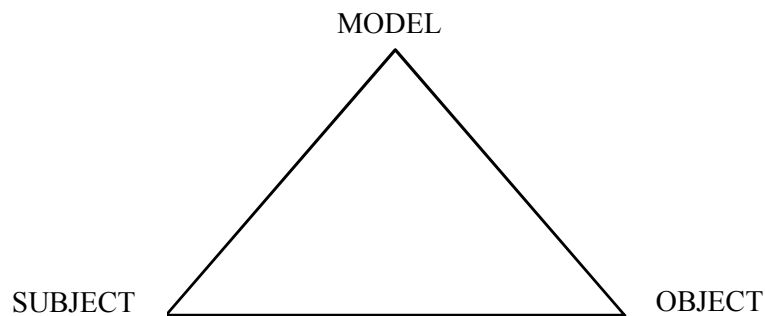
<sup>44</sup> 1) violent consumption – eating flesh and/or drinking blood of an Other, and 2) the grave – tomb, pit, Sheol, the deep waters, etc.

<sup>45</sup> Violent or sinful because the Bible repeatedly ‘equates’ these two terms and ideas, by setting them in synonymous (paradigmatic, or complementary in meaning) parallelism (Berlin 1985, 86-96), among other means (e.g. Gen 6:11, Ezek 28:16, etc.). Girard defines ‘sin,’ stating, “Sin consists in thinking that something good could come from violence” (2010, 106). ‘Humans’ is often literally translatable as ‘sons of Man’ in the Hebrew Bible. I point this out because without recognition of this basic equivalence, a number of biblical passages may become a potential ‘stumbling-block’ to my proposed reading.

<sup>46</sup> Girard has noted the tomb metaphor used by Jesus to describe the nature of the religio-political leaders (e.g. Girard, René. 2007. “The Evangelical Subversion of Myth.” Pages 29-49 in *Politics and Apocalypse*. Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture Series. Edited by Robert Hamerton-Kelly. East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press). I suggest that Jesus has not taken this imagery out of a vacuum, but from the long tradition of related imagery in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>47</sup> Of this critique Girard writes, “...the dearest of all our illusions, [is] the intimate conviction that our desires are really our own, that they are truly original and spontaneous. Far from combatting such an illusion, Freud flattered it enormously when he wrote that the relationship of a person to his desires is really the same as his relationship to his mother” (1978, ix). Girard later suggests, “Real awareness of mimetic desire threatens the flattering delusion we entertain not only about ourselves as individuals but also about the nature and origin of that collective self we call our society” (1978, xii). In the next section, recent empirical evidence that has debunked the idea of the autonomous self is reviewed (Garrels 2006, 52, 69, and throughout this article; Vittorio Gallese in Garrels 2011, pp 88-89). Also, V.S. Ramachandran said in a recent TED talk, “There is no real independent self, aloof from other human beings, inspecting the world, inspecting other people. You are, in fact, connected not just via Facebook and Internet, you’re

imperialism (Girard 2001, 3). Rather than being individuals, Girard asserts that humans, as exceptionally social creatures, are in fact interdividuals (e.g. Oughourlian 1991, x). By this he means that human desire does not arise out of an autonomous self, but that desire is always borrowed (Girard 2001, 2). Because desire is borrowed, or imitated, from a model in a person's environment, Girard calls it mimetic desire.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, a person's metaphysical (mimetic) desire is not in a direct line to the object sought, but rather it goes always through a mediator, and so Girard speaks of triangular desire (see figure 1).



**Figure 1 – Triangle of Desire: External Mimesis**

A triangle of desire (will) is comprised of subject, model, and object. Mimetic desire is distinguished from instinctual desires because it is not concerned with particular objects<sup>49</sup> but with the quality of being (fullness of life) seemingly enjoyed by the person(s) having the object.<sup>50</sup> Mimetic desire is therefore essentially metaphysical desire, and the life or 'being' pursued is also metaphysical, therefore (Girard 2001, 36). Jean-Michel Oughourlian makes this connection plain: "The appropriation of the object only guides one toward the appropriation of the model's being; it symbolizes the desire to appropriate and incorporate his being, his power. With this, we pass from mimetic desire to metaphysical desire" (2010, 62).<sup>51</sup> As long as a subject

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actually quite literally connected by your neurons" ("The Neurons that Shaped Civilization." Filmed Nov. 2009. [http://www.ted.com/talks/vs\\_ramachandran\\_the\\_neurons\\_that\\_shaped\\_civilization.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/vs_ramachandran_the_neurons_that_shaped_civilization.html): 06:19).

<sup>48</sup> Girard qualifies that, by stating that all desire which is not instinctual is mimetic desire (2001, 2).

<sup>49</sup> Though it is often an object (or objectified person ~ prestige) apparently possessed by a model that initiates (suggests) mimetic desire toward another subject.

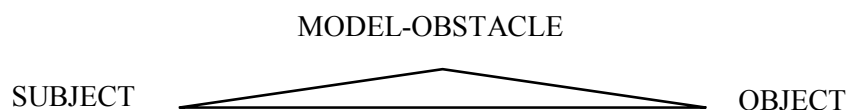
<sup>50</sup> Quite tellingly, capitalist consumer marketing plays to this very aspect of human nature, often selling goods not mainly (sometimes not at all) on their merits, but on the wellbeing that the models/actors in the ads seem to possess who have the goods. When a certain good cannot be construed as needed (instinctually or physically desirable), the seller must attach apparent metaphysical being to it in order to make it metaphysically desirable.

<sup>51</sup> The nature of metaphysical desire therefore means that the object sought in a scandal is lost sight of when the model comes between the subject and the object. The object sought becomes a more general desire for mastery or 'consumption' of the Other. This is critical to bear in mind when analyzing texts of mimetic revelation.

can obtain the mutually prized object suggested by a model freely without impediment, there is no conflict.

To illustrate triangular desire – the internal (sacrificial) and external (anti-sacrificial) phases of mimetic regenerative cycles, and the contrast of internal and external solutions to regular ‘mimetic crises’ (scandal) – I will offer a scenario typical to biblical literature<sup>52</sup> that anticipates the passages analyzed in this thesis.<sup>53</sup> In this scenario, there is a lovely couple, husband and wife. The husband has wooed the wife, and he is wholly devoted (faithful) to her. The wife, however, is not completely satisfied with her husband. Another man notices the great affection the husband has for his wife, and it inspires his own affection for her. In other words, the man imitates the desire of the husband for his wife. Therefore, the woman is objectified by the other man. The wife has taken the husband’s name, and is his glory. The wife, however, notices the other man noticing her, and she also wants to be wanted by him, and so willfully objectifies herself to be possessed by the other man. The husband in this triangle is the model, the wife the object, and the other man is the subject (There are other vantages to this triangle of course, as well as additional triangles).

The proximity of the planes of the subject and the model – how close they come to one another physically, socially, intellectually – determines whether or not mimetic desire will become rivalrous and so potentially result in violence. When the planes of the two subjects (subject and its model) of the triangle do draw together such that the object desired by the subject becomes blocked by the model, the model has become a model-obstacle (or rival-model) to the subject (Hamerton-Kelly 1992, 20). This is the state of internal mimesis (or scandal), variously called conflictual or acquisitive mimesis, or mimetogony (Oughourlian 1991, xi). The subject now feels compelled to contend with- and overcome the model in order to gain the object the model appears to be withholding from it (see figure 2).



**Figure 2 – Triangle of Desire: Internal Mimesis**

<sup>52</sup> This is a ‘figure’ used in the Bible often for Israel in relation to the Lord and the Nations, and is therefore very apt. This type of scenario is one in which the Lord always figures in the triangle of desire in some way.

<sup>53</sup> It is important to note that every subject interacts with other subjects in accordance with the sort of model(s) he/she has had in the past, and whom he/she imitates (Girard 2010, 100).

The other man is a colleague of the husband, comparable in every way as listed above. He feels he is worthy of the 'being' that the husband possesses and that he feels he lacks; he is sure he needs the wife. The other man begins to woo the wife, grasping at equality with the husband. That is, vying for his position and prestige, seeking to acquire the mutually prized object, the glory (metaphysical being) of the husband that would afford the other man the quality of life the husband seems to enjoy, and which the other man desires.

Naturally at this stage, the potential for violence and destruction of subject, model, object, the cosmos (the subjects' entire world), suddenly becomes a real possibility. Girard offers a helpful and concise summary up to this point in the pattern:

We are competitive rather than aggressive. In addition to the appetites we share with animals, we have a more problematic yearning that lacks any instinctual object: desire. We literally do not know what to desire and, in order to find out, we watch the people we admire: we imitate their desire.<sup>54</sup> Both models and imitators of the same desire inevitably desire the same object and become rivals. Their rival desires literally feed on one another: the imitator becomes the model of his model, and the model the imitator of his imitator. Unlike animal rivalries, these imitative or mimetic rivalries can become so intense and contagious that not only do they lead to murder but they spread, mimetically, to entire communities. (Girard 2004, 8)

Often times, as Girard states above, the subject and model *both* begin to serve as model for each other's desire (also Girard 1987a, 299). The model's desire for the object is inspired by the subject's desire for it, and vice versa. The two subjects therefore become increasingly non-differentiated as they more closely imitate the Other's desire; a situation Girard calls the stand-off of rival doubles (1987a, 299).<sup>55</sup> Internal mimesis between rival doubles is a crisis scenario (or scandal), arising out of the blurring of distance and difference between subject and model. When

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<sup>54</sup> This principle relates directly, in my view, to the dichotomy set up with the contrasting imagery of flesh and bread in the Hebrew Exodus accounts, where flesh could be said to symbolize internal mimesis, described in terms of emulating the nation's desire (neighbour's or Egypt's desire), and bread symbolizes external mimesis, described in terms of emulating I AM's desire (God's desire). The latter form of imitation cannot result in rivalry, violence, and death, while the former inevitably leads there. Thus, we have a contrast of two ways.

<sup>55</sup> Girard writes, "Once the symmetry of the mimetic relationship really takes hold, it must be eliminated. The reciprocal violence transforms every model into an anti-model; although the imitators now differ from the model rather than resembling him, the reciprocity is still maintained, precisely because everyone is trying to break away from it in the same way. The desire is always the same, even when it no longer involves belief in the transcendent status of the model" (1987a, 300). I suggest that the mythological idea of Cosmos versus Chaos, otherwise known as the combat myth, is an example of this state of mimetic doubles. My identification (equation) of cosmos with chaos, order with disorder, hero with monster, lion with dragon, is very significant for the combat myth and Messianic/Eschatological Banquet aspects of my methodology, and for my reading of John 6.

a subject perceives the other as model-obstacle to his desired object, he has been scandalized (Girard 1987a, 416).<sup>56</sup>

In our scenario, the subject has taken the husband as model, has become a double of the husband by imitating the husband's desire, and seeks to possess the 'being' of the husband presently embodied in the objectified woman. The other man is quickly scandalized by the stumbling-block (~ scandal) that the husband is to the fulfilment of the other man's desire. That man has a critical choice to make at this juncture, as to whether he will back away from the scandal (mimetic crisis), or proceed into conflict. The husband becomes aware that another man is desiring his object, and has a critical choice himself with regard to the two ways in which to respond to this threat.

Both Girard and the Gospels, working from the Septuagint's translation of the Hebrew מְכַשֵּׁל (e.g. Lev 19:14), use the term scandal (τὸ σκάνδαλον)<sup>57</sup> to denote the social crisis (paroxysm, plague) situation that Girard calls the rivalry of mimetic doubles.<sup>58</sup> At this stage, a subject may deliberately seek to acquire the mutually prized object at the expense of the model (perceived in his theory of mind as an obstacle).<sup>59</sup> This is the internal mimetic response, and occurs because of the subject's perception of the situation as well as the subject's previous models who have demonstrated the internal solution to be credible and expedient.<sup>60</sup> The model seems to 'merge' with the desired object when the model becomes an obstacle, such that

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<sup>56</sup> Girard takes this term from the Bible. Jesus, like the usage mentioned below in Leviticus, uses the term in a technical way (1987a, 393-431). Girard suggests that the scandal (or stumbling-block, which is woefully inconsistently translated in Hebrew and Christian scriptures) is, "...the model that becomes an obstacle, period" (2001, 22).

<sup>57</sup> There are other Hebrew terms that also receive this translation in LXX and the Greek NT, for which see chapter 3. Unfortunately, the English translation of this term (or set of terms) is very inconsistent.

<sup>58</sup> Girard also speaks of this situation, at times, as a 'double bind', borrowing the term from Gregory Bateson's work (Girard 1987a, 291-4; Bateson 1972, 201-227). Girard uses it to express the dual-message 'imitate me, don't imitate me' that the model 'sends' (suggests ~ a theory of mind) to the subject, causing the subject to be scandalized. Additionally, only one of the two subjects (the other being the model) need be cognisant of rivalry (offense, or scandal) for there to be a situation of rival doubles and scandal, though often both are aware on some level.

<sup>59</sup> The New Testament uses the term 'skandalon' for the transformation of model into what Girard calls model-obstacle. This term appears in the context of John 6:53, in John 6:61, translated 'offend' in the NRSV, and most likely referring back to Jesus statement in verse 53 forward, where Jesus asserts that agents of cosmos (all humans, or microcosms) operate on the supposed given that devouring the other is the means to life, and then Jesus adds that devouring his own self is the way to 'everlasting' (or complete/full) life. However, Jesus' use of the metaphor is not only for internal mimesis, but also external mimesis I suggest, since he is subverting (redeeming) the Logos of myth from the inside out, which is the purpose of the Johannine incarnation (enfleshment) of the Logos of God.

<sup>60</sup> Girard discusses how previous models have great effect on how a subject will behave when faced with scandal. If previous models have responded internally (rivalristically, acquisitively, violently) then the subject is likely to respond, in this new scandal, in kind. If the subject has had external mimetic models in the past who demonstrate metaphysical humility, faithfulness, and non-violent responses to scandalous situations, then the subject is more likely to respond in that way (2010, 100).

destruction of the model to acquire the object is often described (in the Bible and elsewhere, as will be demonstrated below) with a consumption metaphor for violence (violent devouring) of the possessor of the object and its associated metaphysical being.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the only way to acquire the desired metaphysical being, embodied now in a merged model-obstacle-object, appears to be by some form of violence toward the model-obstacle.<sup>62</sup>

In the scenario there are many ways the other man may attempt to destroy (metaphorically devour) the husband to acquire (consume, 'feast on') the mutually-prized woman, and the many ways may be recalled from any number of love-triangles viewed regularly in classic and contemporary works of literature and theatre, and every-day occurrences. For example, the other man may engage in a 'duel' of a kind for ownership of the wife, or he may plot perhaps in cahoots with the wife, etc.

If the violence is not one-sided, as is often the case, but both subject and model have been scandalized and have chosen the internal solution, then they may transfer responsibility for the crisis onto a third party.<sup>63</sup> As both self-preferentially view the situation, and fear the destruction of the number of persons and 'objects' at stake, they may displace their rivalry and violence onto a surrogate victim (a third party), in order to forestall the destructive violence that has an uncertain outcome, and thereby purchase peace at the expense of an innocent, impotent, and collectively (as in, all rival parties) objectified Other.<sup>64</sup> This latter process of preserving social order via surrogate victimization is commonly known in Western civilization as scapegoating.

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<sup>61</sup> This observation – the Bible's use of a consumption metaphor to articulate the internal mimetic response in a situation of scandal – is a primary emphasis of this thesis toward identifying the meaning of John 6:53.

<sup>62</sup> It is noteworthy that a common image in the combat myth is the piercing of the serpent/chaos-monster. The serpent is the scandalon, and as model-obstacle-object desired, his piercing releases the life-giving waters (the desired object) blocked from the subject/hero, thus temporarily restoring cosmos/order/life (being) to the violent.

<sup>63</sup> This search for a third party is due to the relative ignorance (self-delusion) of the rivals in their unawareness of the source of the violence, or plague, which is destroying their relationships and often their community by extension. Since those engaged in the scandal do not understand the source of their problems, they seek the one who must be culpable for their present crisis, and when they find what they think is a culprit, what they have really got is a scapegoat (2001, 12). This sequence of events (and the inaccurate meaning attributed to it) is a common motif of combat myths, as well as many other myths featuring the theme of cosmos versus chaos.

<sup>64</sup> For simplicity's sake, I have started with a single rivalry's progress toward victimization. However, Girard states that a community naturally has many developing rivalries culminating in a paroxysm at the level of the entire community (2001, 6). So the size of the community in which this process periodically and naturally unfolds, in accordance with the Logos of violence (which governs all cultures), can be two or three persons, or a group of friends, or an immediate family, or a clan, or a village, a town, a city-state, a nation, etc. Every type of human group (or cosmos/world, since they can be almost any size) periodically engages in this phenomenon, in relative ignorance of the principle and the mechanism that ultimately drives it, and/or justifying the violence as 'good'/sacred, as opposed to the worse violence the cosmos would suffer without the 'good' sacrifice.

Girard notes the first recorded colloquial usage of this term in the work of Saint-Simon, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century French historian of the reign of Louis XIV (2001, 12). There, the term is employed while describing the social derision a woman suffers at the hands of the rest of the clientele of a certain salon. The term, taken from an Israelite ritual described in the Bible (Lev 16), comes to denote the recognition that scapegoating, the transfer of the community's violence onto one back, is in fact the arbitrary and unjust victimization of an innocent person (Girard 2001, 11-12). The collective expulsion or murder of the scapegoat founds or maintains order, or cosmos, both ending and beginning the cycle governed by the Logos of violence.<sup>65</sup>

In our scenario, employed to illustrate the phases of mimetic cycles, the rival doubles may victimize the woman they have been fighting over, re-instating peace between each other. Alternately, another subject (objectified) may present itself into the arena, onto which the rival doubles may transfer their animosity, releasing some of the tension like a pressure valve.

But I am mixing up the psycho-social pattern of events and its interpretation with regard to the surrogate victim (scapegoat), because the fact that the surrogate victim is innocent – is not responsible for the violent contagion overcoming the rivals and the entire community, ultimately – is never fully perceived by the community:

There is a story behind ritual and the story is myth. But the story seems unreadable. Why? Because myths think that the victim is guilty. And this thought is so powerful that the victimizers never realize that they are dealing with a scapegoat. To have a scapegoat, by definition, is not to know that we have him. It's to think we have a culprit. (Girard 2001, 12)

Girard suggests that the perception of the one sacrificed for the many rivals as a scapegoat – denoting an innocent and arbitrarily chosen victim – is an effect of the perfusion of the Judaeo-Christian revelation (uncovering) of scapegoating over time and space (Girard 2001, 34). Scandal-strewn communities engaged in scapegoating never perceive it as such (Girard 2001, 31). If they did, they would be unable to do it unanimously, because of misgivings about their inability to adequately justify their actions, and their growing awareness of their own individual responsibility for violence.

In order to prevent internal or rivalrous mimesis, and subsequent scandal, distance must somehow be maintained. The state of non-rivalrous mimesis in which distance between subject and model is maintained is called external mimesis (Girard 2001, 35). This is where the subject

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<sup>65</sup> Though surrogate victimization is clearly scapegoating, the violence one rival commits against another rival is also understandable as scapegoating, or sacrificial, in that the Other is sacrificed for the preservation of- or increased metaphysical being (life) of the sacrificer/scapegoater. By this logic, violence always has a sacrificial aspect.

is able to continuously acquire the desired object without ever coming into conflict with the model for his desire: “[It] is desiring imitation, but not rivalry” (Girard 2001, 35). External mimesis is typical of the relationship between a child and a father, where physical, social and intellectual distances are very great simply due to the child’s early stage of biological and experiential development. Distances and differences between adults, however, must be deliberately formed and preserved, by careful maintenance of strict categories in societies (cosmoi), with low motility between planes of a hierarchical pyramid of categories by imposition of high innumerable injunctions and prohibitions in a cosmos. Involuntary external mimesis can be institutionalized and enforced for the continued peace and order of the cosmos, with ‘a place for everyone and everyone in his place’. Historically, this is a common way to order a community to avoid the destructive escalation of mimetic rivalry, violence (plague), and the potential for a cosmos’ eschaton (telophase; or an internal cosmos that finally destroys itself).<sup>66</sup> The external mimesis Jesus represents and teaches, however, is a choice rather than an oppressive order, and is guided by the love Logos rather than the violence Logos. It is an order born and maintained through magnanimity rather than tyranny.

Returning to the illustrative scenario, let us say that the husband does not respond to the violence of the other man in kind. Suppose that the husband’s father has exhibited external mimesis in scandalous situations previously, which the husband carefully watched as a lad, and now that he finds himself in a scandal, he recalls his father’s type of response and emulates it. Therefore, the husband engages the sort of metaphysical humility his father used to regularly employ that was effective in forestalling violence. While he loves his wife dearly, the husband simply speaks openly about the other man’s apparent desires and the threat it poses to their marriage. He renews his affection for his wife and asks her to do the same. Unfortunately, however, let us say that the wife informs her husband that she does not love him any longer, but loves the other man, and goes to him. The external mimetic husband is devastated, but only reiterates his love, and waits for his wife to change her mind. On the other hand, if the woman does cling to her husband, and the husband does not reciprocate violence toward the contender,

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<sup>66</sup> But the three pillars of religion (implicitly mentioned in due course above; Girard 1987a, 155) and culture (cosmos), which are ritual (sacrifice ~ sanctioned violence or controlled destruction), myth (foundational narrative), and sacred (sanctioned) legal proscriptions, cannot forestall violence forever (Girard 1987a, 155), for which eventuality even the scapegoat mechanism that is held in reserve – the last line of defence – can lose its effectiveness, and everything is destroyed (Girard 1987a, 155).

that other man may violently prise the woman from the man, slaying the model-obstacle (metaphorically devouring him) to acquire the metaphysical object (also metaphorically eaten, then). The various ways that either of the two ways can and have played out in similar scenarios are the subject of many works of art.

A permanent form of external mimesis is to be found in what Girard terms the Logos of love, the Johannine Logos (1987a, 273), the evangelical subversion of myth (2007, 29-49), the 'scapegoat lens' (1987a, 271-2), among other titles, including I think the second of the two ways, the way of life. Here is one of a number of ways and places in which Girard articulates the essential difference between the two ways, or the two types of Logos:

The *skandalon* is the model/obstacle of mimetic rivalry; it is the model insofar as he works counter to the undertakings of the disciple and so becomes an inexhaustible source of morbid fascination. This is exactly opposite to how *love* in the Christian sense works:

He who *loves* his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling [*skandalon*]. But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes (1 John 2, 10-11). (Girard 1987a, 416-17; also see, for example Job 5:13-15, Ps 107:9-11, Prov 4:19)

In the illustrative scenario, let us say that the other man has been desired by the wife because he is strong, powerful. He takes what he wants, and employs violence to appropriate what he wants without reservation, in the same way that he acquired the husband's wife. It is not long after the woman is possessed by the man that she loses her aura of prestige – the being she gave to her master – and he loses interest, even despises her, and she him. She moves on to another man, while the husband waits and watches. And the other man seeks the apparent being possessed by a husband of another woman, who seems to radiate 'being'. The husband has behaved in a faithful and loving way, in the way of life. The other man has followed the violent way, the way of death. The unfaithful woman suffers, and dies metaphysically, as does the man who goes from woman to woman for 'being'. Both may even die at the hands of rivals or masters physically, as a result of especially brutal scandals, in which both rivals respond violently and destroy each other, or the objectified woman, ferociously. Alternately, the one devoid of 'being' and at a loss may destroy him or herself. All of these scenarios and outcomes are well known in life, as well as their representations in literature and theatre.

For the sake of brevity, I have attempted a very general and abstract reiteration of the essential theory of Girard above. With regard to the function of religion in any given culture,

Girard perceives it as that which institutionalizes scapegoat rituals that are deliberately yet uncomprehendingly used to expel violence from the community, whenever it intermittently crops up, as a safeguard of the continued existence of cosmos when potentially destructive scandals arise. The heart of culture is religion, and the heart of religion is sacrifice.<sup>67</sup> Communities repeat the surrogate victim mechanism ritualistically in order to re-establish the peace experienced by scapegoating. The mechanism of sanctioned violence has power to expel more general and uncontrolled violence ('good' violence controlling 'bad' violence) from the community, which always has the potential to crop up simply as a function of humanity's interdividual mimetic nature, but the paroxysm can reach a pitch at which not even scapegoating can alleviate it.

### **2.3 The Awareness of the Combat Myth Cycle, or Internal Mimetic Cycle, ascribed to Jesus in *John***

It is important to note the relationship of the two types of mimesis to the two types of Logos, and the relation of that dichotomy to the two ways already identified by scholarship on John 6. Internal mimesis is the deliberate but often ignorant (in other words, self-deluded) way of agents of the Logos of violence, and external mimesis can potentially be a deliberate and self-aware practice of agents of the Logos of love. Once one is aware of his propensity for mimetic rivalry – his inclination toward situations of scandal as a result of his desire for the metaphysical being of a model – he can choose metaphysical humility.<sup>68</sup> He can himself create and maintain distance between himself and the Other. This action is selfless deference; it is loving the neighbour as much as the self. In this way, one may move away from the internal pitfalls of interdividuality, and actually become an individual.

The discipline of willful governance by the love Logos comes through revelation and reception of knowledge of one's responsibility for violence, and being existentially and practically changed by that revelation. Girard views the purpose of the Cross as just such a

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<sup>67</sup> e.g. Francois-René de Chateaubriand (1802), quoted by Bernhard Lang (p. 189) in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience* (2002), edited by A.I. Baumgarten. Also, Scott R. Garrels writes, "Archaic religion and culture are seen as sharing the same origin and are intimately related in their service to acts of scapegoating upon which human relational stability was forged and maintained on a ritual basis. Human history similarly reflects our ongoing struggle to come to terms with our own imitative nature, which is the source of our great capacity for learning and cultural advancement as well as, paradoxically, the persistent cycles of violence that continue to underlie our greatest social, political, and religious concerns" (2011, 19).

<sup>68</sup> The role of the imaginary in making this fundamental existential switch is critical (e.g. Girard 1965, 4). I think this relates directly to Jesus' assertion that one cannot enter the Kingdom of God by careful observation, and it may not be found here or there, because it is *within* (ἐντός) you (Luke 17:20-21).

potential revelation for an onlooker (or complicit participant; beneficiary from the expulsion/murder of the Other). However, Girard also notes that there are numerous previous texts of mimetic revelation in the Hebrew Bible, including the murder of Abel (with whom Jesus associates himself; Matt 23:35, Luke 11:51), and the near murder of Joseph (Girard 1996, 252-3), and many others.

Jesus, with his apparent awareness of human mimetic nature (purportedly derived from knowledge of the similar deaths of the ‘prophets’ from Abel to Zechariah), could predict the eventuality of his murder (‘he knew human hearts/minds’: John 2:24-5, 5:42). He makes such a prediction in John 6:53, among other places. *John* clearly states the start of the mimetic rivalry (John 5:18, 7:1), the scandal (John 6:61, and elsewhere), and the escalation toward the social paroxysm (mimetic crisis) for which the high priest endorses the obvious periodic solution, a scapegoating (John 11:49-50, 18:14). It is a temporary solution. As such, it has in the past been, and must therefore continue to be, repeated as crises arise.<sup>69</sup>

Since Jesus knew what was coming, due to his apparent knowledge of mimetic human nature (and in any case the narrative makes clear that his life was wanted by the authorities; e.g. John 5:16-18), he prepared his followers to hopefully understand the why and the how when it finally occurred. He spoke proleptically of his demise, and John 6:51-58 is just such an utterance (Culpepper 1997, 253-4). The language Jesus uses in anticipation of it, and to prepare his audience for it, is metaphorical imagery from his people’s authoritative word that already contains a complete understanding of the psycho-social phenomenon that will consume Jesus, just as it has the many scapegoats (prophets) before him.<sup>70</sup> Jesus himself indicates this continuity by placing himself in line with victims of scandal, violence, and murder from the first in biblical history, Abel, to the last in the Hebrew canon, Zechariah (Matt 23:35, Luke 11:51). The following table illustrates the contrast of the two ways in terms of the two types of mimesis:

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<sup>69</sup> However, it cannot work forever, and so Jesus was purportedly able to predict the eventual destruction of Jerusalem, the center of the Judaean cosmos, through a massive mimetic frenzy (John 8:23-26, Luke 19:41-42, and 21). That world (cosmos) would soon pass away, as all worlds (cosmoi) must eventually do when governed by the death-oriented Logos (way of death). Flavius Josephus has clearly described just such a factious fall of the cosmos, for which no scapegoat event was powerful enough to reconcile the fever pitch of the people’s scandals – the plague that had enveloped them (e.g. *J.W.* 4.375-6).

<sup>70</sup> Jesus makes this equation implicitly by naming Abel as the first prophet (Matt 23:35, Luke 11:51), thereby describing a ‘prophet’ as a person who reveals in some way the underlying nature of human social existence, and the two ways along with the general proclivity for the way of internal mimesis, often ultimately through his death as a sacrificial victim.

Internal Mimetic Subject and Viewpoint		External Mimetic Subject and Viewpoint		
A	<u>Interindividual Progression Toward Mimetic Doubles:</u> imitating the internal desire of another internal human		<u>Individuality, gazing at an external model:</u> Avoiding imitation of the desire of the other son of Man, imitating the external desire of an external model	A <sub>1</sub>
B	<u>Scandal:</u> The model becomes an obstacle to the subject's metaphysical desire (the subject forms a conflictual theory of mind for the model)		<u>Deference – faithfulness to the image of God (the other son of Man):</u> The external subject, who is perceived as model-obstacle to the internal subject, gives freely	B <sub>1</sub>
C	<u>Sanctioned (Sacred) Violence (Combat, Duel):</u> A good sacrifice condoned to end the strife		Ditto, with attempts to convey underlying knowledge of the mechanism the Other is caught up in	C <sub>1</sub>
D	<u>Salvific Murder:</u> Good sacrifice accomplished		Ditto, with continued attempts at restoration through revelation	D <sub>1</sub>
E	<u>Consumption Metaphor for Sacrificial (sanctioned, 'good') Violence:</u> The 'flesh and blood' – life (metaphysical being) – of the rival Other is 'consumed'		<u>Consumption Metaphor for 'Identifying' with (abiding in) the Other:</u> Faithfulness to the divine-image in the Other (The Lord is One)	E <sub>1</sub>
F	<u>Temporary Peace (and a paradox):</u> Consumption (life gained) through the violence Logos (Yet death to self ~ God's wrath). The good violence must be repeated. It is a living-death, being metaphysically Dead. <sup>71</sup>		<u>Life eternal (and a paradox):</u> Full metaphysical life, and often physical life, to the non-violent (First-last and last-first logic) <sup>72</sup>	F <sub>1</sub>

**Table 1 – Mimetic Rivalry between Agents of Opposing Logics**

## 2.4 Empirical Evidence for Mimetic Theory

There is growing empirical evidence for René Girard's anthropological mimetic theory. Advances in the empirical human sciences have been made mainly in two directions with regard to mimesis: 1) research in developmental psychology, and insights made there especially through observation of newborns (Garrels 2006, 54-55) by imitation researchers like Andrew N. Meltzoff, which were confirmed by 2) research in neuroscience by researchers like V.S. Ramachandran, G. Rizzolatti and V. Gallese (Garrels 2006, 55-56). I will briefly make note of

<sup>71</sup> 'He saved his life, and in so doing lost it' (Matt 10:39, 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24, 17:33).

<sup>72</sup> 'He lost his life, and in so doing found it' (Matt 10:39, 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24, 17:33).

some particulars of this empirical evidence that has come to further validate Girard's mimetic theory.

There has been a convergence of mimetic scholarship and empirical evidence gathered by imitation researchers (Garrels 2006, 47-86; Garrels 2011). In fact, a book has just come out in the last few months that, for the first time, contains contributions by both empirical researchers on imitation as well as researchers of culture and religion on mimesis (Garrels 2011). The most significant empirical development has been the discovery of mirror neurons (Ramachandran 2011, 117-35), which is beginning to fill in the empirical side of Girard's mimetic theory in the same way that empirical research began- and continues to confirm and fill in gaps in Darwin's evolutionary theory (Garrels 2006, 69-70). Garrels quotes Ramachandran offering an example of another scientific discovery that has transformed human self-understanding, in order to frame the significance of the discovery of mirror neurons:

The discovery of mirror neurons... is the single most important unreported story of the decade. I predict that mirror neurons will do for psychology what DNA did for biology: They will provide a unifying framework and help explain a host of mental abilities that have hitherto remained mysterious and inaccessible to experiments. (2000; in Garrels 2006, 56)

Garrels recites the nature and function of these neurons that enable learning:

Mirror neurons therefore act as both motor and sensory neurons. Their dual function suggests a direct resonance, or common coding between observation and execution, of participant [model] and observer [subject]. The activation of these neurons is automatic and independent of the individual performing or observing the action, creating an immediate and shared experience. (2006, 56)

These findings are revolutionary, and confirm Girard's assertion of human interdividuality, with the identification of the biological apparatus by which social cognition takes place.

Imitation researchers found that not just any action would trigger mirror neuron activity. The predominant stimulator of mirror neurons is *grasping* action, that is, action directed toward an object, and having to do with taking and eating especially (Garrels 2006, 57). Another important insight, building on these, is that the subject not only imitates what a model does, but is able to perceive 'failed attempts', that is, intentions, and will imitate an intention even when the model has not fulfilled the modeled action (Garrels 2006, 64-66). This last ability is related to the zenith of the human's system of imitation, which has been called *theory of mind*, or the ability of a subject to conceive of the model's goals, desires and intentions, without them having ever been decisively indicated by the model (Garrels 2006, 66-68).

This last psycho-social phenomenon under investigation (the ability to create a ‘theory of mind’ for another person) requires further research to be empirically understood, but is related to the findings around imitation. It is apparent that theories of mind can be incomplete, resulting in the everyday occurrence of misunderstandings – the way a subject pieces together a state of mind of an Other, and later finds that he did not have it quite right. But this relates to the way a subject can experience a suggestion from a model – a theory of the Other’s mind - and whether factual or not, it still influences the decisions and behaviours of the subject. In this way, a person can deceive himself while pinning responsibility for the deception on the model. Miscommunications like this are a common cause of conflict.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, this ability to fashion a theory of mind for an Other is part of how two subjects, taking each other as model, increasingly become identical rival doubles as they imitate the desire of the Other (Girard 1987a, 283-4; Garrels 2006, 74-78).

Garrels laments that the relationship of conflict studies to research on imitation is still poorly developed (2006, 75-76). But Girard, as briefly described above, has already articulated the ways in which mimesis and conflict relate, working from the study of literature, cultural anthropology, history, religious texts, and especially the Bible. Girard himself notes how imitation research has curiously avoided acquisition and appropriation, and resultant conflict, in its enumeration of types of imitation (Girard 1979, 9; 1987a, 8). As stated above, however, imitation research has already, perhaps unintentionally, provided empirical evidence for the relationship of imitation to conflict, since it identified the primary stimulant of mirror neuron activity to be acts (or intentions) of *grasping*, which if intended (or perceived to be intended) to be maleficent equates to acquisitive mimesis (Garrels 2006, 77), which is appropriative in competitive situations of internal mimesis, or scandal.

Garrels, in agreement with mimetic scholars, notes that imitative reciprocity (or mimesis) can be cooperative as well as rivalrous. He says there is a ‘bipolarity’ to human mimesis (2006, 77), which I take as another word for Girard’s distinction of internal versus external mimesis. It is this psycho-social polemic at the neurological and cognitive level that I propose is equivalent to what the Bible intuitively and experientially describes as the two ways toward life at the level

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<sup>73</sup> Garrels cites Trevarthen, Kokkinaki, and Fiamenghi (1999) in this regard, who state, “The facts are that motives in individuals do affect the awareness and intentions motivated in other individuals. The understanding (and misunderstandings) of talk, and of all symbolic and representational forms of language, are carried upon intuitive interpersonal regulations, and upon mimetic representations that cross intersubjective space easily. They are woven into narratives of sympathetic intentionality charged with emotion” (2006, 72).

of psycho-social volition, or the ambivalent path toward acquiring life (metaphysical being).<sup>74</sup> The Bible contains recognition that one way paradoxically leads to metaphysical (but also often hastened physical) death, or the ‘Grave of Desire’ (e.g. Num 11:31-34; Ezek 37:11-14; Prov 1:10-19, 9:1-18), the other (paradoxically perhaps) to unanticipated fullness of metaphysical as well as physical life (e.g. Ps 139:24, 143:8, Prov 3:17, 3:23, Prov 4:11, 6:23, 9:6, 10:17, etc.).

## 2.5 External Mimetic Triangles of Desire<sup>75</sup>

When Girard first articulated mimetic desire in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1965),<sup>76</sup> he began by articulating the triangle of desire in the form of voluntary external mimesis, or a subject who willfully imitates the desire of a model who is at such a distance from the imitator as to be impossible to occasion a double bind, scandal, conflict, violence and death. If the desired object the external model suggests to the subject – or rather, if the theory of mind for the model created by the subject – is externality itself (or to use biblical terminology, love of God and neighbor),<sup>77</sup> then the internal potential of a mimetic human is theoretically abolished as long as that human maintains faithful imitation of his external model. Even when a person with an external model comes into potentially rivalrous proximity with an Other, the external subject possesses (indwells/abides in) a form of mimesis that serves to forestall internal mimesis with a potential double.

No human in close proximity could consistently offer this sort of mediation, or mimesis, to another human on his own. The model must remain in the mind’s eye (anything closer is too close, and potentially scandalous therefore). This does not mean the model is not real, however, because the subject is willfully governed by the model’s metaphysical desire, and makes it real by imitating it (though a God could be real, but no human who may have seen God is here to speak of it). As Girard says, “The mediator [may be] imaginary but not the mediation” (1965, 4).

The quasi-imaginary quality of mimesis is there whether the mediator is external or internal, because it is always a theory of mind that the subject infers from the suggestion

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<sup>74</sup> By way of example, the Hebrew wisdom literature, in intuitive and experiential fashion, discusses this duality frequently: Job 23:11, 24:13, Ps 1:6, 139:24, 140:4, Prov 1:10-19, 4:11 and 14, 4:18-18, 5:5-6, 9:6, 10:17, 12:28, 14:12, 15:9, 16:17 and 31, 19:2, 21:8, 22:24-5, 28:6, 28:18, 30:20, etc.

<sup>75</sup> See figure 1.

<sup>76</sup> Actually, the book first appeared in French as *Mensonge Romantique et Vérité Romanesque* (1961). Last year saw the celebration of fifty years of Girard’s mimetic theory.

<sup>77</sup> Or brother, deference to the other, or ‘tolerance’ perhaps; e.g. Deut 6:4-5, Lev 19:18.

mimetically received from a model (another subject) on the level of mirror-neuron interaction. It is just a theory. But the theory is acted upon with conviction, the subject believing he has understood the model's intention, the model's metaphysically desired object. Just because it is in one's mind does not mean it is not real.

There are then two types of triangular desire, one with an external mediator at the 'top' and one with an internal mediator at the 'top,' with 'external' defined as self-awareness of mimetic reality and its dangers (on some level) and choosing externality with regard to others, and internal defined as self-delusion with regard to mimetic reality and internality with regard to others. These are the two types of mimesis arising out of social-cognitive mimetic bipolarity, and in my opinion are directly related to the two ways of Scripture, that constitutes an example of what Girard calls a text of mimetic revelation. The ambivalent Lord's Table may be considered the choice between the two ways, a forced test or pseudo-scandal of sorts, described in terms of the ambivalent (symbolic) consumption metaphor. This metaphor either stands for violence (sin) or love (faithfulness), which is the choice of the feaster, and the choice is the purpose of the feast. The pattern of behaviour for an external mimetic subject during a scandal is depicted in the following table, along with a parallel biblical example from Hebrew Wisdom:

External Mimetic Subject and Viewpoint		Psalm 23 as an Example of External Mimesis: Abiding in the Lord: <sup>78</sup>
A	<u>Individuality, fixing gaze on an external model:</u> Avoiding imitation of the desire of the other human, imitating the external desire of an external model	With the Lord as model, one does not imitate the metaphysical desire of his neighbour (Ps 23:1; tenth command, Ex 20:17)
B	<u>Deference – faithfulness to the image of God (the other son of Man):</u> The external subject, who is perceived as model-obstacle to the internal subject, gives freely	One has metaphysical satisfaction – rest, water, life, being – reflecting the glory (name) of the Maker (Ps 23:2-3)
C	Ditto	Shadow of Death ~ presence of internal mimetic others and moments of scandal (Ps 23:4a)
D	Ditto	The fear of the Lord (or externality ~ discipline and guidance) keep one from the fear of evil (violence) and participation in it (23:4b)
E	<u>Consumption Metaphor for ‘Identifying’ with (abiding in) the Other (love, faithfulness):</u> Faithfulness to the divine-image in the Other (The Lord is One)	No violence toward ‘enemies,’ no metaphysical death (23:4a, 5a)
F	<u>Life eternal (and a paradox):</u> Full metaphysical life, and often physical life, to the non-violent (first-last and last-first logic) (‘He lost his life, and in so doing found it’; Matt 10:39, 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24, 17:33)	The Lord’s table and cup, the Lord’s seal of approval, love (faithfulness), life, and life everlasting (23:5-6)

**Table 2 – Voluntary External Mimesis**

## 2.6 The Bible’s Two Ways and Girard’s Two Logics – Synergies to Better Understand the Two Ways in the Hebrew Bible and Their Deployment in John 6<sup>79</sup>

I propose that the bipolar nature of human mimesis – the potential for mimetic desire to be competitive *or* cooperative – articulated by Scott R. Garrels (with regard to the biological and volitional workings of mirror neurons, mimetic desire, and theories of mind) relates directly to the duality articulated in the Bible, and also in John 6, in terms of the two ways. The logical path

<sup>78</sup> External mimesis is desiring imitation, but not rivalry, which distinguishes it from internal mimesis (Girard 2001, 35).

<sup>79</sup> Girard develops this idea particularly in *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, pp. 263-280. The Heraclitean Logos is equivalent, in my view, to the sacrificial combat myth and its associated ritual and law that governs, and has governed, cultures (cosmoi). It is the one of the two ways described in the Bible that leads to death, although it appears always at first to be life-giving (As with Eve, Adam, and the fruit, Gen 3:4-7). This logos, or governing logic, is the way of internal mimesis, of scandal, that requires and happily utilizes sanctioned violence (scapegoating) to keep greater violence at bay. The Johannine Logos is equivalent, in my view, to the scapegoat lens, or the subversive and anti-sacrificial reflection narrative formed against the violent and sacrificial Logos. Rather than being oriented toward grasping at the metaphysical being of others at their expense, it is that one of the two ways that is characterized by metaphysical humility. It loves the neighbour as much as the self, and is therefore externally mimetic, giving the one governed by it and everyone around him fuller and indefinite life.

from the scientific understanding of mimesis to its existential, anthropological, or biblical understanding has been well-trodden in both directions by René Girard in his writing on the two types of Logos (e.g. 1987a, 263-80).

Support for the assertion that the two ways correspond to the two Logoi would be if the behaviours typical of internal and external mimesis – appropriative and destructive versus cooperative and creative actions – could be demonstrated to be articulated in the context of the Bible’s presentation of the two ways.<sup>80</sup> Persons governed by what Girard calls the Heraclitean (violence) Logos are characterized in behaviour by internal (conflictual) mimesis, scandals, violence, and death. Persons governed by what Girard calls the Johannine (love) Logos are characterized in behaviour by external (metaphysically humble) mimesis, forbearance toward the Other (selflessness, faithfulness, love), peace, and life. I suggest that *John*, in describing the notion of two ways in continuity with the Hebrew Bible, contrasts them in terms of the Law (Logos, word, discourse) of Moses<sup>81</sup> and the Law (Logos, word, discourse) of God made flesh, or Jesus the Nazarene according to *John*’s Gospel.

If this may be shown to be a plausible equation of anthropological insights, though described from different ‘eyes of knowing,’ then the two ways described in John 6 – the diet of the bread of life versus the diet of the flesh of life (death) – may be considered a contrast of internal and external mimesis. Internal mimesis would be the ‘fruit’ of a life lived under the governance of the Logos of violence, metaphorically personified as the Father of murder and lies,<sup>82</sup> and external mimesis would be the ‘fruit’ of a life lived under the governance of the Logos of love,<sup>83</sup> perhaps metaphorically personified as an external mimesis with the Father of faithfulness, love and life (the love Logos, John 6:54-58).<sup>84</sup>

The two ways become a choice offered to Jesus’ audience in John 6, the choice of the kingdom of God rather than the kingdom of ‘the Accuser’. But John 6 makes it plain (in keeping with the prologue of that Gospel) that Jesus, as the word made flesh, is simply making plain and

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<sup>80</sup> I attempt this through analysis of narrative, verbal and thematic indicators, overlays and recurrences.

<sup>81</sup> Although in *John* Jesus defends Moses as simply misunderstood or misread by those who wish to position Moses’ teaching as opposed to Jesus’ teaching (John 5:45-47, 6:32-33, 8:52-59).

<sup>82</sup> Or the Satan/Devil; e.g. John 8:31-59, which is part of the biblical quasi-theoretical means for describing the violent Logos.

<sup>83</sup> Represented by one anointed/sealed with the Name, a son of God, John 8:54-55; also depicted in terms of a servant of Yahweh, John 6:45, Isa 54:13, Jer 31:34.

<sup>84</sup> Which is consistent with the biblical quasi-theoretical articulation of what a restored Israel and humanity looks like: e.g. Isa 45:20-23, Isa 49, Jer 31:33-34.

reiterating the Hebrew Bible's articulation of the choice which he supposedly incarnates (e.g. Prov 9:1-18, John 1:1-18). The hearers may only become aware of the existence of a choice as to how life is gained, at the most fundamental level, once they have become aware that they are currently governed by a Logos that is violent, sacrificial, and causing death for the Other *as well as* themselves personally and collectively (e.g. Gen 4:6-14, Num 11:4-15 and 31-35, Ps 53:2-4, Prov 1:18-19, Prov 9:18; John 5:24, 6:27 and 48-50).

*John* indicates that Jesus' hearers do not fully understand<sup>85</sup> the situation he claims they are in, or the choice they have before them. In John 6, the audience is in fact *at* the Messiah's ambivalent banqueting table,<sup>86</sup> according to *John*. They must choose to take either the bread of life from the word of God, or the flesh of life (paradoxically, a metaphysical death) from the son of Man. Each hearer may engage in metaphorical consumption (violence, expulsion) to gain temporary life as the Grave gives it, (metaphorically) eating and drinking the flesh and blood of another 'scapegoat' (John 6:53), or he may engage in reception of the word to gain everlasting life as heaven gives it, (metaphorically) eating and drinking the true 'flesh' and true 'blood' of the son of Man *and* son of God (John 6:54-58).

The Gospel of John is recognized as 'the symbolic Gospel' (e.g. Koester 2003), and while it is not alone among the Gospels for this quality, it does seem to be the most theoretical of the descriptions of Jesus' teaching, life, death and resurrection. *John's* concern is the broad, theoretical yet completely existential, articulation of a traditional reading of the Bible. John 6 should be understood as part of a quasi-theoretical text of mimetic revelation. As such, what in John 6 is described as the bread of life and the flesh of life may be equally described as the Logos of love and the Logos of violence, respectively. This internal biblical polemic is textually verifiable as the Lord's ambivalent Table.

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<sup>85</sup> 'the darkness did not comprehend [the light]' (John 1:5).

<sup>86</sup> Like 'the Lord's table' in Malachi (1:7 and 12), where the people must choose between faithfulness and fear of God (e.g. 3:16-18, 4:6) or violence, faithlessness and disdain for God (e.g. 1:13, 2:8-10, 2:14-16).

## CHAPTER 3: Background to John 6:53

### 3.1 Synopsis

The chapter begins with a thorough description the two Types of Logos, referred to at the end of the methodologies, in terms of the combat myth and its biblical subversion by reflection narrative. I then note the profusion of biblical themes melded together in *John* (and John 6 especially), apparently in an attempt to describe the word (Hebrew Bible) made flesh. Identifying this synergy of themes makes plain the rationale for the possibly seemingly disparate biblical material that I view to be background for John 6. I briefly review some of the biblical material already identified and analyzed by scholarship as texts of mimetic revelation, which contrast the sacrificial and anti-sacrificial types of Logos.

There is a particular *type* of mimetic rivalry featured in the Hebrew Bible that constitutes part of the background to *John*, in that these texts include rivalry between agents of the opposing types of Logos. Those texts are analyzed to flesh out the triangles of desire articulated through the various imitations of others' desires, and thereafter they are analyzed for scandal and consumption metaphor inclusions. I then focus in on the idea of two ways in terms of bread and flesh in the selected narratives, or the Lord's (ambivalent) Table in the wilderness wandering. In the process, I note the role of the term 'son of Man' (and related terms) in some of the selected narratives and their proximity to- and association with the Table. Selected texts included are the aetiological and anthropological tales of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, the patriarchal Joseph narrative, the Exodus narrative, the 'son of Man' 'narrative' of *Ezekiel*, and the 'narrative' of the two ways in Hebrew Wisdom. I then move to early Christian background, including the Synoptic Gospels' accounts of the Lord's Table as well as Paul's discussions of it. This background is necessarily highly selective, but hopefully demonstrates the contrast of the two types of Logos as a central biblical theme forming the allusive background to John 6:53.

### 3.2 Introduction

The background to John 6:51-58 is lengthy and complicated, spanning the canon. However, a judicious selection of biblical material may paint a sufficient picture with which to cast in relief the essential biblical background to this text, which has been considered by some trends in scholarship to be of anything but biblical derivation (e.g. Cho 2010). I would suggest otherwise. I begin by discussing the two types of Logos identified and described by Girard in relation to the combat myth and its anti-sacrificial subversion, in tandem with their deployment in the biblical literatures. I then offer a listing of themes alluded to in *John* that are pertinent to John 6 that together demonstrate the synergistic quality of the narrative. I survey biblical texts already analyzed as texts of mimetic revelation and then identify the parameters on the type of mimetic rivalry of particular interest to the writers of the bible.

I proceed with application of my methodologies by identifying the triangles of desire in the background texts, the key phases of the mimetic cycle (scandal and metaphorical consumption) in the selected narratives, and the contrast of the two ways throughout these Hebrew Bible and early Christian passages. The findings are then assessed as to their relationships to the Lord's (ambivalent) Table, which I suggest articulates the two types of mimesis that characterize the two types of Logos arising from humanity's mimetic bipolarity as a personal choice from the purview of mimetic theory. While (due to time and space) largely disregarding pre-biblical and much of Second Temple Judaism's literary background material to *John*, the following survey makes possible a contextual and theoretical reading of John 6:53 that is able to explain the intended meaning of this verse in its socio-literary context.

### 3.3 The Heraclitean Logos and the Sacrificial Combat Myth Tradition<sup>87</sup>

The combat myth's narrative cycle overlays (or 'maps' onto) the internal mimetic cycle of a cosmos governed by the Heraclitean (violence) Logos (see table 3). The complementarity of the two vantages on the single phenomenon is well borne out in the figure noted. But there are not one but two types of Logos that are polemically layered in the Bible.<sup>88</sup> Eminent biblical apocalypse scholar John J. Collins has discussed the two logics in terms of two types of God in *Does the Bible Justify Violence?* where he writes, "The Bible witnesses not only to the innocent

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<sup>87</sup> Pre-biblical (e.g. Adapa and Enuma Elish) and intertestamental antecedents were not addressed in detail due to time and space considerations. They remain significant background, however.

<sup>88</sup> The other Logos is described in the next section, and complements the reflection narrative of the combat myth.

victim and to the God of victims but also to the hungry God who devours victims and to the zeal of his human agents” (2004, 30–31). Girard argues that these two conceptions of deity, which serve as models for human behaviour in the worldview of the Hebrew Bible,<sup>89</sup> are part of what he identifies as two types of Logos (2001, 19).

In the work of Heraclitus of Ephesus,<sup>90</sup> the Logos is “the divine, rational and logical principle according to which the world is organized” (Girard 1987a, 263). Girard draws on Heidegger to show that the Logos of Heraclitus operates on “the illusion that there is difference within the heart of violence [, which] is the key to the sacrificial way of thinking” (Girard 1987a, 266). The opposing forces in the world, or cosmos versus chaos, are in fact rival doubles because they maintain peace (order, or what Girard at times calls transcendence) with one and the same ordering mechanism: sacred violence. This mechanism “is the violence of the sacred [or scapegoating] that inhibits the doubles from unleashing even greater violence” (Girard 1987a, 267, also see pages 23–30; 130–138). Girard sums up this form of cosmic order, stating, “The Heraclitean Logos, in Heidegger’s terms, is the Logos of all cultures to the extent that they are, and will always remain, founded upon unanimous violence” (Girard 1987a, 267).

I approach the Judaeo-Christian scriptures from the perspective that the combat myth is the sacrificial worldview that Girard terms the Heraclitean Logos, and these two are both equivalent to what the Bible describes as the way of violence and death (e.g. Isa 59:6-8, Jer 21:8, Ezek 33:11, Prov 1:31-32, 3:31, etc.). This deathly path naturally views itself as the only way to gain life. Its agent is not aware that the path he treads takes him into the Grave of Desire (e.g. Numbers 11; Proverbs 1 and 9) and additionally makes him into a grave (pit, snare, tomb) that others fall into and perish (e.g. Proverbs 1; Matt 23; Luke 11).

The first type of Logos, that which governs human culture, is virtually synonymous with the combat myth. This mythic pattern essentially embodies a mythological view of one’s cosmos (the world perceived and engaged in by a subject) that assumes violence and scapegoating are necessary for preservation of one’s world (cosmos), and that only some people are guilty of threatening peace (one’s metaphysical being) and are deserving of expulsion and death. This worldview is defined by “the illusion that there is difference within the heart of

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<sup>89</sup> The notion of deity as model is developed early on: e.g. ‘...Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy’ (Lev 19:2). ‘Holiness’ is interpreted as compassion by Jesus, e.g. Luke 6:36, though it is interpreted as ‘good’ violence by others. John J. Collins (2003) discusses this latter reading in “The Zeal of Phineas: The Bible and the Legitimation of Violence.” *Journal of Biblical Literature*. vol. 122, no. 1 (Spring): 3-21.

<sup>90</sup> ca. 535– 475 BCE; two fragments are in mind: DK 22B1 and DK 22B2.

violence...” which is “...the key to the sacrificial way of thinking” (Girard 1987a, 266). This false distinction enables the false-categories of heroes and demons, gods and chaos-monsters. The Heraclitean Logos equates with (maps onto) the notion of cosmos versus chaos. The latter has been marvellously laid out by Norman Cohn as the phenomenon of the combat myth worldview of ancient peoples all over the Earth in *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come* (2001, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

Cohn traces some of the earliest worldviews of ancient Near Eastern cultures in terms of their use of combat myth imagery and plot to define their experience of the world around them, as well as the permutations of this worldview as it progresses toward what is now often labelled apocalypticism as it occurred amongst Persians, Jews and Christians. The intertextuality that defines the Bible depends on the continuous redeployment of imagery and narrative—both mythical and historical (if any clear distinction is possible between these) in the writers’ and audiences’ collective memories—reinvigorating the old tale, aiding in fresh understanding of and application to the present. Perhaps *the* essential regularly redeployed story of the Bible, and an essential recurring myth-plot of many cultures the world-round, is the combat myth.

Joseph Fontenrose has set out a point by point summation of imagery and plot common to all of those remarkably similar foundation narratives (see table 3). Fontenrose notes that myths are redeployed as either *versions* (where the story is altered but personal and place names are unchanged) or *variants* (where the story remains the same for different persons and places). He defines a *type* as a plot recurring in several *variants* (Fontenrose 1959, 5–6). I suggest that in the Hebrew Bible, *variants* of the *type* known as the combat myth are subverted by means of the Hebrew literary practice of performing reflection narratives.<sup>91</sup>

There are two layers of logic, then, to many biblical stories: 1) the traditional form is governed by sacred violence, and 2) the Judaeo-Christian reflection narrative form that is anti-sacrificial (or anti-violent). In the Bible (and other texts of mimetic revelation) it is difficult if not impossible to form a polemical reflection without retaining the original image. So there is a “...redemptive return to the pattern of myth, as well as its overcoming” (Girard 2001, 31). Girard describes this aspect as the biblical writers’ awareness that, “...in order to transcend the old gods, you must obey them” (2001, 19). That said, it has been argued that some stories found in the Bible are reflection narratives of shared cultural foundation stories that the writer(s) *did not*

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<sup>91</sup> As defined by Omri Boehm in the next section.

include fully, if at all (Boehm 2004, 145–156; Girard 2001, 18). The Logos of violence at work in human culture is polemicized and replaced with a new Logos in the Bible.

Biblical scholarship has noticed and employed Fontenrose's invaluable work. The eminent Jewish apocalypse scholar Adela Yarbro Collins, in her dissertation on Revelation 12, asserts that this chapter of John's *Apocalypse* has all the plot elements of the combat myth as outlined by Fontenrose (Table 3; Yarbro Collins 1976, 59–61). Yarbro Collins also indicates in her analysis that Revelation 12 may be regarded as a summation of significant events in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as narrated in the Gospels (Yarbro Collins 1976, 60).

Fontenrose's outline of the combat myth is highly useful for identifying the similarities of plot and imagery of the combat myth mapped over by the Judaeo-Christian reflection narrative. There are striking similarities between the stages of the combat myth and the phases of the internal mimetic cycle (see table 3). The anti-sacrificial reflection narrative is the external mimetic cycle (or scapegoat lens) engaged in subversion of the violent Logos from the inside out (see table 6). Therefore, the combat myth and its Hebrew reflection narrative are part of the biblical articulation of the two ways, or two types of Logos.<sup>92</sup>

Taking Fontenrose's lead, Yarbro Collins elaborates the progressively allusive redeployment of the combat myth among world cultures, beginning with the Greek Apollo-Python and Zeus-Typhon myths that echo an earlier myth from Syria and Cilicia, which in turn is likely of Semitic or Sumerian origin. It has been recognized that the Egyptian Horus-Osiris-Seth cycle and the Baal-Yamm myth of Canaanite Ugarit are also *variants* of the same *type* (Yarbro Collins 1976, 57–58).

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<sup>92</sup> The manner in which the *reflection narrative* subverts the combat myth is the subject of the next section.

Echoes (or subverted redeployments) of the latter myth remain in the Genesis creation account, as well as in the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt, and recur again in the prophet Isaiah 24-27, as well as Second Isaiah with the description of the second Exodus from Babylon. The prophet Ezekiel regularly looks back at the Egyptian oppression and liberation narrative for critique of Israelite behaviour in his own time, as do many other prophetic writings. During the time of the writing of these texts, the combat myth came to be associated more with Yahweh's deliverance of his people from oppressive orders than with the expelling of chaos for the preservation of cosmos. This change in understanding is consistent with the effect of the subversion of the violence Logos with the love Logos. Cohn records the change in usage of the combat myth motif for the Israelites:

It was shortly before or during the Babylonian exile that the ancient autumn festival, with its celebration of Yahweh's mastery of the waters, yielded in importance to the spring festival of Passover, with its commemoration and celebration of the Exodus. Nothing could show more clearly how radically the traditional world-view was being transformed. In place of an essentially changeless world order, always threatened yet always surviving, history began to move into the centre of interest. (2001, 146)

From the end of the sixth century BCE onward, then, the prophets of Israel are concerned most especially with a God who saves the oppressed through history, rather than one who defends 'our' order against 'their' (dis)order. This is a God of victims, and is a counterpart of the scapegoat lens (reflection narrative, love Logos, way of life) that emerges more and more in the Hebrew Bible. This lens can be perceived from the start of the canon to a certain extent, and is clearly found in various passages including the Abraham cycle of narratives, the Joseph narrative, the Exodus narrative, throughout the prophetic literature, in the Hebrew Wisdom as in Proverbs 1, many of the Psalms,<sup>93</sup> and Job's continuous reception of accusations from his prosecutorial 'friends', and so on. A pertinent example from the twelve prophets, alluded to by Jesus multiple times in the Gospels with a social reading, is Hosea's significant assertion from Yahweh, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. Like Adam they transgressed the covenant. There they were unfaithful to me." (Hos 6:6-7).

Jesus referred to this early Yahweh-Alone and anti-sacred violence passage to critique the false-justification of social violence perpetrated by the leaders of the Judaeon cosmos in his time (e.g. Matt 9:13, 12:7). An entity governed by the Heraclitean Logos will always view its own

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<sup>93</sup> Examples include Psalm 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137, 139.

violence as good, sanctioned, or sacred violence. At the same time, all violence perpetrated against it by rival entities is perceived as bad, evil, or demonic violence. This distinction is revealed as false, as a delusion, when viewed under the scapegoat lens that Girard asserts is progressively developed throughout the Bible. That progression coincides with the growing Yahweh-Alone (monotheistic) movement, as both of these developments—the scapegoat insight and monotheism—are results of the growing recognition that violence is humankind's and is foreign to God. The requirement for- and appropriateness of sacred violence is something humans project onto God to justify their violence. Girard writes, "[The] economy of violence, which is not human but divine, can only be rooted, from the standpoint of the Gospel, in a projection of human violence on to God" (1987a, 215). As recognition of human or personal responsibility grows, the distance felt between God and humanity grows. The God's lack of violence, or sinlessness, defines the space between humanity and God, ultimately. As stated, it is significant that Hosea, a mid-8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and anti-sacrificial-violence prophet, is also considered the earliest Yahweh-Alone (Monotheistic) prophet (Cohn 2001, 141). This connection is not trivial, as it suggests the logical relationship (in light of mimetic theory) between the conceptualization of an external model in the form of a single, transcendent and compassion deity, and the conscious, systematic rejection of sacred violence.

The Heraclitean Logos is the combat myth, which is the ongoing conflict of doubles, each cosmic order perceiving the other (the outsiders) as 'agents of chaos', founding and maintaining their cosmos at the expense of (through violent expulsion of) the Other. The maintenance of order is based on sacrificial scapegoating. In the Hebrew Bible, and then also in the Gospels, there is a complete subversive redeployment of this essential combat myth image in order to reveal it as the Logos of violence, as well as to show another way that is open to human cosmoi (interdividual mimetic humanity), the Logos of love.

Girard asserts that the clean cut between the two types of Logos is well articulated in the Gospels by children of Israel writing in perfect continuity with the reflection narrative tradition of the Hebrew Bible. Girard writes, "A non-violent deity can only signal his existence to mankind by having himself driven out by violence—by demonstrating that he is not able to establish himself in the Kingdom of Violence" (1987a, 219), and , "in effect, love of this kind has been lived to its end only by Jesus himself" (215; or at least, the only such recorded life). Though in an interview with J.G. Williams Girard is careful to state, "...in the story of Joseph and his

brothers... Judah offers himself in place of his younger brother...this is already the Gospel” (1996, 252-3).

In the Jesus narratives (Gospels), a son of Man is described as living by the Logos of love (Hebrew way of life) consistently. This faithfulness to the way of life and especially the recording of it itself (both of Joseph and other biblical examples, as well as of Jesus) constitutes an external model for combatting the way of violence (death), or internal mimesis. This subversion lends itself, and actually describes itself, as a new foundation for a new type of psycho-social order like that which *Daniel* describes (2:43-45); an idea the Gospels continue as the ‘kingdom of God’ (e.g. Matt 12:28, 29:24).

	<b>Fontenrose – Pattern of the Combat Myth:<sup>94</sup></b>	<b>Girard – Internal Mimetic Cycle:</b>
<b>A</b>	The Dragon pair – the opponent is often a pair	1 Mimetic Doubling - imitating the internal desire of another internal human
<b>B</b>	Chaos and Disorder – caused by the opponent	2 Scandal - the model becomes an obstacle to the subject’s metaphysical desire
<b>C</b>	The Attack – opponent seeks to overthrow chief god(s)	(Ditto) <sup>95</sup>
<b>D</b>	The Champion	3 Violence Sanctioned (good to control bad) - a good sacrifice condoned to end the strife
<b>E</b>	The Champion’s ‘Death’	(Ditto) – combat, the duel
<b>F</b>	The Dragon’s Reign	(Ditto)
<b>G</b>	Recovery of the Champion	(Ditto)
<b>H</b>	Battle Renewed and Victory	4 Salvific Murder - good sacrificial violence accomplished
<b>I</b>	Restoration, Hero’s Banquet on the Monster, and Confirmation of Order	5-6 Table (Consumption) and Peace (Life): <sup>96</sup> (5) the ‘flesh and blood’ (metaphysical being) of the rival Other is ‘consumed’, (6) the peace is temporary <sup>97</sup>

**Table 3 – The Traditional Combat Myth and Internal Mimesis**

<sup>94</sup> As summarized in Yarbrow Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 60. Also see Fontenrose, *Python*, 9-11, and 469-474.

<sup>95</sup> Blocking a spring is typical in a combat myth, and is a fitting image, as water represents metaphysical being in *John*, and its biblical antecedents.

<sup>96</sup> The external mimetic response to the internal mimetic cycle is a rejection of that logic (spirit) and reception of the ‘enemy’ other. The receiving is articulated with the ‘good’ consumption metaphor of ‘bread (a table) in the presence of my enemies’ as depicted in Psalm 23, and in John 6:54-58 (see table 2).

<sup>97</sup> Because the underlying problem of internal mimesis remains. The ‘good’ violence must be repeated, unless another way is found.

### 3.4 The Two Types of Logos – Adding the Anti-Sacrificial Reflection Narrative or Johannine Logos

Through intertextual analysis, among other means, Yair Zakovitz and many after him identified the Hebrew literary device of the reflection narrative, a phenomenon already central to the discussion above with respect to the subversive redeployment of the combat myth throughout the Hebrew Bible (Boehm 2004, 145–156).<sup>98</sup> Identification of reflection narratives engenders an appreciation of the incredible intertextuality of the biblical corpus, and the complete dependence of the second temple Jewish and later Christian material upon it. As James L. Kugel has noted:

Even the most innocent-sounding remark about this or that biblical person or law or prophecy is likely to contain some element of interpretation. Quite often, that interpretation is found in fuller form elsewhere, in the vast corpus of second temple Jewish (and later Christian) writings that have reached us via various routes. Thus this literature as a whole, and the scriptural interpretations contained within it, must be the starting point for a reckoning with any single text from within it, since any single text is likely to evoke, if only in an offhand manner, interpretive motifs known from elsewhere. (2001, 169)

But it is not simply allusion to an earlier authoritative text that enables the contextualization and consistent understanding of a passage in question. It is also achieved by employing social scientific models appropriate to the material for exegeting the relationship between it and its antecedent(s). As already noted, Girard asserts that the essential paradigm with which to understand Jesus' subversive intent as presented in the Christian scriptures is the scapegoat lens of his mimetic anthropology (1987a, 270–271).

An example is appropriate here. Jesus himself exegetes Psalm 118 in a manner faithful to the reflection narrative technique as well as the scapegoat lens (demonstrating the complementarity of the two) in order to describe a new foundation for a new order without sacred (sanctifiable) violence. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus poses a question to the religious leaders concerning a passage from Psalm 118. This moment in the narrative comes immediately after Jesus has told the parable of the tenants who abuse and murder the messengers of their master, and finally murder the master's own son in order to dispossess him of his property (Matt 21; Mark 12; Luke 20). Girard uses this text as an example of the Gospels' anti-scapegoating reversal of interpretations, in other words, a reflection narrative. As Omri Boehm describes it:

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<sup>98</sup> Boehm draws on the work of Yair Zakovitz on the notion of reflection stories (1985, 165–76), which I was unable to engage as it is, to my knowledge, entirely in modern Hebrew.

“Reflection stories”, as defined by Y. Zakovitch, are a well-known feature in the biblical narrative. A "reflection story" is one in which we can find the same motives as in another, different story, but in inverted form. Like an image and its reflection in a mirror, the inverted image and its movements become an "antithesis" of the "original" one. A "sophisticated reader" who is able to trace the relation between the stories and understand it-in similarities but especially in differences-will be able to re-evaluate the stories, their actors, actions and contents. (2004, 147–148)

Jesus performs this operation with the stone rejected of Psalm 118. In fact, the Psalm itself already subverts the sacrificial violence Logos, which indicates that Jesus, described as the word made flesh in *John*, is merely in continuity with the program of cosmic renewal (in terms of rejecting sacred violence) already present in the Hebrew Bible. The one whose rejection founds and maintains cosmos for the many becomes the foundation of a second antithetical cosmos in Psalm 118. But Jesus adds the equation of the stone to himself, as a scapegoat par excellence, deliberately attempting to incarnate the text. Girard concludes, “The problem of exegesis Christ puts to his audience can only be resolved, in short, if we see in the words that he quotes the very formula for the reversal, at once invisible and an obvious one, that I am putting forward. The rejected stone is the scapegoat, who is Christ. By submitting to violence, Christ reveals and uproots the structural matrix of all religion” (1987a, 178–179). What Girard has asserted is supported by the (intra) socio-literary criticism of biblical reflection narratives, which is demonstrably present in a large number of stories in the Hebrew Bible, and continued in the Christian scriptures.

A simplistic illustration of the reflection narrative’s inversion is E || Δ. With regard to the combat myth then, the champion is the dragon, the dragon is the champion. Or rather, those emulating internal mimetic models necessarily imitate the desire of the rival other so that the two become completely indistinguishable. All the while both claim to be polar opposites. Because both are defined by the notion and practice of good versus bad violence, they cannot escape sameness, mutual metaphorical consumption, and self-destruction.<sup>99</sup> Girard asserts that the scapegoat lens enables the observation that mimetic rivals are doubles, essentially alike, the conclusion being that cosmos = chaos. Therefore that dichotomy is an artifice, is a lie. There is no good violence.

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<sup>99</sup> An example of a description of such a situation in the Bible is Isa 9:18-21, depicting Israel and Judah as mimetic rivals devouring each other until none remain.

In addition, the sacrificial violence that characterizes the two rivals is illogical from the vantage of the love Logos. The violent Logos undoes itself: “If Satan is divided against himself his kingdom cannot stand” (Matt 12:25-6; Mark 3:24-26; Luke 11:17-18). Jesus is a ‘dragon’ (demon-possessed) only in the eyes of the Logos of violence, while in fact he is of another Logos entirely, and is therefore not a double at all, since he has a new mind (to use Paul’s words in Romans 12:2, and elsewhere). Where an agent of violence sees enemies, an agent of love sees friends. One having realized the Logos of love cannot have an enemy as it would be illogical within the Logos of love. Only the Logos of love can see both viewpoints, while the Logos of violence sees a difference within violence itself that is merely delusion. From the vantage of love in the biblical subversion, the ‘dragon’ ceases to be the chaos-monster and is re-defined as the internal mimetic cosmos, which is the Satan, the violent Logos that conceals itself in ‘good’ violence.<sup>100</sup>

The biblical material is engaged in an anti-sacrificial-violence critique of the sacrificial violence Logos, and to do so (among other means) deliberately subverts the mythic Combat cycle of cosmos versus chaos, which traditionally depicts and condones that Logos. I borrow Boehm’s term to call this a reflection narrative (or ‘reflection story’). The Girardian model of external mimesis is part of the subversion of the internal mimetic combat myth. As such, I consider some biblical scholarship and Girard’s mimetic theory to use different terminology to identify a comparable set of phenomena in literature.<sup>101</sup> The difference between the two types of Logos – articulated by means of reflection narrative – has everything to do with the issue of violence,<sup>102</sup> and has precisely to do with how one perceives violence. The Heraclitean Logos is able to justify or sanction (or sanctify, make sacred) violence, while the Johannine Logos refuses to legitimate violence as a means to life, but actively reveals the fact that violence cannot, by definition, bring life to its practitioner, only death. The reflection narrative is regularly employed in the Hebrew Bible with anti-sacrificial (in the broad sense of the term) intent, as part of the Yahweh-Alone (Monotheism) movement.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Or scapegoating, or metaphorical consumption of the Other, which is the ordering principle of sacrificial violence. I think the *Apocalypse* must be read in this light.

<sup>101</sup> And also in actual human interaction. The representation of life is, after all, a primary goal of classic works of literature.

<sup>102</sup> Or sin, unfaithfulness to the way of the Lord. This unfaithfulness the Bible describes synonymously with violence (e.g. Mal 2:1-17).

<sup>103</sup> Boehm’s reading of the Abraham cycle is an example, including the subverted rite of circumcision (2007, 54-57). There is clear regression from the intended (subverted) purpose of circumcision, as indicated by the prophets’

As mentioned, John J. Collins recognized in the Bible the presence of the loving God, who is perhaps most explicitly described in the Gospels. The representation of the loving God *seems* often to be inconclusive in the Hebrew Bible, but grows in explicit articulation in the second temple Jewish literature (e.g. Jub 18, concerning the Aqedah; and WisSol 11:21–12:2). Girard cites an example of the full development of the loving God:

The Gospel of John states that God is *love*, and the synoptic Gospels make clear that God treats all warring brothers with an equal measure of benevolence. For the God of the Gospels, the categories that emerge from *violence* and return to it simply do not exist. When brother hates brother, neither one can expect this God to answer his call and come to his support. (1987a, 271; 1 John 4; John 3:16, 5:42; Matt 5:44–46, etc.)

Girard suggests that the definition of this second way of ordering is also to be found in the prologue of John's Gospel (John 1:4–5 and 10–11). To clarify his position, Girard states:

The Johannine Logos is foreign to any kind of violence; it is therefore forever expelled, an absent Logos that never has had any direct, determining influence over human cultures. These cultures are based on the Heraclitean Logos, the Logos of expulsion, the Logos of violence, which, if it is not recognized, can provide the foundation of a culture. The Johannine Logos discloses the truth of violence by having itself expelled. First and foremost, John's prologue undoubtedly refers to the Passion. But in a more general way, the misrecognition of the Logos and mankind's expulsion of it disclose one of the fundamental principles of human society. (1987a, 271)

God causes his soft rain, bringing bread and life, to fall indiscriminately on the just and the unjust (Isa 26:19, Matt 5:44–45). This God is entirely gratuitous and benevolent. One who takes this deity as model is a person whose *modus vivendi* involves loving his enemy, turning the other cheek, laying down his life for his 'friends', and so on. This son of Man opposes violence, though not with violence, but with deliberate non-violence. The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are engaged in the disclosure (revelation) of the Logos of violence by means of the Logos of love. The former is represented at times as the kingdom of the Satan, the latter at times as the kingdom of the Father of Jesus, who represents all scapegoats, in the sense that the term would come to denote in Bible-imbibed Western culture. That son of Man is like every son of Man expelled and/or murdered by his own flesh and blood (or fellow image-bearers of the divine).

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subsequent quest to restore the anti-sacrificial intention of the rite (e.g. Deut 10:12–22, 30:6; Jer 4:4, 9:24–26). Another example is the judgement of Solomon as the contrast of sacrifice and anti-sacrifice (1 Kgs 3:16–28; Girard 2001, 28–9). Girard notes that the prologue of *John* is an anti-sacrificial reading of the expulsion from the Garden in Genesis (1987a, 274–6).

### 3.5 Allusive Synergy in John 6 – The Working Together of Multiple Biblical Themes

The ostensible overlaying of multiple biblical themes and passages in John 6 makes necessary the identification and collation of those antecedents in order to make comprehensible the intent of *John*. The Prologue to *John* indicates to the reader from the outset that what follows is to be a massive synergy of elements from the Hebrew Bible.<sup>104</sup> The ‘word became flesh’ (John 1:14) indicates that *John* views Jesus the Nazarene as the word of God incarnate, which is to say, the Bible in the form of a son of Man (mortal; e.g. Malina 1968, 106).

The critical background to John 6 includes: 1) from Torah, the aetiological foundation stories of Genesis, Exodus 1-16 and Numbers 11 with the Lord’s ambivalent Table in the wilderness, 2) from the Prophets, the alluded-to portions of *Isaiah* and the son of Man narrative of *Ezekiel* (his purpose, activities and message), 3) from Wisdom (Writings), Proverbs 1-9 contrasting the way of life and the way of violence (death), and Psalm 23 (among certain other Psalms), 4) from the Synoptic Gospels, the feedings on the mountainsides, and the son of Man in conjunction with the Lord’s ambivalent Table, 5) from Paul, the Lord’s Ambivalent Table.

There are numerous smaller yet highly pertinent examples throughout the Biblical, Second Temple, and early Christian literatures that constitute significant background. Naturally, not all may be addressed here. There is also pre-biblical background to bear in mind. That is, the Near Eastern mythical antecedents from outside of Israelite culture that are undoubtedly part of the chain of antecedent texts to a certain extent, including the Adapa and Enuma Elish<sup>105</sup> myths of Mesopotamia that represent some of the earliest bread of heaven versus flesh of the sea and sacrificial combat myth stories.

There is an unfortunate myopia in some scholarship on *John* that looks at the ‘bread of heaven’ or manna material that seems to dominate chapter 6, but discounts the possibility of a biblical antecedent for the flesh in 6:51-58 in connection with the bread, often assuming that the apparent eucharistic feel of the section precludes such an allusion.<sup>106</sup> As noted in the first

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<sup>104</sup> Raymond Brown writes, “... John vi reflects a medley of themes drawn from the synagogue readings at Passover time” (AB29 1966, 279). These readings include portions of Genesis, Exodus, and Isaiah, making intertextual allusions and assumptions drawn from collective Tradition.

<sup>105</sup> I wondered whether I should not open this discussion of background by suggesting the Genesis creation account as an anti-sacrificial reflection narrative of the Enuma Elish (or a myth like it), in which Marduk creates the cosmos from the corpse of his slain opponent, the chaos-monster Tiamat. The God of Genesis creates without a hint of violence. He simply gives out of his own ‘being’. I decided against this direction, but it remains a significant piece of background to my mind.

<sup>106</sup> Because it is often assumed that the eucharistic material is not ‘historical,’ which is to say it is of later and extra-biblical origin.

chapter, some studies of the manna tradition in relation to John 6 have noted instances of the bread and flesh symbolism coexisting in certain passages (e.g. Exod 16 and Num 11), and being used to contrast two ways, one of life and one of death (e.g. Malina 1968, 105). Overall, however, these studies have generally concluded that the pairing of loaves and fish has no strong precedent in the biblical tradition (e.g. Wong 1998, 195), and no certain bearing on the intended meaning of the contrast in John 6. This thesis reconsiders those conclusions.

In John 6 (and its immediate context), we find a remarkable interweaving of (often seemingly disparate) topoi from all over the biblical corpora: reference to portions of the Genesis creation (cosmogony) with the word (or wisdom, or spirit) of God hovering on the waters (e.g. Gen 1:2; WisSol 9:1-2 and 9, John 1:1-5; 6:38 and 45-51a). There is allusion to flesh coming up from the Sea borne on the breath of God (e.g. Num 11:31; John 6:19-21). We encounter references to portions of the Exodus narrative with the bread of Heaven and the flesh of the Sea (e.g. Exod 16:11-13, Num 11:4-6). There are references to instruction concerning internal mimetic (sinful, violent) desire that occurs for example in Genesis, Numbers, and Proverbs (e.g. Gen 4:6-14, Num 11:4-15 and 31-35, Prov 1:18-19, Prov 9:18). There are allusions to a choice between a way that is death and a way that is life (e.g. Num 11; Proverbs 1-9). We encounter the Lord's way as light, and Humankind's way as darkness (e.g. Exod 14:20; Isa 59:9-10, 60:1-3; John 1:5, 1:9, 8:12, 12:35). We find the contrast between the will<sup>107</sup> of God and the will<sup>108</sup> of Humanity, which is to say, grasping at equality with God versus humility before God (e.g. Gen 1:26-31, Gen 3:4-6, Isa 44, John 5:31-47, 6:32-36, 3:17-21, 12:43). We encounter references to the contrast between two types of banquet or an ambivalent Table (e.g. Num 11 with bread versus flesh, Prov 9, 1 Cor 10:14-22, 11:23-32), in other words, two ways of metaphorically eating flesh and drinking blood (John 6:47-58). There is allusion to founding creation through the spoken word of God (non-violently) versus founding order (cosmos) through (metaphorically) drinking the blood of an Other (e.g. Gen 4:14-17) in the way that Cain founded the first cultural order in biblical history, the first cosmos.<sup>109</sup> There is reference to the idea of scandal (e.g. Exod 10:7, Ps 69:22, John 6:61, Rom 11:7-12); and other allusions are made. Is there a unifying factor to these many seemingly disparate themes and materials?

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<sup>107</sup> metaphysical desire ~ praise, acceptance, faithfulness, reliance, etc.

<sup>108</sup> metaphysical desire ~ praise, acceptance, faithfulness, reliance, etc.

<sup>109</sup> This type of foundation is counter-poised to the Lord's Creation, and better parallels Marduk's violent and bloody creation of the Babylonian cosmos through the flesh and blood of Tiamat and her consort Qingu, for example (Dalley 2000, 253-57).

Though at first glance there may appear to be no continuity between some or all of these themes and antecedent passages, it is clear that to *John* there was continuity and coherence, and therefore it is *John's* view that must be understood before it may be critiqued. *John* seeks to demonstrate that the full authority and interpretation of *Tanakh*, in essence, is made manifest in Jesus the son of Man. While it appears daunting, the reader must consider the possibility that the monumental interweaving is intentional, and if so, that it represents a grand interpretation of the Hebrew Bible embodied in the word made flesh. This attempt should not surprise the reader in light of the Prologue (John 1:1-18), which Girard and others have observed is a re-articulation of the Creation narrative in the name of the word of God, both son of Man and son of God (1987a, 274-6).

Nothing can be interpreted accurately if done out of context, and so a proper reading of John 6:53 will necessarily account for the convergence of the many themes and allusions in and around John 6, if only in passing, to be sure that the reading of a particular element is in harmony with its surroundings. The synergy of multiple antecedents from the Hebrew Bible in John 6 makes for a massive, well-woven and (certainly *John* hopes) authoritative expression of an understanding of Jesus as God's word made flesh (John 1:14).

It is important to mention that neither Girard nor I view the Christian material as engaged in any kind of supersessionism or Christian triumphalism,<sup>110</sup> of which Girard has sometimes been accused of suggesting (e.g. Matthews and Gibson 2005, 3). The purpose of *John*, and *John's* Jesus (both perceiving themselves as faithful sons of Israel the text suggests), is clearly continuity and fidelity rather than cancellation (abolition, conclusion, supersession, etc.) with regard to the Hebrew Bible. Jesus is proposed to embody the word (John 1:14), giving it fuller expression for creatures that require mimetic models (and are short on consistently external models), not superseding the word.

### **3.6 Previously Identified Texts of Mimetic Revelation in the Bible**

A number of scholars have already identified and explored several texts in the Hebrew and Christian canons that may be described as texts of mimetic revelation, or texts that describe

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<sup>110</sup> For example, see Girard's interview with James G. Williams, where he suggests that the Gospel is a continuation of an idea already articulated, for example, in the Joseph Narrative (Girard 1996, 252-3).

both the way of death (masquerading as life-giving, the Logos of violence) and the way of life (the Logos of love) in polemical contrast, or what Omri Boehm has called a reflection narrative (2007, 51-52).<sup>111</sup> Girard suggests a number of texts that contain articulation of both logics as well and, though less systematically and consistently than Boehm in this aspect at least, Girard describes the two as in a mirror, reflection, or subversion relationship (Girard 2001, 16-18; Girard 1987a, 144-58).

For this reason I meld Boehm's perhaps more systematic method for identifying and investigating anti-sacrificial biblical reflection narratives with Girard's mimetic theory that offers greater context and meaning to this biblical vocation already recognized in the field of biblical studies. With that, I also meld my understanding of the biblical subversion of the sacrificial combat myth motif with the subversion of the broad mythological worldview that both Boehm and Girard have recognized to be the Logos that derives order through violence. The latter is subverted by the love Logos by means of the Hebrew reflection narrative technique. These three trends or currents in biblical studies (the anti-sacrificial reflection narrative, the combat myth subverted, and mimetic theory) are brought together in this thesis to aid in the formation of the background to- and systematic analysis of the midrashic homily<sup>112</sup> in John 6.

Some of the previously identified texts of the love Logos' subversion of the violence Logos are listed here. Omri Boehm identified the reflection narrative, or contrast of the two types of Logos, in the Abraham cycle in Genesis, particularly with regard to the Binding of Isaac (2004 and 2007). René Girard has identified anti-sacrificial reflection narratives in numerous texts of the Hebrew Bible and Christian scriptures, including the Binding of Isaac where he essentially agrees with Boehm's reading, as well as the Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph narratives in Genesis (1977, 4-6; 2001, 16-18). Jean-Michel Oughourlian identifies and analyzes the disclosure of the mimetic revelation (the biblical aetiology of internal mimesis, or sin and violence in humanity) in the stories of Adam and Eve and their sons (2010). Girard views the Judgement of Solomon as directly concerning the biblical distinction between love and violence, or selflessness and sacrifice (a distinction in the meaning of 'sacrifice' itself; 2001, 28-29; 1987a, 237-45). Girard has also read Isaiah 52-53 as a text of mimetic revelation (1987a, 156-7), as well

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<sup>111</sup> Boehm borrows this idea from the work of Yair Zakovitz (e.g. 1985. "Reflection Story – Another Dimension of the Evaluation of Characters in Biblical Narrative". *Tarbitz*. 54/2: 165-76. Print.) and uses it to both reconstruct what he calls 'the ancient Near Eastern myth of child sacrifice' and argue that the Abraham cycle of stories in Genesis is a subversive polemic against that sacrificial order, or a reflection narrative.

<sup>112</sup> Identified by Borgen (1963) and Malina (1968), among others.

as some of the Wisdom literature including the book of *Job* to which he dedicated an entire volume (1987b). Girard reads much of the Gospels as completely engaged in the contrast of the two types of Logos (1987a, 263-80). However, he has not brought his scapegoat lens to John 6. I have suggested that such a lens (the Johannine Logos) may be able to explain the juxtaposition of so many seemingly disparate themes, and allusion to so many different passages of the Bible, in and around John 6. Use of this lens may enable the coherent interpretation of John 6:31-58, and especially the contextual meaning of John 6:53 that so many scholars recognize remains lacking.

### **3.7 The *Type* of Mimetic Rivalry occurring between Agents of Opposing kinds of Logos**

A number of stories and passages, like the ones just listed, together provide examples of the main permutation of mimetic scandal and its resolution described in the biblical material, and that recurs in the Jesus Narratives (Gospels). This permutation articulates the choice of two ways – in which persons individually and collectively may tread – in the inevitable moments of mimetic rivalry and scandal; choosing either the way of death or the way of life.

The Bible contains numerous scenarios with various responses and actions by the participants. Broadly speaking, there are four potential permutations of any given scandal. The first two are internal mimetic resolutions: 1) war between the rival doubles, in which peace returns via the ‘sacrifice’ (metaphorical consumption) of one or the other rival, or 2) surrogate victimization of a collectively selected third party (or a scapegoating), in which peace returns as responsibility for the strife is carried away from the community on the back of the expelled or murdered third party.

The third potential outcome of scandal is that one or all parties engage in metaphysical humility, or love of the neighbour as much as the self, resulting in a de-objectification of the Other, and deference to the Other’s desire, re-creating distance and a situation of voluntary external mimesis.<sup>113</sup> The fourth permutation is all too common in the biblical material, as it is the means to subverting violence through the witness (martyrdom) of a ‘prophet,’ the first of which is Abel. In this type of mimetic cycle, of the two mimetic rivals, one is not governed by the violent Logos, but by an anti-violent logic, the Logos of love. This is the type of the mimetic

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<sup>113</sup> An exceptionally rare outcome, for which the Bible is constantly striving. An example would be the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers (Gen 45:5, 50:15-21).

cycle of which the Gospel accounts are examples. The fourth type of mimetic cycle *seems* to be the first or second type, initially. I hope to show that there is more to these stories, however. The Gospels – examples of the fourth permutation – have a number of precedents in the Hebrew Bible that as such constitute significant background.

Typically, only one of the four permutations occurs in a given story or scene, which is only logical. In Genesis, a classic narrative that *appears* to be the first permutation is the tale of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-17), of (supposedly) the second, the story of Joseph's enslavement (Gen 37:1-36), and of the third, the account of Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers (Gen 42-47). However, Abel and Joseph, for their parts in their stories, play the role of the anti-violence (love, faithfulness) governed characters.

Analysis of these texts of mimetic revelation (Girard 1978, x) will comprise part of the assemblage of background to John 6. Identification of the internal and external mimetic content of texts of mimetic revelation is possible through the interpretive lens laid out in the methodologies. These writings should be read as quasi-theoretical, as articulating a logical anthropology<sup>114</sup> that seriously attempts to explain humanity's rivalrous circumstances and violent actions in Creation<sup>115</sup> in a rigorously logical way. The metaphysical plane of the narratives should be born in mind continually.

I take the intention of *John's* prologue at its face as a re-iteration of the Creation story of Genesis in the light of the word made flesh (Girard 1987a, 274-6), or rather, a quick re-appraising glimpse back at the shift from Creation to human-made Cosmos that takes place between Genesis 1:1 and 4:17.<sup>116</sup> As with *John's* Prologue, John 6 is engaged in a return to- and re-appraisal of the Torah, in order to continue faithfully the Hebrew Bible's supposed agenda of completely subverting the mythological world (cosmos) from the inside out. As such, I suggest that the purpose of John 6:53 is "the (redemptive) return to the pattern of myth as well as its overcoming" (Girard 2001, 31). It is a symbolic (ambivalent, in Léon-Dufour's terms) reflection narrative, in essence.

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<sup>114</sup> In the literal sense of a discourse on the nature of humanity.

<sup>115</sup> I use this term to reflect the Hebrew understanding of all things made by God, and to differentiate that notion of a natural world (Earth) from the cosmos (or respective cosmoi), which I take Girard to assert is made by humans as a result of their 'fall' into an internal mimetic state. The cosmoi are founded and maintained by sanctioned violence (scapegoating) to control violent escalation that would lead to a cosmos' telophase (eschatological self-destruction).

<sup>116</sup> This could be considered a subversive ABBA chiasmus, therefore.

John 6:53 states the sacrificial principle that governs the cosmos and reinterprets it anti-sacrificially. It reiterates the biblical metaphor of consumption for violence that articulates the phenomenon of internal (acquisitive) mimesis – grasping at life (metaphysical being) by destroying the Other. However, it uses the familiar biblical metaphor to describe the subversion of that principle, the external mimesis of selfless love that Jesus describes with proleptic reference to the nature and event of his death.

### **3.8 Triangles of Desire in Biblical Texts of Mimetic Revelation**

#### **3.8.1 *In the Aetiological Genesis Material***

The six phases of the mimetic cycle that I have identified from Girard's mimetic theory are 1) progressive mimetic doubling, 2) scandal, 3) sanctioned violence, 4) salvific murder, 5) metaphorical consumption, and 6) temporary peace (cosmos) (Table 1). The phases of the mimetic cycle flow into each other in such quick succession in the first few narratives of the Hebrew Bible that they are difficult to parse, though all are clearly present. I begin analysis of a narrative with identification of the internal and external triangles of desire contrasted there, and the essential aspects of the internal mimetic cycle that are always explicitly articulated, namely, the scandal and consumption metaphor phases (see tables 1, 2, and 3).

In the tale of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:1-8, the external triangle is comprised of the Lord at the 'top' (of course, which is the heart of the awareness of mimetic human nature), the humans as ignorant yet voluntary imitators (subjects), and the Lord's will as the metaphysically desired object (figure 1). The internal triangle is introduced with the figure of the serpent. The serpent substitutes itself into the 'top' of the triangle by speaking for God in his apparent absence. Or rather, the serpent suggests that God's posture toward his image-bearers is internal rather than external. So the internal triangle is comprised of a suggested (projected) internal god as model (in the subjects' new theory of [the Lord's] mind), the human subject(s) and a suggested metaphysically desired object that is no longer innocuous but represents a withheld (blocked, scandalized) greater quality of life (metaphysical being) that the humans *supposedly* lack (figure 2).

In the second Hebrew foundational tale, Cain's murder of Abel (Gen 4:1-17), the first triangle introduced is an internal one with Abel at the 'top' from Cain's vantage, and Abel

possessing a metaphysically desirable object that is apparently withheld from Cain (the Lord's favour), which immediately scandalizes Cain. The Lord himself seems to notice the problem and intervenes in order to become an external model for Cain, to help him choose external mimesis. So the external triangle is topped by the Lord with Cain as subject, and the Lord suggests to Cain the metaphysical object of mastery over sin, or external mimesis itself. That is, the Lord describes Cain's scandalized and violent state of mind toward his brother as sin, or internal mimesis, and Cain must choose which posture toward another son of Man (his brother) he will abide by (the choice engendered by humanity's mimetic bipolarity, essentially).

The next Hebrew tale revisited here describes a clear rejection of internal mimesis in favour of external mimesis. It is one of the first victories over sin in the Bible. The Joseph narrative plays with the idea of mimetic triangles rather explicitly, in that it toys with the nature of social hierarchies. Joseph is portrayed as offending the social hierarchy of his family, and thereby scandalizing all members thereof (Gen 37:10-11). Some of the brothers react violently (Gen 37:20). The external triangle is comprised of the Lord at the 'top' (this is always the case in the biblical material, since its final redaction is thoroughly imbued with the notion of Yahweh-Alone), Joseph as his faithful emulator (the subject), and the metaphysical object is externality itself, the Lord's 'being', which is freely given to the metaphysically humble Joseph who serves him. In so doing, Joseph serves everyone faithfully (though he is initially portrayed as arrogant because his dreams contest traditional hierarchies). The internal triangle is comprised of Joseph at the 'top' in the theories of [Joseph's] mind of some of his brothers, those brothers are the subjects quickly scandalized, and the object is very much like the object seemingly withheld from Cain by Abel, which is the favour (honour, praise, glory) of a father-figure.

### 3.8.1.1 Four-Fold Fracture, Four-Fold Reparation

It is significant to note that the Joseph narrative describes a four-fold restoration of a four-fold metaphysical (and physical) death.<sup>117</sup> The tale of Joseph is agreed by many to most clearly offer the polemical parallel, even the solution, to the problem that unfolds in the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel (Girard 1987a, 149; Brett 2000, 37). Girard views the Joseph

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<sup>117</sup> As described with the unfaithfulness of Adam (Man, son of God), Eve, Cain (son of Man), and others. For Adam and Eve, the psychological fracture occurs in Gen 3:4-7, the theological in Gen 3:8 and 23, the sociological in Gen 3:7 and 16b, and ecological in Gen 3:15 and 17. For Cain, the psychological (and partly sociological - with his brother) fracture is described in Gen 4:6-7, and the other three are all certainly in Gen 4:14.

narrative as containing full expression of the restorative Logos that Jesus reiterates in the Christian material. Much of the imagery first employed in the story of Cain and Abel (a tale of many firsts) recurs in that of Joseph and his brothers. This shared imagery sheds light on the related meaning of all the stories included here. The writers of the Hebrew Bible seem to have possessed an awareness of the heart of human nature in its insatiable desire to acquire the very essence of the Other; in other words, an internal mimetic proclivity. This ‘bent’ of humanity acts in ignorance of the reality that the acquisition does not enhance one’s life but destroys it. Jean-Michel Oughourlian writes concerning Genesis’ description of internal mimesis:

The ‘forbidden fruit’ is only a symbol, and it is mimetic rivalry, which is itself the source of all the oppositional differences in the world, that causes one to eat it. And yet these differences seem to come out of the ‘forbidden fruit’ as though they were already contained in it before being swallowed by the humans who will never be able to digest them. The allegory of the serpent is well chosen: the mimetic venom insinuates itself between the woman and God, then between the woman and the man. From this point on, false differences invade the field of reality, and reality is everywhere replaced by illusion. (2010, 67)

Metaphorical imagery is the means by which the biblical writers express a profound quasi-theoretical understanding of human mimetic bipolarity. Girard is right to consider these narratives quasi-theoretical texts of mimetic revelation (1978, x).

### **3.8.2 *In the Exodus Narrative***

The external triangle is formed when Moses encounters ‘I Am’ in the wilderness, and is comprised of ‘I AM’ at the ‘top’, Moses as the willing subject, and the will of ‘I Am’ as the metaphysical object. The internal triangle is Moses at the top from the vantage of Pharaoh (“See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh...” – Ex 7:1), and the people of Israel seem to physically embody what Moses is blocking from Pharaoh, whom the latter has objectified and seeks to continue possessing and oppressing. Pharaoh has learned the spirit (or Logos) of internal mimesis well from his father, who was himself scandalized by the people of Israel and objectified them horribly (Ex 1:8-16). Significantly, the text says that these two Pharaohs did not know Joseph (Ex 1:8), that is, they had no benefit from the external mediator that Joseph was, in his explicit and self-professed imitation of the external Deity within the narrative’s world (e.g. Gen 41:15-16). These Pharaohs believe they are gods, and view Moses as a rival for that position (mimetic doubles).

In the first concise yet complete internal mimetic cycles of Genesis just reviewed, four forms of brokenness due to faithlessness toward the Lord (metaphysical death) are described as a result of attempts at violent acquisition of life at the expense of the Other. The psycho-social and metaphysical foci of the worldview behind the text are clear. The phases of the internal mimetic cycle are more distinct in this example from Torah, the Exodus narrative (Exodus 1-15).<sup>118</sup> This subversion of the sacrificial combat myth is followed by Exodus 16 (and Numbers 11) that contrasts the two ways in highly symbolic fashion, contrasting bread and flesh to form a polemic between reliance on the way to life symbolized by the Egyptian cosmos, and reliance on the way to life symbolized by the Lord's presence. This contrast is revisited throughout *Tanakh*.

The phases of the mimetic cycle in the Exodus are laid out in table 6. They are background to *John* and John 6, which make an essential contrast between Moses (supposedly) and Jesus, and the life offered via each model. Moses encounters 'I AM' in the wilderness of Sinai, and is commanded to approach Pharaoh in the name of 'I AM' in order to free Israel from the Egyptian cosmos, and bring them into the Lord's presence (Ex 3:9-15). Moses squares off with Pharaoh and they quickly form a relationship of mimetic doubles. Moses imitates I AM's external mimetic desire, while Pharaoh seems to imitate his father's internal mimetic desire.<sup>119</sup> Pharaoh is scandalized by Moses' imposition of the will of a god he does not know, which if obeyed *appears* as though it would cripple his cosmos (e.g. Ex 10:7-11; 14:5-8). Moses is in an external mimetic relationship with 'I AM' begun in the wilderness, and so unlike Pharaoh he is not scandalized by Pharaoh's violent reaction. He does not imitate the desire of Pharaoh or his way. The latter is characterized by increased violence toward the people whom Moses is attempting to preserve from Pharaoh's 'jaws' in keeping with the Lord's will (desire).

### **3.8.3 In Ezekiel – the Son of Man Narrative**

In *Ezekiel*, the two triangles are formed with imagery of a husband, a wife, and many adulterous men (Ezek 23). The external triangle is depicted with the Lord at the 'top', the faithful imitator (subject) is the son of Man (the prophet Ezekiel here), and the metaphysical object is the will (desire) of the Lord which is tied (as it was in the Exodus narrative) to his name (image-

<sup>118</sup> The Exodus may be considered a subversive variant of the combat myth, and I would characterize it as an anti-sacrificial (or anti-violent) variant.

<sup>119</sup> The Pharaoh's father had already begun to oppress the Hebrews out of fear of their numbers, and had sanctioned the mass murder of their newborn sons (Ex 1:15-16) among other forms of violence. That same Pharaoh had attempted to murder Moses (Ex 2:15), who was spared as a child in the earlier attempted mass murder.

bearers) the people of Israel (Ezek 2-3). The Lord is depicted as a faithful husband, the peoples of Israel and Judah as his two unfaithful wives, and the surrounding nations and their gods as adulterous men who bed the Lord's wives.

The wives are unfaithful by imitating the desire of nations, and the nations of their desires, in internal mimesis leading toward rival doubling and destruction (e.g. Ezek 23:48). Therefore the internal triangle (there are many, but I shall select the most pertinent) is comprised of Israel and Judah (their leaders) taking other gods (nations and their leaders) as models, and vice versa. Israel and Judah, each, are as an unfaithful wife who willfully objectifies herself – 'playing the whore' (Ezek 23:3) – and moves between rival lovers, one the husband (the Lord) and one the adulterer who willfully takes another man's wife.<sup>120</sup> Both Israel-Judah and the nation(s) perceive the other as possessing metaphysical life-giving objects that are withheld and must be acquired by force, as is typical of internal mimetic doubles. Israel and Judah are unfaithful to the Lord by the very fact that they turn from external to internal mediation, choosing human models as if they were gods. Therefore Israel-Judah and the nations are both of them subject and model, or rival doubles, who both scandalize each other and block each other's desire for the metaphysical being of the Other. Israel-Judah has forgotten the Lord who gives actual life, and so they are in a state of metaphysical death, or the Graves of Desire, like those described in Numbers 11. They are a 'Valley of Dry Bones' (Ezek 37:11-14).<sup>121</sup>

The two suitors (the other actually a group) are contrasted, the one oppressive (forceful, violent; Ezek 23:22-27) and the other loving (patient, compassionate, faithful; Ezek 23:18, 23:35, 33:10-11, 33:17-20, 34:1-31), and the leaders of Israel-Judah as emulating (doing the will of, or behaving in a manner consistent with) the oppressive suitors – Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, etc. – rather than emulating the loving suitor, the Lord (e.g. Ezek 22:6-12).<sup>122</sup> The leaders are like shepherds who eat their own sheep (Ezek 34:10), a consumption metaphor for oppression and violence.

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<sup>120</sup> Ezekiel moves freely in and out of various kinds of metaphor and imagery, making his logic difficult to track. However, I think Girard's mimetic theory fits this subject matter and enables consistent exegesis, especially in terms of triangles of desire.

<sup>121</sup> Ezekiel 23:17ff says that, "...she broke/was alienated from her life because of them (the internal mimetic model-obstacles)".

<sup>122</sup> Yahweh is termed 'husband' while the nations 'masters' (baals).

### 3.8.4 In the Hebrew Wisdom

The Hebrew Wisdom literature is very explicit in its discussion of models, and the two types of triangles are therefore readily identifiable. The external triangle is comprised of the Father at the ‘top’, exhorting the Son as subject to acquire the metaphysical object called Wisdom (e.g. Prov 2:1-5), which is explicitly equated with the way of life (e.g. Prov 2:16-19), and is therefore externality itself (e.g. Prov 2:20-21; it is quite abstract, quasi-theoretical).

The internal triangle is comprised of a fool at the ‘top’, and a fool who internally imitates him (e.g. Prov 3:31, 4:14-17), and both go violently seeking the metaphysical being that each other seem to possess and each feels he lacks (Prov 1:12-14). They both seek the object that is Folly. Their way is the way of violence and death (Prov 1:18-19). They walk in the darkness of internal mimesis (Prov 4:19), and do not know that they are walking in Sheol (Prov 5:5-6), in the grave, the house of Folly, in metaphysical and imminent physical death (e.g. Prov 9:13-18; as *John* says, the wrath of God abides on them – John 3:36).

The Wisdom literature is concerned with model selection from the outset, and the suggestion that a human is constantly encountering other subjects taken as models and therefore potential rivals, as a natural function of human interdividuality. The Wisdom is in large measure concerned, therefore, about the avoidance of the violent fallout of the regular scandals that arise in the natural course of human interaction.

## 3.9 The Biblical Articulation of Two Essential Phases of the Internal Mimetic Cycle – Scandal and Metaphorical Consumption – Central to John 6

### 3.9.1 The Biblical Notion of Scandal ( $B||B_1$ of the Mimetic Cycle – Table 1)

Scandal is the pivotal event in the internal mimetic cycle in a relationship between interdividuals, which occasions the moment of choice between the two types of mimesis. It is a ‘test’ of sorts, and is occasionally termed, described and/or translated as much.<sup>123</sup> The moment of scandal is a test that Man (Adam) and Eve failed, and that the first son of Man (Cain) failed. It is a failure that was regularly emulated thereafter, according to biblical history and the meta-narrative of Judaeo-Christian scriptures at any rate, because of the internal mimetic models

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<sup>123</sup> Examples of deliberate scandals performed as ‘tests’ by the Lord, to see if humans will choose his will (desire) or internal mimetic desire, are Gen 22:1 -  $\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ ; 42:15 (Joseph of his brothers, to see if they will sacrifice another brother, or finally choose love of brother) -  $\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ ; Ex 15:25 -  $\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ ; 16:4 -  $\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ ; etc.

available to humanity, and the apparent inclination to make gods of each other, imitating their internal desires, rather than an external desire.<sup>124</sup> As Girard has succinctly defined it, scandal is “the model that becomes obstacle, period” (2001, 22). In any given interdividual triangle of desire, a subject may be scandalized by another whom he has taken as model of desire when that Other is perceived (a theory of mind) to have become an impediment to the metaphysical object of his desire.

In *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (1987a), Girard explores Jesus’ use of the Greek σκανδαλίζω and its antecedent in the Hebrew Bible in the term מְכַשֵּׁל (and other similar terms; 1987a, 416-431). He analyzes the meaning, various other terms used to convey that meaning, and the problem of English translation of the term and idea in the Hebrew and Christian material. I have put together a table (Table 4) below that lays out the variety of terms used (as encountered in passages explored for this thesis) and their key terms in Hebrew and Greek. This brief figure demonstrates the state of the problem quite plainly. Nevertheless, I hope that my analysis of the selected texts here will show that Girard was quite right to exegete scandal the way he has, which is in a manner consistent with the intended meaning throughout the biblical literature.

In Girard’s own identification and evaluation of the notion of scandal in the Scriptures, he lists some of the ways σκάνδαλον is usually translated into English, and it is woefully inconsistent. I would instead advocate for a consistent technical translation of the term (and all such quasi-theoretical terms), in the spirit of the idea of ‘foreignizing translation’ (Rohrbaugh 2008, 12-14; Venuti 2008, 21-23), as well as to make understanding the biblical text and its intertextual consistency much easier. English translations of the description of situations of scandal or mimetic rivalry below regularly omit or replace the Hebrew and Greek terms, obscuring and often obliterating, with the removal of the original words, the intended meaning.

Girard notes that some English translations of Hebrew and Greek terms for scandal include, “ ‘scandal’, ‘obstacle’, ‘stumbling block’, or ‘snare’ lying in wait” (1987a, 416). I would suggest that ‘lying in wait’ is part and parcel with the typical Hebrew imagery (or idiom, see Jean-Marc Babut below) for articulating situations of scandal. I would also expand Girard’s list, noting that there is more than one Hebrew term used for this notion, and more than one Hebrew word translated σκάνδαλον in LXX as well as in New Testament reception of *Tanakh* and LXX.

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<sup>124</sup> Or idolatry, adultery, unfaithfulness, rebellion (Ezek 2-3, etc.), to use biblical terms.

That is, there is inconsistency in the Greek translation of the Hebrew words, let alone English translation, despite consistency of the contextual psycho-social scenarios described.

It is important to note that what Jean-Marc Babut and Claus Westermann say regarding biblical idioms, described below concerning the consumption metaphor, is equally relevant to the biblical idiom of scandal (see section 3.9.2). Both may take the form of a complete metaphor like a parable, or a single line, or simply one key term (Westermann 1990, 3). Complete examples of the idiom, or what could be regarded as the entire biblical notion of scandal as Girard identifies it, may be found in Ezekiel 14:1-11, Proverbs 1:10-19, or 4:14-16. These are all parabolic descriptions of scandalous activity, certainly denoting behaviour characteristic of internal mimesis and the Logos of violence. There are many other instances besides, either descriptive (narrative) or terminological, and the following table lists a selection. Many of the examples of scandal between rivals cited in the table below also contain clear anticipation of metaphorical consumption of the ‘being’ of someone. Consumption metaphors are dealt with directly in the next section.

Passage (Occurrence):	Key Hebrew Terms:	Key Greek Terms:
Gen 3:13 ‘trick’ – ‘give false hope’; model become obstacle ~ scandal	נָשָׂא	ἀπατάω
Gen 4:7 ‘Sin’ is ‘One lying in wait’ desiring to ensnare ~ scandal, and so must be mastered by the scandalized	תְּשׁוּקָה טָמְאָה, רָבִיץ	ἡσυχασον, ἁμαρτάνω, ἡ ἀποστροφή
Gen 37:4/8/11/18 hate (intolerance), jealousy (rivalrous/emulous) and intent to kill ~ scandalized	מֹת, נָכַל, קָנָא, שָׂנָא	μισέω, ζηλόω, πονηρεύομαι, ἀποκτείνω
Ex 10:7 Moses is a scandal, a model-obstacle, to Pharaoh’s desire	מֹקֵשׁ	σκῶλον
Num 35:20-21 one hates (unable to tolerate the presence of) an Other, he lies in wait with enmity (hostile intention) and strikes and kills the Other (Ex 21:14)	אֵיכָה צָדִיקָה, שֹׂנְאָה (צָדִיקָה)	ἡ ἔχθρα, ἡ ἐνέδρα, ἡ μῆνις, (ἐνεδρεύω)
Josh 23:13 The nations become snares and scandals to the children of Israel	מֹקֵשׁ, פֶּחַ	ἡ παγίς, τὸ σκάνδαλον
Judg 2:3 The nations and their gods become snares (lying in wait) and scandals to Israel	מֹקֵשׁ, (צָדִיקָה צָדִיקָה)	ἡ συνοχή, τὸ σκάνδαλον
1 Sam 24:11 – you are lying in wait to take my life	נָפֵשׁ, לָקַח צָדִיקָה	δεσμεύω, λαμβάνω, ἡ ψυχή
1 Sam 28:9 – you set a snare for my life to cause my death	מֹת, נָפֵשׁ, נָקַשׁ	παγιδεύω, ἡ ψυχή, θανατόω
Job 18:7-10 – one’s schemes against others are a snare and a trap bringing death, darkness, and death to self	מַלְכָּת, חֹבֶל, (צָמָא צָמִים, פֶּחַ רֶשֶׁת)	ἡ παγίς, ἡ παγίς, διψάω, τὸ σχοινίον, ἡ σύλλη(μ)ψις

<b>Passage (Occurrence):</b>	<b>Key Hebrew Terms:</b>	<b>Key Greek Terms:</b>
Ps 31:3-5 <sup>125</sup> - for your name protect me from the snare of the enemy, preserve my life/spirit	רוחַ כַּשֵּׁת	ἡ παγίς, τὸ πνεῦμα
38:12 – They lay snares with desire to acquire my life, choosing (greedy for-/threatening) my ruin	נָפֶשׁ בָּקֵשׁ נָקֵשׁ	βιάζω, ζητέω, ἡ ψυχή
Ps 59:1-3 – Men of blood lie in wait for my life	נָפֶשׁ אָרַב, אֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים	θηρεύω, ἡ ψυχή, ἄνδρες αἱμάτων
69:22 – Their Table (my life as their food) is a snare, a retribution (reciprocity), a scandal	שֶׁלֶחַן מִוֶּקֶשׁ, שֶׁלֶלּוּם, פָּח	ἡ παγίς, ἡ ἀνταπόδοσις, τὸ σκάνδαλον, τράπεζα
Prov 1: 10-11/13/18-19 – they lie in wait for blood, and to fill their houses with a victim’s objects of desire, but they lie in wait for their own blood, and keep hidden (make treasure of) their own lives. Stealing fragments of others’ lives fragments one’s own, taking the life of its master.	צִפּוֹן מַלְא, הָיוּ, דָּם, לָקַח בָּצַע, נָפֶשׁ אָרַב	τὸ αἷμα, ἡ κτήσις, πίμπλημι, κρύπτω, κοινωνέω
11:6 – The unfaithful are ensnared by their violent desires (choice to ruin another because of greed)	לִכְדּוֹת, פְּתוּיִם, הָיוּ	ἀλίσκομαι, παράνομοι, ἡ ἀπόλεια
Isa 8:11-15 (3:5-17) – Isaiah is not to go in the way of the people, because they will be scandalized by the Lord, because they imitated the desire of nations rather than the Lord’s	כָּשָׁל מִוֶּקֶשׁ, פָּח יָקֹשׁ לִכְדּוֹת מִכָּשׁוֹל	ἀλίσκομαι, ἡ παγίς, τὸ κοίλασμα, ἀδυνατέω, τὸ πτώμα, ἡ ἀσφάλεια
Jer 5:25-29 – (v26) the people lie in wait for humans as if for catching birds, like ‘the wicked’, bringing about their own ruin	אֲנָשִׁים, לִכְדּוֹת, שֶׁחִית יָקֹשׁ	διαφθείρω, συλλαμβάνω, ἄνδρες, ἡ παγίς
8:9 – The ‘wise’ who have rejected/refused the word of the Lord are ensnared and destroyed, are without wisdom	דָּבַר יְהוָה, מָאָס, לִכְדּוֹת חָתַת	ἀλίσκομαι, ἀποδοκιμάζω, ὁ λόγος κυρίου, πτοέω
9:7-9 – The Lord will test the people, because with his mouth a person speaks peace to his neighbour, but inwardly he sets a snare (scandal) ‘lying in wait’ for him	אֵךְ בִּבְחִן	δοκιμάζω, ἡ ἔχθρα
Ezek 3:20-21 – When a man is scandalized and the son of Man does not warn his brother, he will die, and the son of Man will be accountable for the life/blood of the man	מֹות, חֲטָאת, עָוֹל, דָּם בְּנִי-אָדָם מִכָּשׁוֹל	τὸ αἷμα, παράπτωμα, ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἀποθνήσκω, ἡ βάσανος, υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου
14:1-11 (vv3-4, 7) – The son of Man warns the people, because they have put idols in their hearts and stumbling-blocks before their faces, bringing on their own destruction (19:4/8, 33:4-8, 35:6, 38:21-23)	נִבֵּחַ מִכָּשׁוֹל עָוֹן, בְּנִי-אָדָם	ἡ κόλασις τῶν ἀδικιωτῶν, τάξι, υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου
36:13-15 – This example, like many others, contains consumption metaphor for violence in addition to scandal: The Lord will save his people from the scandal, Violence (eating Adam/humanity) and death that is internal mimesis	כָּשָׁל, שָׂכַל, אָדָם, אָכַל	κατεσθίω, ἄνθρωπος, ἀτεκνόω, ἀτεκνόω
Hosea 6:4-10 – The people’s love is fleeting, they lie in wait for each other, and ‘sacrifice’ each other. Like Adam, they are unfaithful to the Lord (Obad 1:7, Mal 2:8, Micah 7:2/5-6, Dan 11:14)	וְנִבֵּחַ, אִישׁ גְּדוּדֵי יָם בְּגֵד, אָדָם, חָהָה	ἀνδρὸς πειράτου, ὁ ἔλεος, ἡ θυσία, ἡ ἰσχὺς, ἄνθρωπος, καταφρονέω

**Table 4 – Scandal in the Scriptures**

<sup>125</sup> Ps 31:5 also expresses the external mimetic notion of entrusting one’s life to the External Model, rather than engaging Internal Models for gaining life through one’s own strength, one’s own violence.

### 3.9.1.1 Aetiology of Scandal in *Genesis*

In Genesis 3:1-8, the tale of Adam and Eve's 'fall', the serpent is truthful to an extent, because the humans have knowledge of good at this point, but acquisition of the fruit will bring knowledge of evil, or both good and bad mimesis. The internal mimesis brings violence and (metaphysical) death, however, as soon becomes apparent in the narrative. The serpent in effect puts words in the Lord's mouth by suggesting to Eve that there is knowledge possessed by the Lord but withheld from his image-bearers (Gen 1:26-27),<sup>126</sup> the son and daughter of God. The suggestion is clearly intended to cause scandal, or a theory of [the Lord's] mind pieced together by Eve that the Lord is not as external as he claims, has not given all things into the care of humanity, but in fact is blocking a greater 'being' from them that Eve could acquire simply by eating the forbidden fruit of a certain group of trees in the midst of the Garden.

The 'being' is described as the knowledge of good and evil, and may be interpreted as the knowledge of the two ways (described by the serpent as 'good' and 'evil'), since the humans have thus far lived in an external relationship with their Maker, in a state of metaphysical humility toward him. The serpent's suggestion serves to introduce a scandal to the minds of Eve and Adam. That is, their model (God) is portrayed as an obstacle also, in that he is blocking them from the fullness of life that, supposedly, only he currently enjoys. The humans and the Maker become rival doubles, though only from the perspective of the humans, since they have inflated themselves to contend with their model, and grasp at his (supposedly withheld) likeness in the form of the fruit (object) that God is withholding.

Thus to the serpentine theory of mind, God is model-obstacle-object to the humans, and they will eat (devour) the fruit supposedly imbued with God's superior 'being' to gain what they supposedly lack. In the world of the narrative, humanity changes here from (in)voluntary external mimesis before their Maker into awareness of mimetic bipolarity, or the existence of the choice to take life at another's expense, rather than merely receiving what is given. That is, as the serpent shrewdly suggests, the humans are 'good' before-hand by the Lord's own assessment (Gen 1:26-31), but if they eat the desirable fruit of the tree symbolizing the fullness of God, they will also know 'evil'<sup>127</sup> or internal mimesis, which is life acquired via grasping at the Other's

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<sup>126</sup> This thesis reads the text in its final form, as a whole, to understand the logic that unites it, despite the many elements that have been shown to indicate considerable editing and piecing-together of texts to form the final redaction.

<sup>127</sup> or sin, or violence.

metaphysical being. From the time of this 'fall' the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve will have to make a choice when 'tests' (scandals) like the one Eve and Adam faced here arise. Cain, the first son of Adam, is told as much when scandalized by his brother, and fails, choosing internal mimesis and the first murder. The humans are increasingly estranged from the exclusively external model, the Lord. They then only have each other for models, and have become internally inclined. This state is a general internal mimesis, and may be considered the reign of the Logos of violence.

In Genesis 4:1-17, the aetiology of biblical sin is first explicitly iterated in a tale of the first humans' first sons. The first son of God's first son of Adam (humankind), born in the image of his father (Gen 4:1, 5:3) and in the image of his Father (Gen 5:1-3), is a worker of the ground, and his brother is a keeper of sheep. In this tale, it appears that God's apparent preference to use animals as substitutes to prevent scandal (Girard 1977, 4-6), despite the parents' use of leaves (Gen 3:7, 3:21), is reiterated in God's apparent preference for Abel's offering of the fat of sheep rather than the vegetables that Cain offers. Cain is scandalized by his brother, who seems to have found favour in God's eyes instead of him, and Cain grows angry (Gen 4:5). Quickly we have rival doubles and a situation of scandal. The Lord comes to Cain to tell him that if he does well he will be accepted, and to warn him against sin lying in wait at Cain's tent-flaps, whose desire is for Cain, but Cain must master sin (Gen 4:6-7).

In the story of Joseph and his brothers the 'phantasm' representing the intense desire to take of the 'being' of the other is not explicitly stated, but may simply refer back to the sin personified in Genesis 4:7 with Cain. The remaining imagery present with the brothers of Joseph nicely parallels the story of Cain and Abel. The Joseph story also adds an obvious complication to the issue, being that there is a group of brothers. But as can be readily identified in the story, the brothers individually and together are the models for each other in cultivating a hatred of Joseph, each equally jealous of their father's favouritism toward him (Gen 37:4, 37:8). They are all scandalized by Joseph, who seems to block their father's affection. Internal battle against the suggestion of internal metaphysical desire seems to ensue more powerfully within two of the brothers than the rest, Reuben and Judah, who in turn debate with the group in order to effect a less disastrous outcome for Joseph (Gen 37:21-22, 26-27). These two seem to have an external model powerful enough in their memory to combat the internal proclivity in a scandal.

### 3.9.1.2 Scandal in *Exodus*

In the Exodus narrative, Pharaoh's servants tell him plainly that Moses is a scandal to them (10:7). The Hebrew term used is translated 'τὸ σκάνδαλον' elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, though here it is rendered 'snare' (σκῶλον), which is clearly synonymous. Moses and Pharaoh are described as in a relationship of rival doubles, though Moses' and Pharaoh's mutual desire for possession of the people (Moses on behalf of 'I AM') is not acted upon the same way, according to the same Logos. That is, while Pharaoh happily employs 'good' violence against Moses and his people, Moses does not respond in kind. Moses allows the Lord's signs to serve the purpose of allowing Pharaoh's violent grasping to return onto his own head (divine judgement, or wrath of God), in accordance with the paradoxical biblical notion of 'live by the sword, die by the sword' (e.g. Prov 1:18-19, Ezek 33:25-27; the Lord's 'wrath' bears a striking resemblance to causality).

### 3.9.1.3 Scandal in *Ezekiel* – the son of Man Narrative

Ezekiel 14:4-6 specifically addresses the problem of scandal, concerning doing the will of gods (other humans divinized in internal mimesis) rather than the will of 'I AM'. Ezekiel makes regular reference to the Exodus narrative and the idolatry of the people there in desiring the life of oppression in Egypt for the flesh-pots it afforded (e.g. Ezek 23:8, 23:21; Ezek 11:1-12, Ezek 24:1-14). So the flesh (of the cosmos, or the Sea – Exod 16, Num 11; see the Two Ways section below) became symbolic of imitating violent internal models, other humans, rather than relying on the Lord's provision, which was symbolized by the bread (of heaven). This essential contrast of both imagery and meaning is continued and expanded upon into the Exilic, Second Temple period and early Christian writings.

In *Ezekiel*, the Lord equates the stumbling block (scandal) to choosing idols over himself, and describes the same sort of divine judgement (living by violence, therefore suffering violence; e.g. Ezek 11:7-8, 33:25-7) that occurs to Pharaoh (Ex 15:9-10) and the desirous Israelites in the wilderness (Num 11:4-6, 11:31-34) who craved flesh when the Lord gave them bread. An internal mimetic model always becomes an obstacle eventually, resulting in violence and death for the human that imitates that form of mimesis. The human that imitates the external mimesis exemplified by Moses in relation to the Lord is not scandalized by the model. But there is more than one triangle happening when a subject moves from one model to another. The Lord's desire

for his people is also impeded. His wrath is not<sup>128</sup> to retaliate with violence, but to ‘turn his back’ (e.g. Ezek 23:18, 23:35) and allow the people to suffer the inevitable end of imitating an internal mimetic model (causality), which is ‘double-bind’, violence, and death (e.g. Ezek 23:28-31, 23:48-49).

*Ezekiel* makes both explicit and implicit reference to the Exodus narrative, with regard to the people’s flagging with regard to the choice of mimetic metaphysical models. In Ezekiel 2 allusion is implicit, and the context confirms the allusion with explicit reference throughout the later ‘narrative’ (e.g. Ezek 19:4, 20:5-10, 20:36, 23:3, 8, 19-21, 27). Three portions in Ezekiel 33 express the Lord’s desire to give the people the way of life (33:10-11, 33:14-15, 33:17-20), for them to turn from their deathly way, and live. Here in Ezekiel is clear talk of the two ways. The Lord pleads with them to turn and take him as model, engaging metaphysical humility, the way of external mimesis, to cease the internal mimesis with other humans, other nations, false-gods, and the constant scandals that imitation of their internal desires cause.

#### 3.9.1.4 Scandal in the Hebrew Wisdom

In a few key passages from the *Proverbs*’ description of the two ways (e.g. 1:13, 4:14-16, 4:19, 5:21-23),<sup>129</sup> examples of one characterized by internal mimetic desire for the other’s metaphysical being, followed by scandal, violence and death are together amongst the most thorough and clear iterations of a quasi-theoretical mimetic revelation in the biblical corpus. They clearly describe the choice of internal mimesis, when scandalized by- or scandalizing another. The other son of Man is violently treated, leading to the brother’s death, but also the metaphysical and eventual physical death of the violent, the text suggests.

Certain passages from the first nine chapters of *Proverbs* (e.g. 1:18-19, 3:21-26, 4:10-13, 4:18, 6:23-26) also describe the subversion of- or the path to avoiding the potential destruction scandals bring, in describing the way of life (e.g. 6:23b), which involves humility before the father-teacher, imitating his external metaphysical desire rather than an internal mimetic model, or a fool, who desires the metaphysical being of other men, is then scandalized by his internal

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<sup>128</sup> Not usually; the biblical accounts can be inconsistent, see Raymund Schwager on the progression toward more consistency on this point however (2000, 2<sup>nd</sup> English ed.). It is sometimes difficult to parse Janus-faced projections of Deity and wholly compassionate projections. See also Schwager’s article (1987) “The Theology of the Wrath of God” in *Violence and Truth*, edited by Paul Dumouchel, London: The Athlone Press.

<sup>129</sup> Job 18:5-21 is a clear parallel of Proverbs 1:10-19. Both describe the self-destruction brought on by internal mimesis.

desire, and brings about his own death. Proverbs 1:18-19 makes plain that those who lay snares (scandals) for others, or engage in violent reciprocity in moments of scandal that is, bring about their own deaths, paradoxically. Proverbs 6:26 rather interestingly contrasts an external solution to potentially scandalous desire with bread, and describes taking the invariably self-destructive path as having one's life devoured.

### 3.9.2 *The Biblical Consumption Metaphor for Violence (E||E<sub>1</sub> of Mimetic Cycle – Table 1)*

Before proceeding in identifying and reconstructing the use of the consumption metaphor for violence,<sup>130</sup> the variability of the usage of such imagery must be set forth. Concerning biblical expressions in general, Jean-Marc Babut has pointed out that:

The distinctive features of the expression can be identified only by comparison with other terms or expressions belonging to the same semantic domain. Inasmuch as the meaning of the expression is unknown *a priori*, it is not possible to establish or sketch out from the outset the semantic domain with which the expression could be associated. However, it is possible to get a preliminary idea of the domain by isolating the *constant features* that emerge in a comparison of the different contexts in which the expression appears. While it is not impossible *a priori* that the meaning of the idiomatic expression changed over time, it is nevertheless improbable that it would have several different meanings at a given point in its evolution. (1999, 85)

The expression under analysis here, which I call the consumption metaphor for violence (sin), is not always fully or explicitly formed in the context of the narratives in which it occurs, but fortunately, it does find complete expression in a few contexts, including the Hebrew Wisdom in Proverbs 1:11-12: “If they say, ‘Come along with us; / let’s lie in wait for innocent blood, / let’s ambush some harmless soul; / let’s swallow them alive, like the grave, / and whole, like those who go down to the pit,’” and Proverbs 1:18-19: “These men lie in wait for their own blood; / they ambush only themselves! / Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain; / it takes away the life of those who get it” (NRSV).

The complete articulation in *Proverbs* should not be surprising, as proverbs also in our own time have complete forms in formal contexts or moments of teaching, while in common usage only part of an expression is employed and the hearer (reader) is expected to perceive the referent on his own; the assumption being that all the hearers (readers) share a common body of practical wisdom (collective memory or shared authoritative tradition). For example, in our time and place some say, “When in Rome...” as they proceed to engage in a strange or new practice

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<sup>130</sup> An ‘idiom’, or what might otherwise be understood as a ‘unitary complex’ (Babut 1999, 28).

with strange or new people, and the speaker need not complete the adage, everyone knowing immediately what he means.<sup>131</sup> This is similar to what is going on with the Hebrew consumption metaphor for violence. The complete adage is in the first chapter of the Proverbs, everyone knows it, so only partial reference needs (or ought) to be made, since this keeps the reader engaged, and deeper significance is instilled in the story. Westermann writes of this phenomenon with regard to parables:

[The comparison] can be expanded into a parable which would then form an independent self-enclosed unit, a brief narrative. The explicit comparison consisting of a single sentence can also be reduced to an implicit comparison consisting of only one (or two or three) word(s). This implicit comparison reduced to one word is usually a metaphor (e.g. 'the earth opened its mouth', 'the arm of the LORD'). All three forms are comparisons inasmuch as they reflect a process of comparing or inasmuch as they are based on such a process. Although transitional forms exist, these three can nevertheless be clearly distinguished: the comparing narrative (parable) – the single sentence comparison – the comparison in just one word. (1990, 3)

Westermann asserts that it is necessary to investigate occurrences of all three types in order to fully comprehend the significance. Such a systematic identification is what I attempt to do with regard to the consumption metaphor for violence (as similarly conducted with biblical scandal above), which is a key aspect of the internal mimetic cycle, and in my view is deliberately subverted<sup>132</sup> in John 6:51-58 to articulate an external mimesis exemplified by Jesus' relationship with his Father. A complete form of the consumption metaphor, used to describe internal (acquisitive, grasping) mimesis for the violent appropriation of the other son of Man's metaphysical being, occurs in the first chapter of Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:11-12 happens to be the first expression of wisdom expressed after the introduction in the Proverbs that calls a son to heed his father (externality), and it parallels the first murder of the Bible and idioms deployed there (Gen 4:4-11). An aetiological foundation story like 'Cain and Abel' may set the standard for certain terminological idioms of jealousy, rivalry and fratricide which recur throughout the Biblical corpus. As may be seen from the 'lying in wait' phrase (Prov 1:11: **לִצְוָה**) – which may be etymologically related to the behaviour of (and

<sup>131</sup> Other such deliberately incomplete idioms include, 'What goes up...', 'Birds of a feather...', 'If at first you don't succeed...', etc. There is even a game called 'Simile' played in which a person states the first half of a simile, and others must race to guess the second half of it, with the assumption that everyone should know the complete image/metaphor.

<sup>132</sup> A redemptive return to the pattern of myth (the Logos of myth, of violence) in order to overcome it (Girard 2001, 31). Though as stated, the 'redemptive return' is already iterated multiple times in the Hebrew Bible, including Proverbs 1-9 which forms the same essential polemic of the two ways as is formed in John 6. As such, Jesus according to *John* simply reiterates a perspective of the Hebrew Bible, which is only to be expected of 'the word made flesh'.

the first synonym for) Sin (Gen 4:7: חַטָּאת), together with the Bible's aetiology of sin (Gen 4:7) – scandal often occurs in the immediate context of a consumption metaphor for violence. This proximity is expected in light of the internal mimetic cycle (and the parallel combat myth) (see table 1).

In Proverbs we see the full expression of the ethical adage, but in the context of the narratives only a few key terms or fragmented phrases are employed, in a manner consistent with Westermann's observations. These allusive fragments are signal terms that are used in varying combinations to represent the whole of the proverbial injunction. Such terms include the Hebrew terms for shedding blood, שָׁחַ or שָׁחַט, swallowing or devouring, בָּלַע (although this can be expressed with other verbs including לָעַט and אָכַל, which also denote eating and consuming), and terms for the earth (soil, ground), אֶרֶץ – in the sense of where humans go when they die – and so also occurs Sheol (שְׁאוֹל, denoting the Grave, a term that comes directly into English) and pit, בּוֹר, and so on.

It is often difficult to distinguish (intentionally most likely) whether it is the murderer(s) or the earth (or even at times some other occurrence in nature) which is devouring the victim. The intended meaning is probably either nature as metaphor for violent humans, or that both do the devouring in succession. The earth doing the deed may be used to ratify it, as if to say it is just.<sup>133</sup>

To demonstrate the usage of this imagery apart from the passages that mainly concern us here, some examples follow. In Lamentations 2:16 there is a particularly important example in that the verb to swallow is set in parallel poetic lines with 'opening their mouths'. A few lines before that in verse 5 the Lord is equated with 'an enemy' who 'swallows up' Israel. Verse 16 reads, "All your enemies *open their mouths* against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry: "We have *devoured [or swallowed]* her! Ah, this is the day we longed for; at last we have seen it!" (Lam 2:5, 16). In Psalm 35 as well, from verse 21 to verse 25 the opening of the mouth is equated with the swallowing of the victim by the assailants. Verse 7 of this same Psalm contains the pit imagery, dug by the assailants to be used to swallow the victim. It reads, "For without cause they hid their net for me; / without cause they dug a *pit* for my life." Thereafter:

They *open wide their mouths against me*; they say, 'Aha, Aha, our eyes have seen it.' You have seen, O Lord; do not be silent! O Lord, do not be far from me! Wake up! Bestir yourself for my

<sup>133</sup> This would explain texts that describe how the earth will one day no longer cover the slain (Isa 26:21, Ezek 24:7-8). Such statements would then be a part of the subversion of the Logos of violence.

defense, for my cause, my God and my Lord! Vindicate me, O Lord, my God, according to your righteousness, and do not let them rejoice over me. Do not let them say to themselves, ‘Aha, we have *our heart’s desire*.’ Do not let them say, ‘We have *swallowed you up*’. (Ps 35:7, 21-25).

It is exceptionally pertinent for the argument set forth here that the phrases ‘our hearts desire’ and ‘swallowed you up’ are set in parallel lines in the poem.<sup>134</sup> This indicates that the writer sees them as related concepts.

Psalms 124 contains another important combination of nature metaphors for human violence against their neighbours – fellow sons of Man. Here, significantly, we see a combination of metaphors of different natural phenomena, including (alongside the swallowing clearly performed by men) a raging stream and swollen flood waters in verses 3 through 5, and prey in the teeth of a pack of predators in verse 6. This last image is pertinent in relation to the twice repeated phrase in the Joseph narrative, that “a wild animal has devoured him” (Gen 37:20, 33). The pertinent verses from Psalm 124 read, “then they would have *swallowed us up* alive, when their anger was kindled against us; then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters. Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us *as prey to their teeth*” (Ps 124:3-6).

All of this related imagery is used to express understanding of a recurring psycho-social phenomenon that Girard calls acquisitive or appropriative or internal mimesis at the phase of metaphorical consumption of the model-obstacle-object on the heels of a situation of scandal. As such, this biblical metaphor falls firmly within Girard’s identification of quasi-theoretical texts of mimetic revelation (1978, x). In Psalm 124, for example, the men use coercive and even violent means to acquire the metaphysical being of the other; the quality of life the Other possesses which they feel they ought to possess as well, or instead, whatever it takes.<sup>135</sup> The following table contains a series of consumption metaphors found throughout the Bible:

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<sup>134</sup> Adele Berlin calls this semantic or paradigmatic parallelism (1985, 86-96).

<sup>135</sup> This could be rephrased as the delusion that life cannot be maintained for one person except at the expense of the other, an either-or logic part and parcel with the Heraclitean Logos and the combat myth.

Passage (Occurrence):	Key Hebrew Terms:	Key Greek Terms:
Gen 3:1-6 (v5) – The serpent suggests that when Eve/Adam eat the fruit they will not surely die, but will be like God, knowing good and evil (but he spoke of a metaphysical, and subsequent physical death). Only after the serpent's suggestion was Eve overcome with desire to take the fruit.	בְּאֵהֶם אָכַל מוֹת, לֶכַח תָּמִיד אֹהֶה	ἀποθνήσκω, ἐσθίω/ἐφαγον, ὡς θεοί, ἀρεστός, ὠραῖος, λαμβάνω
Gen 4:11 – For failing to be his brother's keeper, and slaying him instead in a moment of mimetic rivalry, Cain is cursed from the earth which opened its mouth to take his brother's blood from Cain's Violent hand.	תָּמִים, פָּה, פֶּצֶה אֲדָמָה אָח	ἡ γῆ, χαίνω/χάσκω, τὸ στόμα, ὁ ἀδελφός
Gen 37:20 – Joseph's rivalrous brothers plot to slay him, throw him in a pit, and then lie saying a wild animal devoured him.	אָכַל, בּוֹר הָרָג	ἀποκτείνω, ὁ λάκκος, κατεσθίω
Ex 15:9 – The enemy says of the Israelites, '...I will gorge myself (lit.: my life will be filled with-) on them, my sword will destroy them...'	יְרֵ שֶׁהָרַב, גִּפְשׁ גָּלָא	ἐμπίπλημι, ἡ ψυχή, ἡ μάχαιρα, ἀναιρέω
Num 23:24 – Israel is like a lion that will not rest until it has eaten its prey and drunk the blood of its victims. (Lev 26:38, Num 13:32, 14:9, 24:8)	תָּלַל, דָּם טָרַף, אָכַל שְׁתֵּה	ἐσθίω/ἐφαγον, ἡ θήρα, τὸ αἷμα, ὁ τραυματίας, πίνω
Deut 32:41-43/46-7 – The life of the people and the land is preserved through eating the flesh and drinking the blood of their enemies. / By this word (Logos) the people gain and maintain life!	בָּשָׂר, אָכַל, דָּם שָׁכַר, יַיִם דָּבַר	μεθύσκω, τὸ αἷμα, κατεσθίω, τὸ κρέας, ὁ λόγος, ἡ ζωή
2 Sam 1:22 – From David's lament for Saul and Jonathan: their weapons did not return unfed/unfilled with the blood of victims and the flesh (fat) of warriors. (2 Sam 2:26, 11:25, 21:1-14, <sup>136</sup> 23:13-17)	לֵב, תָּלַל, דָּם כִּיָּם, גִּבּוֹר	κενός, τὸ αἷμα, ὁ τραυματίας, τὸ στέαρ, οἱ δυνατοί
Ps 14:4 – All those doing sin do not know, eating [the Lord's] people [as if] eating bread, not calling on the Lord. (= 53:4)	לָחַם, עָם, אָכַל	κατεσθίω/βιβρώσκω, ὁ λαός, ὁ ἄρτος
27:2 – The Lord is the light and stronghold of my life. When the 'wicked' approach to eat my flesh, they themselves will stumble and fall. (44:11)	אָכַל, תַּיִם, מָעוֹז, אֹר, כָּשַׁל בָּשָׂר	ὁ φωτισμός, ὁ ὑπερασπιστής, ἡ ζωή, ἐσθίω, ἡ σὰρξ, ἀσθενέω
Prov 1:10-19 (v12) – 'Sinners' (the Violent) say 'let us swallow them alive (or their lives) like Sheol (the Pit, the Grave, the deep Waters), and whole, like those who descend to the Pit.	בּוֹר, תַּיִם, בָּשָׂא אֹל, בָּלַע	καταπίνω, ὡς περ ᾗδης, ζάω, ἡ μνήμη ἐκ γῆς
Prov 29:10 – Men of blood hate (cannot tolerate) the 'pure/righteous', and seek to acquire his life.	בָּקַשׁ, שָׂנֵא, שִׁנְאָה	μισέω, ἐκζητέω, ἡ ψυχή
Prov 30:1-5/8/11-14 (like Ex 16:4 - 'daily bread') – There is an internal mimetic 'generation' (a life, or a livelihood, that is a 'life sustained by internal mimesis'), which eats the poor and oppressed from humanity (Adam).	אָדָם, אָכַל	κατεσθίω, ἄνθρωποι
Isa 9:12-20 – The 'wrath' of the Lord is described as a man having no compassion on his brother. He cuts in pieces/devours a brother on the right and is still hungry, and eats a brother on the left, and is not satisfied/sated. A man eats the flesh of his own seed (children). (Isa 1:11-20, 34:1-7, 50, 56:9-12, 58:6-8, 66:2-4)	בָּרַח, אָח מִלֵּא, אָיִשׁ, אָכַל עַב, אָכַל עַב, זָרַע בָּשָׂר	ἄνθρωπος, ὁ ἀδελφός, οὐκ ἐλεέω, ἐκκλίνω, πεινάω, ἐσθίω/ἐφαγον, οὐ μὴ ἐμπίπλημι, ἡ σὰρξ, ὁ βραχίον

<sup>136</sup> Yitzhaq Feder discusses this clear text of human sacrifice to preserve/atone for- the people and the land in his recent book *Blood Expiation in Hittite and Biblical Ritual* (2011), pp. 176-178.

**Passage (Occurrence):**

Jer 2:26-37 (v30) – Your sword eats your prophets, like a lion destroys (from the Pit?)

(7:21-28 also, it refers to Num 11 – if you make sacrifices eat the flesh yourselves. I did not command you to do those things. From Egypt until now I sent my prophets to lead you in my way, and you slew them all in your own way; 30:16, 46:10, 50:7, 51:34-6)

**Key Hebrew Terms:**

מִשְׁחַת, נִבִּיאַ, אָכַל

**Key Greek Terms:**

κατεσθίω, ὁ προφήτης, ὀλεθρεύω

Ezek 2:8 – the son of Man is to open his mouth and eat the word of the Lord, and share it as a warning to the house of Israel, rather than refusing to eat the Lord's word (bread?) like the rebellious people in the wilderness until now (this is a reverse consumption metaphor, for doing External desire rather than Internal desire). (consumption metaphors for violence: 18:10/13, 22:25, 23:21-34)

אָכַל בְּרֵךְ בְּרוּךְ אֲדָם

ὁ ἄνθρωπος, λαλέω, ἐσθίω/ἐφαγον

Ezek 33:25-6 – The people think they can eat flesh with the blood, lift their eyes to idols (Internal Mimesis), shed blood, rely upon their sword (or Violence, instead of the Lord), and forcibly take the wife of one's neighbour, and still possess the land. The son of Man is to make clear that this way (Internal Mimesis) leads to death. (32:4-6, 34:10/28)

עַל-הָהָר, אָכַל etc.

ἐσθίω/ἐφαγον, ἐπὶ τῷ αἵματι, etc.

Ezek 36:13-15 – No longer will the land eat its people (2X), deprive its people of children, and scandalize its people...

כָּשָׁל, שָׁכַל, אָדָם, אָכַל

κατεσθίω/ἐφαγον, ἄνθρωπος, ἀτεκνῶ, ἀτεκνῶ (?)

Ezek 39:17-20 – The Lord is preparing his table, a great sacrifice, for all the 'wild animals' (see v. 21-24) of this earth to attend upon the mountains of Israel, where they will eat the flesh and drink the blood of mighty men and princes of the earth as if they were sacrificial animals.

בָּשָׂר, אָכַל, נָבַח, שָׁלַח, שָׁתָה

ἡ τράπεζα, ἡ θυσία, ἐσθίω/ἐφαγον, τὸ κρέας, πίνω, τὸ αἷμα

Hab 2:4-5 (whole chapter) – 'See the arrogant, his life ('being') is not upright within him, but the righteous will live by his faithfulness. And even as the wine is unfaithful, a strong man is proud and will not be sated, who opens wide his mouth, his life ('being') like Sheol, he is like Death never satisfied' (This quasi-theoretical text describes Internal Mimesis with special regard to the consumption metaphor for violence). (Hosea 13:8, Hab 3:14, Dan 7:7/19/23)

אֶנְהָ, בָּגַד, אֶמְוֶנָה, וְכָשָׁל  
בְּפִנְיָת בְּשׂוֹל כְּחָב  
אֶשְׁבֵּעַ

ἡ ψυχή, ἡ πίστις, ὁ καταφρονητής, μὴ περαίνω, πλατύνω, καθὼς ὁ ἄδης, ὡς θάνατος

**Table 5 – The Consumption Metaphor in the Scriptures**

The violence described with the consumption metaphor is paradoxical, in that it is regularly described as bringing death not (or not only) to the target (scapegoat, 'meal') but to the practitioner himself. Girard describes this aspect of the Logos of violence and the internal mimetic cycle, of which I consider the 'consumption' (The Lord's ambivalent Table) to be the E||E<sub>1</sub> phase (Table 1):

Not to *love* one's brother and to kill him are the same thing. Every negation of the other leads, as we have shown, toward expulsion and murder. The basis for all of this lies in the fundamental human situation of a mimetic rivalry that leads to a destructive escalation. That is the reason why

killing and dying are simply one and the same thing. To kill is to die, to die is to kill—for both stay within the circle of evil reciprocity, in which reprisals inevitably take place. Not to *love* is to die, therefore, since it is to kill. Cain—who is mentioned in the Epistle [of John] a few lines earlier—said: ‘Now that I have killed my brother, everyone can kill me’. (1987a, 214; Gen 4:13-14)<sup>137</sup>

The consumption metaphor for violence is an essential element of the biblical description of the way of violence and death. It is a remarkably clear portrait of the violent appropriative nature of internal mimesis.<sup>138</sup> One rival double may attempt to overcome with violence his perceived model-obstacle-object.<sup>139</sup> I have termed this type of imagery the consumption metaphor for violence, for sacrificial preservation of one’s own or one’s group’s life (continued existence or ‘being’ of cosmos). I suggest that the language of John 6:53 is a succinct descriptive reiteration of the principle of the violence Logos<sup>140</sup> using the terminology of the Bible’s consumption metaphor for violence. Jesus’ intent would then be a redemptive (subversive) reflection narrative of this principle and its principal imagery, which he transports from the Hebrew Bible.<sup>141</sup>

### 3.9.2.1 The Consumption Metaphor in *Genesis*

In Genesis 3:1-8, God does not attempt to constrain the humans with regard to the fruit. In fact, he appears to be oblivious to the whole situation (Gen 3:8-9), suggesting that this whole scenario is played out entirely in the minds of the humans. All phases of the internal mimetic cycle quickly come and go, all in the minds and sphere of the two humans, without any real violence between humans and God, or fellow humans. God is completely unaware and uninvolved in the events. It is not clear whether the humans suppose that they have gained what they sought, and have acquired God’s superior being. It is clear that they have gained significant changes to their lives that they did not seek, and did not desire. No actual violence is involved

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<sup>137</sup> Girard refers to 1 John 3:12.

<sup>138</sup> The imagery even complements the grasping and eating neurons that fire when creating a theory of mind (inferring the intentions) of the other during mimesis, at the point when scandal may or may not arise, and the choice of the internal or external way is required. This may point to just how profoundly intuitive the biblical imagery is. The imagery is complementary to the neurobiology of humanity, and there is complementarity between the biblical material and mimetic theory (and all texts of mimetic revelation).

<sup>139</sup> Since, when the triangle of desire collapses from external into internal mimesis, not only does the model now block the subject’s path to the object that seems to contain/represent the metaphysical being or life that the model seems to be withholding in the subject’s theory of mind, but also, the model seems to merge with the object so that the only conceivable way of acquiring life is now at the expense – via the sacrificial consumption – of the model.

<sup>140</sup> The requirement for sacrificial (sanctioned, ‘good’) violence to found and maintain life (culture, cosmos).

<sup>141</sup> Rather than deriving from the influence of Greek mystery cults like the cult of Dionysius as some scholars assert, or from later eucharistic formulas that are supposedly extra-biblical and/or subsequent to historical Christianity’s inception. As I noted earlier, Ezekiel also features redemptive/subversive consumption metaphors. There is also an example of this in Jeremiah.

yet, only the precedent of forced acquisition of the Other's being, a sort of quasi-theoretical description<sup>142</sup> of the aetiology of humanity's internal mimetic inclination (Oughourlian 2010, 43).

The 'eye-opening' that occurs from eating the fruit of God-likeness, knowing good and bad mimesis, results in the humans – now that they have objectified and consumed the 'being' of another for personal 'being' – looking at each other as objects rather than subjects for the first time, something potentially acquisitioned. That is, the humans are aware of the other as potential model-obstacle (and metaphysical object) for their desire – as the serpent suggested that God was with the acquisitively desirable fruit – and that they may simply take it. That is a problem for both of them suddenly, and they seek to cover up so that other eyes will not be scandalized by acquisitive (internal) mimetic desire (Gen 3:7). They know the Other thinks this way because each has begun to think this way about the Other.

Notably, the Lord fixes the humans' coverings with skin in place of the leaves. This substitution may be proleptic of the use of animal (skin) substitution throughout the narratives that follow to forestall violence between sons of Man, brothers. It may also be proleptic of the Lord's preference for the use of plant-life, symbolizing the external way of faithfulness, and the flesh of creatures as symbolic of the internal way of faithlessness.<sup>143</sup>

The behaviour of the humans increasingly estranges them from their Maker, the *external* model, as Genesis continues, which is presumably part of the metaphysical death that the Lord warned the humans they would suffer. The death is becoming inclined to internal mimesis and the Logos that justifies it, and growing ignorant and dismissive of the option of voluntary external mimesis for forestalling scandal and preserving life.

The humans themselves flee from God and hide in the trees when they hear his footsteps in the Garden (3:8). They are ashamed of their nakedness, of which they are newly aware due likely in part to their new-found awareness of a desire that objectifies the Other and takes what it desires without regard for the needs or desires of the Other.<sup>144</sup> In other words, the shame arises

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<sup>142</sup> As Jean-Michel Oughourlian states, "I would like to propose the hypothesis that the text of Genesis and the idea of 'original sin' interpret through metaphor the birth of psychological man, that is, of humanity, of the couple, and of desire. In connection with this, I also propose to show that this birth of psychological man, like that of social man, is brought about by purely mimetic mechanisms" (2010, 43).

<sup>143</sup> The possible etymological relationship between the Hebrew word for clothing, כִּתְיָוָה, and the word for unfaithfulness, אִנְיָוָה, is interesting in this context.

<sup>144</sup> The Hebrew for 'unfaithfulness,' incidentally, is the same term for 'clothes'. The Prophet Malachi writes of Israel using violence (faithlessness, sin) as a covering (garment) for its shame (2:16). This is the opposite of the

from the switch from external to internal mimesis. The humans are aware that their gaze toward others is scandalous, wanting what it may only gain by force, unless freely given. The humans likely use leaves to cover up what the Other appears to be objectifying, to create a stumbling-block, or hopefully a check<sup>145</sup> from internal acquisitive desires and scandals arising.

God has another solution in mind. He takes the skin of animals and puts them between the humans.<sup>146</sup> He also removes the humans from the Garden, and puts a Cherub with a flaming sword as a blockade to the other tree(s) they were not to eat from, which purportedly give life. It seems the Lord did not think it just that humans who are unfaithful and violent toward his image should live forever. So this is the biblical origin of metaphysical death. The new state of internal mimetic proclivity in the world of the Bible, while separating humanity from the Maker and from the other creatures, has not yet become fully sinful and violent in the narrative. The absence of these terms suggests that they are reserved for inter-human violence in the biblical history.

In the tale of the first son of Man's murder of his brother, Cain evidently sanctions violence against his brother and murders Abel, and in so doing is mastered by sin. The Lord asks Cain where his brother is and what he has done, and Cain, with a question, denies responsibility for his brother ("Am I my brother's keeper?", Gen 4:9), prevaricating (lying) about knowledge of Abel's whereabouts. The Lord uses a consumption metaphor for violence to describe Cain's murder of Abel, saying that the earth has *opened its mouth* to take Abel's *blood* from Cain's hand (Gen 4:10-11).

This is the first biblical intersection of certain verbal and descriptive elements denoting the sin, violence (murder), and metaphorical consumption of another son of Man (one's *flesh and blood*, a brother human),<sup>147</sup> which together form the core of the *internal mimetic* cycle of the violent Logos. Cain gains 'life', or the metaphysical being of the Other by objectifying and

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faithfulness and love that the Lord desires of his children, his imitators. So this Genesis narrative may be considered to form an aetiology for the one Hebrew term for garment and unfaithfulness to the Lord. In any case, the imagery is striking.

<sup>145</sup> The biblical narrative seems to suggest that the first human-given prohibition or law is clothing.

<sup>146</sup> This is striking, because God has forbidden eating animals, only the seeds and fruits of plants may be eaten (Gen 1:29-30), yet he initiates the use of an animal product, though there is no explicit indication that he slaughtered animals to do it.

<sup>147</sup> Joseph's brothers metaphorically devour their own 'flesh and blood', throwing him into a pit (Gen 37:27). That tale contains reiterations of the key terms and narrative phases of internal mimesis, but it also contains an unprecedented forgiveness and renewed faithfulness between the brothers, because Joseph imitated the Lord's desire to preserve life (Gen 50:19-21), and because Judah reversed the internal with external mimesis, offering his life in place of his brother Benjamin at the moment he was tested (or scandalized; Gen 44:30-34) to sacrifice his brother to save himself.

devouring his brother as model-obstacle-object. Cain's acquired 'being' is fleeting, as he immediately fears reprisal, fears losing what he has taken by sin (violence). Cain experiences a sort of metaphysical death through murder (Gen 4:14 and 16), paradoxically, which he did not anticipate. The Lord attempts to protect Cain from actual reprisal, to forestall more bloodshed (4:15). Significantly, Cain the first murderer becomes the founder of the first city, the first cosmos within creation (4:17) according to Genesis.

This account is therefore descriptive of the sacrificial violence that is the foundation of humanity's cosmoi, and the origin of the fear of being a wanderer<sup>148</sup> and potential victim (4:13-16) that making oneself ruler of a contrived domain composed of four walls may forestall. 'Cain and Abel' may be considered the Bible's critically subversive account of the birth of cosmos versus chaos, which represents relying on one's violence for life rather than God's provision for life. The latter is symbolized in Abel by wilderness sheep-herding and tent-dwelling. The contrast of these two sets of imagery is well-noted by scholarship (e.g. Alter 1996, 16), and may indicate an underlying essential contrast between the two ways.<sup>149</sup>

With regard to the Joseph Narrative, Genesis 37 depicts all the elements of the consumption metaphor for violence that are neatly packed into Proverbs 1:10-19. In 37:19 forward we read, "They said to one another, 'Here comes this dreamer. Come now, *let us kill him* and throw him into one of the *pits*; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams'" (Gen 37:19-20, italics added). The italicized terms together have a very flexible and layered meaning, particularly in this context. It is as if the brothers in their selfish and violent plot will reduce themselves to 'evil intentioned wild animals,' very much less than the image of their Maker, much more like acquisitive internal mimetic beings. The phrase is used again by Jacob when his sons bring him the blood-stained

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<sup>148</sup> Without a friendly/faithful brother, a neighbour, a son of Man engages the three contrived pillars of culture to protect himself over-against the Other: myth, ritual, prohibition ~ cosmos as religion as sacrifice (Girard 1987a, 155).

<sup>149</sup> Ideally, God has indicated plants for food. This changes with the tale of Cain and Abel, it seems. By the time of Noah (Gen 9:3), God makes full concession to the eating of animals out of a desire not to destroy his image completely (Gen 9:5-11), since he cannot control their evil, sinful violent inclinations (Gen 6:5-6, 6:11-12), and would clearly have to totally destroy them in the attempt to force them to do his will. In the Exodus narrative the contrast is more crisply defined as bread from Heaven in the wilderness or flesh from the Sea in the cosmos. This contrast between bread and flesh is important, because it is symbolic hereafter in the Bible for the contrast between the way of life and the way of death.

cloak of Joseph.<sup>150</sup> If the author is asserting that the brothers have debased themselves from men to animals within a few short lines (since, at the beginning of Gen 37:19 *אִישׁ* (man) is used of them), then it is they who have devoured Joseph like the ‘Sinners’ of Proverbs 1, and like the predators of Psalm 124:6.

By the end of the narrative the victimized Joseph says to his brothers, “‘Come closer to me.’ And they came closer. He said, ‘I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you *to preserve life*’ (45:4-5, italics added, 50:15-21), and:

But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. *Am I in the place of God?* You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, *the saving of many lives*. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (50:19-21; italics mine)

It is significant that in the intervening time Joseph has been in slavery in Egypt and presumed dead by his father, the family has suffered from famine. With the reconciliation to Joseph the victim come not only the psychological, social and theological reunifications represented so far in the narrative, but also an ecological restoration, where the family settles in what is described as the best and fattest portion of the land of Egypt (45:18, 20).

These stories of Genesis share the common grain of describing characters driven by the desire to acquire the metaphysical being of the Other using the consumption metaphor for violence.<sup>151</sup> While the stories of Cain and of Joseph are very similar on one level, the latter is designed as a mirror polemic of the former on another level (a reflection narrative), in that what goes so horribly wrong for Cain and Abel is rectified with Joseph and his brothers. The latter story subverts the Logos of violence. The ostensibly anti-sacrificial and anti-violent Logos in the Joseph story that subverts the earlier violent and sacrificial Logos in which the first son of God and the first son of Man are ensnared is a part of an anti-violent reflection narrative movement in the Hebrew Bible that parallels the Yahweh-Alone movement (as exemplified in Hosea 6:6-8, and described earlier). I suggest the Christian writings of the first century CE continue this movement, using the same essential narrative, verbal and thematic idioms and patterns.

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<sup>150</sup> Robert Alter notes the use of layered terms of this kind to evoke deeper meaning in the Genesis stories (1996, 208).

<sup>151</sup> Some recent scholarship recognizes in these stories a clear proclivity of the writers for using concrete imagery to express abstract thought (e.g. Alter 1996, xii-xiii).

### 3.9.2.2 The Consumption Metaphor in *Exodus*

The Exodus narrative describes the Egyptian Pharaohs using violence to preserve their cosmos, and because they live by the sword and refuse to change their ways, they die by the sword. The Egyptians suffer human sacrifice at the last (Ex 11-14), and cannot resort to animal substitution as they have not received that merciful and life-preserving law from the Lord, as the Hebrew Patriarchs had.

Moses' hymn in Exodus 15, in confirmation of the narrative events, uses language like that of Proverbs 1 (discussed below) to describe the intent to metaphorically consume the Israelites; in other words, to destroy them violently by the sword. The consumption metaphor for violence is clearly reminiscent of similar terms used to describe the first son of Man's (Cain's) murder of his brother Abel, and other examples throughout Scripture as indicated in the table above. It is noteworthy that Pharaoh stood to gain nothing from destroying the Israelites at this point, except shoring up his own glory and pride (in other words his metaphysical being). Israel became to him a model-obstacle-object to be devoured.

### 3.9.2.3 The Consumption Metaphor in *Ezekiel*

Portions from Ezekiel 33 express the consumption metaphor for violence. The Lord condemns the way of 'being' through violence, or life at the expense of the Other by violence toward the neighbour (fellow sons of Man). The Lord indicates unequivocally that those who live by the violent way will die by the violent way (e.g. Ezek 33:25-27). In Ezekiel 34, the son of Man announces the Lord's intent to save the oppressed sheep from the devouring mouths of their shepherds (Ezek 34:10), who lead them in the way of violence and death rather than the way of life; leaders who internally imitate the desires of the nations round about and their idols rather than the Lord (Ezek 34:31; 23:1-49).

A passage in Ezekiel 39 contains the Lord describing his Table, at which violence against fellow sons of Man is described as sacrificial; the flesh of humans is metaphorically eaten and their blood drunk (Ezek 39:17-20). All the humans described as suffering that logical end are those who have founded and maintained cosmos by consuming others themselves. This is the internal mimetic logic that the consumption metaphor is often used to depict in the Hebrew Bible, and on which Jesus draws in John 6:53. There, Jesus uses the metaphor to describe how

the leaders of the Judaeian cosmos will metaphorically eat his flesh and drink his blood to maintain their metaphysical being, and the existence of their cosmos (e.g. John 11:45-53, 12:19).

#### 3.9.2.4 *Ezekiel's son of Man and John's son of Man*<sup>152</sup>

Ezekiel 2:8 is significant because it exemplifies the close relationship between scandal and metaphorical consumption, in terms of mimetic bipolarity, in that a consumption metaphor may be used to depict either internal or external mimesis. This ambivalence is effectively employed in John 6:53. Ezekiel 2:8 clearly indicates the son of Man's willful choice of metaphysical humility before the Lord, imitating the Lord's externality (e.g. John 7:16-19). In Ezekiel 2:8, the use of a consumption metaphor is not for internal mimesis and violence, but for external mimesis and love (faithfulness to the Lord; the fear of the Lord). The son of Man does the Lord's will (external desire) rather than his own or any others, and the Lord's will is that the son of Man should be his brothers' keeper (their 'watchman'; Ezek 3:17, 33:7), to warn and plead with the people to master their metaphysical desire, turn to the Lord and live (e.g. Ezek 33:10-11), rather than continuing with the behaviour metaphorically illustrated with the image of unfaithful wives (Ezek 23).

There are a number of aspects to the son of Man in *Ezekiel* that render it the most likely, or majority, background to the son of Man in *John* (This is also Girard's view; 1987a, 206-209). In *Ezekiel*, as in *John*, the son of Man is *sent* (Ezek 2:3-8; John 6:29) to teach the people (Ezek 3:1-11, 33:30-32, 44:23; Isa 54:13; John 6:45) so that they will not die in their sin, or remain in a state of metaphysical death.<sup>153</sup> Instead, they may hear the voice of the Lord, and be raised from their metaphysical graves (Ezek 37:11-14; John 5:28-9). This is critical background to John, and is in direct allusion itself to the Exodus narrative and the flesh representing unfaithfulness to the Lord's desire (e.g. Ex 16; Num 11) and bread representing faithfulness to the Lord's desire (e.g. Ex 16; Num 11) contrasted there and illustrating the notion of two ways.

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<sup>152</sup> In his book *Christian Origins* (1985), Christopher Rowland lists and discusses the most common interpretations of the term 'son of man' (182-7). More recently, J. Harold Ellens has produced an important analysis of the use and meaning of the term 'son of man' in *John*, in *The Son of Man in the Gospel of John* (2010; see especially pp. 60, 84-89, 141-44).

<sup>153</sup> Within the Logos of violence, internal mimesis; e.g. John 5:24-29, 8:24.

### 3.9.2.5 The Consumption Metaphor in the Hebrew Wisdom

A few examples of the consumption metaphor for violence in *Proverbs* (e.g. 1:12, 4:17, 9:17-18) convey considerable flexibility in describing the way of violence and death. The first, in chapter one, is consistent with what is encountered in previous passages, with humans compared with the Pit (Sheol, Grave) when living by the violent Logos, which imagery Jesus takes up in the Gospels in a manner consistent with *Ezekiel*, *Proverbs*, and elsewhere (e.g. Matt 23:29, Luke 11:44, John 5:28). However, Proverbs 4:17 uses bread and wine as symbols for violence, indicating the ambivalence the imagery can have. This ambivalence is consistent with the ambivalence of the Lord's Table as already seen above, and which is continued in the Christian material.

Proverbs 9:17-18, for example, contrasts the table of Folly with the table of Wisdom described earlier in that chapter. There as well, bread and flesh do not denote love and violence as they have in past examples, but the exact opposite in this case. Nevertheless, it is the contrast itself and its intended meaning that is most significant. The terms in *John* more closely follow those preferred in Torah and the Prophets than some of these examples from the Hebrew Wisdom, though they express the same essential contrast of the two ways. There is an important example of 'eating the bread of violence' in John however (13:18 and 26-7) which alludes to Psalm 41 (Ps 41:9). Paul also does this (e.g. 1 Cor. 5:8, 1 Cor. 11:26-7).

A number of selections from the *Proverbs* (e.g. 1:31-32, 3:7-18, 3:31) depict metaphors of consumption for humility (love, life, and peace) contrasting the way of wisdom and life to the way of violence and death. The violent eat the fruit of their way, and the humble and loving eat the fruit of their way. The words are clear, the contrast patent, and the close connection of the kind of social interaction to the kind of life one experiences demonstrates the appropriateness of analyzing these practical and existential adages with Girard's anthropology of violence and religion. There is undoubtedly clear symmetry between the two lenses.

There are pertinent phases and terms that describe the theme of the contrast between the two ways in Psalm 23.<sup>154</sup> Psalm 23 is notable in Hebrew Wisdom because it has all the phases of external mimesis,<sup>155</sup> the way of life (love Logos). It is purely concerned with the external imitation of the external desire of the Lord, and reliance upon him for life. It also discusses how

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<sup>154</sup> Other Psalms that articulate the two ways include Ps 1, 50, 51, 69, etc.

<sup>155</sup> As depicted in table 2 in the methodologies due to its strong quasi-theoretical qualities.

the Lord preserves his people for his Name, the metaphysical object he prizes that he wants his people to prize which is externality itself,<sup>156</sup> faithfulness to the image of God (which is humanity, one's brother, one's *flesh and blood*).<sup>157</sup> The enemies are mentioned only to say that despite the internally mimetic surrounding him, drawing over the shadow of death, he keeps his mimetic gaze on the Lord. The Psalmist also describes the life gained from the Lord with the same duality that Jesus uses in John 6 (e.g. Ps 23:6 || John 6:40).

### 3.9.3 *The Two Key Phases Featured in John 6*

I propose that the Eucharist or Lord's ambivalent Table is intended, according to *John*, as a reflection narrative of the language and associated behaviour of internal mimesis, as just analyzed in the Hebrew Bible, and especially the most critical scandal (B||B<sub>1</sub>) and consumption (E||E<sub>1</sub>) phases, which are the very heart of the violent Logos that believes in difference in the heart of violence. This rite's purpose is to redress perhaps the essential existential problem that plagues humanity according to the biblical history from which it draws. The problem addressed is that of bringing home the responsibility for humanity's personal and corporate (cosmic) violence (sin) from projecting it away onto God, or placing it onto the heads of scapegoats, and admitted its origin within oneself, and then rejecting that blade of the double-edged sword that is mimetic bipolarity. The eucharistic rite exhorts the participant to honesty about being one's brother's keeper, rather than prevaricating and lying as Cain did (e.g. John 13; 1 John 3:12; Jude 1:11). So John 6:53, in my view, would be understood ambivalently (symbolically, in Léon-Dufour's terms) as both descriptive of the sacrificial way of death, and petitionary of the anti-sacrificial way of life (like the son of Man in Ezekiel 33:10-11).

There are additional aspects to the phrase in John 6:53, as it is also proleptic of the way Jesus will die, in the typical manner described with this consumption metaphor, which is in a situation of mimetic scandal resulting this time in a scapegoating of the one for the many.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>156</sup> I read this as the accurate reflection of his external image by his image bearers, in love of God and neighbour.

<sup>157</sup> I view this as the intended meaning of the 'Shema' in Deuteronomy 6. Jesus certainly interprets it this way in Luke (10:25-37) in his discussion with the lawyer. It is a reading of what 'one' means in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. According to Luke 10, the Lord's oneness means that to be a son of God, a son of Man must love both the Maker and other sons of Man, made in the image of the Maker (sons of God, therefore; John 10:30-39, Ps 82:1-8); in other words, love of God and neighbour without qualification.

<sup>158</sup> The many is the cosmos, in this case Judaea, but also the greater cosmos at the time, the Roman empire. These two cosmoi, like concentric circles, are able to agree on a common good violence against Jesus the 'chaos monster'/demon-possessed, etc. (e.g. John 8:48-52). There is record of other persons sacrificed because they were perceived to be threats to cosmos in and around this period.

Jesus' crucifixion is therefore a martyrdom (witness) to the falsity of the idea of good violence, and therefore condemns the Logos of violence (which draws a line in the heart of violence, as in the still popular notion of 'cosmos versus chaos'<sup>159</sup>). So John 6:53 should perhaps be understood as multivalent. It is the complexity of this verse and its contextual passage that has caused it to be categorized as among Jesus' 'riddles' by some biblical scholars (e.g. Thatcher, 2006; Thatcher 2000, 188).

### 3.10 The Two Ways (Bread versus Flesh) in the Hebrew Bible

#### 3.10.1 *In the Exodus Narrative*

The way of death and the way of life are contrasted, in keeping with the subversion of the combat myth pattern in the Exodus narrative that immediately precedes it, in Exodus 16 (as well as in Numbers 11)<sup>160</sup> with the 'eschatological-messianic banquet'<sup>161</sup> (the Lord's ambivalent Table) in the desert whither the Lord has delivered Israel. The imagery used for the contrast is bread from Heaven versus flesh from the Sea. This contrast replaces the contrast between cosmos and chaos which was successfully debunked in the Exodus narrative just prior, where violence was delegitimized as a means to life for a people, and reliance on 'I AM', humanity's Maker, was idealized. Exodus 15 ends with the provision of water in a highly symbolic manner, and in *John* the living water precedes the bread narrative also.<sup>162</sup> In Exodus 16 the people soon grumble about food, desiring the flesh-pots they enjoyed in Egypt (Ex 16:3), and growing rivalrous with Moses over their hunger and discontent, expressing a desire to return to Egypt where they lived well on flesh (Ex 16:2-3).

The bread from Heaven is provided by 'I AM' to satisfy the people's hunger. He does not offer them flesh, and he describes his provision as a test (Ex 16:4). It is Moses who first says

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<sup>159</sup> For example, a recent Canadian Forces recruitment advertisement invites citizens of the national cosmos to join up in order to "fight chaos" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaBE1c37rBc>).

<sup>160</sup> Numbers 11 is written as occurring later in Israel's sojourn in the wilderness, but develops the same essential contrast.

<sup>161</sup> Eschatological in that this 'feast' occurs immediately after the 'combat,' and after deliverance from oppression in the Egyptian cosmos, and is fully provided by their Messiah, 'I AM' and his servant Moses, by the Lord's own miraculous power. The feast occurs at the appropriate time in the combat myth cycle (Fontenrose 1969, 11 – see phase 10b; see also table 3, phase I).

<sup>162</sup> Although there is water from the stricken Rock in the next chapter as well (Exodus 17), which imagery may be drawn upon in the water from the stricken scandal (which 'rock of stumbling', or 'chaos-monster' can signify; e.g. Jesus' reading of Ps 118 in Matt 21, Mark 12, and Luke 20) with Jesus' crucifixion (e.g. John 19:34).

there will be flesh to eat in the evening and then bread from heaven in the morning (Ex 16:8). The flesh is associated with darkness and the bread with light, therefore. The Lord seems to have no trouble affirming Moses' suggestion of the provision of flesh and then bread (Ex 16:12) in the Exodus account (see the next paragraph, however). The next verse indicates that quail 'came up' (Numbers 11 completes this with 'from the sea', Num 11:31), and the dew (soft rain) of Heaven came down, leaving behind the bread that the people would call 'Manna' (Ex 16:13-15). Quite curiously, the remainder of Exodus 16 is entirely concerned with the Manna (bread), and not a shred concerns the quail (flesh). So then, the people demand flesh, 'I AM' offers bread, somehow both flesh and then bread are given, and yet the remainder of the account concerns only the bread. The Lord had described this as a test, without indication of 'pass or fail', it seems. The Numbers account appears designed to clarify this irresolution.

In Numbers 11 it is clearly stated that although the people strongly desire the flesh-pots of fish that they enjoyed in Egypt (Num 11:4-5), the Lord has only given them the Manna, or bread from Heaven to eat. The Lord appears to have not yet given the people flesh at all (despite being farther along in their journey through the wilderness). The people have grown tired of the bread in Numbers 11. They are not satisfied by it, and want to eat flesh as they once did in the Egyptian cosmos, despite the violence they suffered there. The Lord is angry with the people. Their rejection of the bread is equated with rejection of 'I AM' who saved their lives (Num 11:18-20), and the people seem to desire to resubmit to the internal mimetic cosmos of Egypt with all of its terrors (Num 11:20). The Lord promises the people the flesh they so greatly desire, but the moment they have it, "while it is still between their teeth" the text says (Num 11:33), he strikes them down and many Hebrews die there "because they had craved other food" (Num 11:34). The survivors call the place "the Graves of Desire" (Num 11:34). The contrast of life via the bread of 'I AM' (of Heaven) and death through desire for the flesh of the Sea is striking in light of the Exodus account that precedes it, and in light of the three lenses brought to this analysis.

The flesh represents the way of internal mimesis, the way of life-acquisition through objectification and violence toward the Other, which the Pharaohs represent by their behaviour in Exodus 1-15, where when a neighbour people is perceived as potential rival, Pharaoh is scandalized, views the Hebrew success as model-obstacle, and then model-obstacle-object that if 'devoured' metaphorically through violence, will give greater life ('being') to Pharaoh and his

people. This solution worked temporarily, but ultimately and paradoxically it failed, since it brought both metaphysical (Exodus 10:7) and physical death (Exodus 15:9-10) to Pharaoh and his people in the long term. Notably, once Israel is situated in the land of Cana'an, according to the biblical accounts, they are commanded to be good to their neighbour foreigners (fellow sons of Man) amongst them, loving them as oneself, because they were foreigners in the cosmos of Egypt (e.g. Lev 19:33-34).

The bread represents the way of external mimesis, the way of life through imitating desire for externality in the periodic moments of potential scandal (testing), which Moses vis-à-vis 'I AM' in relation to Pharaoh represents. Therefore, when a neighbour people (or person) perceives one as potential rival, and is scandalized by him, rather than imitating their desire to 'eat' him (metaphorically), the one attempts to correct their theory of mind by maintaining a view of the Other as subject, as brother, as a fellow son of Man, and son of God. Moses does not seek to devour Pharaoh, only to liberate the people that constitutes Pharaoh's 'daily bread' (metaphorically a flesh-diet). Moses on the other hand maintains a diet of bread for his 'daily bread' (Ex 16:4; Prov 30:7-9; Job 23:12; Matt 6:11; Luke 11:13; John 6) which is the word, or will, of 'I AM,' whose will Moses does, and lives thereby, without living by imitating internal models leading to violence and death. Moses is in an external mimetic relationship with 'I AM', emulating his external desire to preserve life (e.g. Gen 50:19-21; Ex 2:23-25).

### **3.10.2 In Ezekiel – the Son of Man Narrative**

Ezekiel, the 'son of Man,' as the Lord calls him, is commanded to do something the people of Israel since the time of the Exodus have never been able to do consistently,<sup>163</sup> which is to eat the food that the Lord gives him, and do the Lord's will thereby (Ezek 2:8), rather than devouring each other (e.g. 34:10). Such a consumption metaphor for violence recurs throughout *Ezekiel*, for example, with the metaphorical description of the nations feasting on the flesh and blood of Egypt and her allies in the language of the combat myth, with the hero of cosmos as Babylon and the chaos-monster played by Egypt (Ezek 32).

With regard to the bread imagery, in Ezekiel 2:1-3:27 as well as chapters 33-34, and 36-7, there are descriptions of the way of life in terms of eating and doing the will (desire) of the

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<sup>163</sup> There may be some biblical examples of the people living by the way of the Lord temporarily, but they then choose other internal models and leave the way of the Lord.

Lord, rather than the will (desires) of other sons of Adam (humanity).<sup>164</sup> The contrast between the way of the Lord and the way of the violent takes many forms throughout *Ezekiel* and throughout the prophets generally. One does not read far into *Ezekiel* before encountering an allusion to the rebellious people who were delivered from Egypt, yet would not eat what ‘I AM’ gave or do his will. The Lord, when ‘commissioning’ Ezekiel, a son of Man, warns him not to be like those rebellious people (Ezek 2:3). Unlike them, the son of Man is to be humble, to “... open [his] mouth eat what [the Lord] give[s] [him]” (Ezek 2:8). In other words, the son of Man is to imitate the Lord’s external mimesis, to desire externality (faithfulness to Maker and Made). What the son of Man is given from the Lord’s hand is a scroll that tastes like honey (Ezek 2:9-3:3), the word of God to his people. The Lord then *sends* the son of Man to go and speak the word he has received to the people (Ezekiel 3:4) for them to eat as well, that they may eat the Lord’s desire and live, being raised from their graves of internal mimetic desire.

The similarities between the story narrated in Numbers 11 and the usage of the title ‘son of Man’ by Jesus in *John*, along with a number of other allusive qualities of Jesus’ message and terminology in *John* make *Ezekiel* a likely antecedent for much of the content of that Gospel. That *Ezekiel*’s son of Man’s word from God is a warning to turn from the way of violence and death to the way of love and life is clear (e.g. Ezek 33-37).

In terms of flesh imagery, a primary example of the description of the violent internal mimesis in the prophets is the description of the ‘flesh-pot’ in Ezekiel 11. The flesh-pot is immediately reminiscent of the ‘flesh-pots’ of Egypt, insatiably desired by the people in Numbers 11, which makes them grumble and complain loudly about the bread of Heaven that the Lord has provided for them (Num 11:3). Ezekiel and his interlocutors use the image metaphorically. While the violent leaders in Jerusalem view themselves as ‘flesh in the pot’ in a good sense of being well-to-do and full of life, Ezekiel turns it around, saying that the flesh in the pot is the many people slain by the leadership in Jerusalem in order to give them that sense of fullness and life. In other words, the son of Man in *Ezekiel* uses the term flesh in a consumption metaphor for violence in a manner consistent with the notion of internal mimesis, and in a

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<sup>164</sup> Ezek 11 has the people as flesh in the city as in a pot, like the ‘flesh-pots’ they desired in the wilderness, full of fish. It says they fear the sword, so the sword will devour them (instead of fearing the Lord, and living). This indicates that the desire for flesh makes one the flesh between the teeth of someone else as well. This image is consistent with the deathly causality of the way of internal mimesis.

manner consistent with the critique of eating flesh and drinking blood to derive life for the cosmos represented in John 6:51-58.

There are other significant examples of the contrast of the two ways, one of life and one of death in Ezekiel 33-34, which contains flesh denoting violence. Another example is complementary to the first, and is a part of the critique of the shepherds of Israel, the leadership in Jerusalem. The people are criticised for eating the flesh with the blood, engaging in bloodshed, relying on the sword rather than on the Lord (Ezek 33:25-6). They are critiqued metaphorically as shepherds who open their mouths and eat the sheep, sacrificing other sons of Man to preserve themselves, rather than caring for those who rely on them (Ezek 34:10). All of this describes the contrast between “the decrees that give life” (Ezek 33:16) and the way of sin that leads to death (Ezek 33:10-11). The essential logic of the two ways polemic is that a person lives and dies by the way he has chosen, by the Logos he has chosen he is judged (Ezek 33:17-20; John 5:28-30, 5:45), which renders the Lord’s justice as little more than the law of causality. This idea is transported by Jesus in John 5-6.

### **3.10.3 *In the Hebrew Wisdom***

There are many good, relatively lengthy, examples of the contrast of the two ways in the Wisdom material. If I were to keep continuity with the organization of this analysis up to this point, I would now discuss Proverbs 9, which is like the offer of the Lord’s ambivalent Table at the end of a ‘narrative’ description contrasting the internal imitation of metaphysical desire and the external imitation of metaphysical desire (as with Exodus 16 after the first fifteen chapters).

A number of factors indicate that Proverbs 9 is essentially discussing the contrast between life by the violent Logos versus life by the loving Logos, which I think equate to the two ways. While Proverbs 9 is a good example of that contrast – though in terms of the table of Wisdom (and life) and the table of Folly (and death) without the flesh-bread contrast – I will instead use Wisdom material that contains the particular terminological features that are carried-over in John 6 (where bread is associated with life, and flesh with metaphysical death).

Psalms 1 explicitly contrasts the two ways, but not in terms of flesh and bread as in the Exodus material. However, Psalms 50 and 51 each offer a good contrast of the two ways in terms of flesh and bread, though somewhat indirectly. Each one contains the contrast, but there is mutually informative content that makes the reading of them together quite effective. These two Psalms seem to contrast a way of flesh and a way of bread.

In terms of bread imagery, Psalm 50 describes how the Lord does not desire to eat flesh and drink blood in a particular cultic sacrificial sense. But significantly, this is paired with condemnation of the violence of the wicked, and it declares that the 'I AM' is not like those who engage in violence against their brothers (fellow sons of Man). The description of the behaviour of the wicked man (Psalm 50:16-21) is strikingly similar to that of Proverbs 1:10-19, which uses the metaphors of eating the Other and lying in wait for blood.

Twice in Psalm 50, the Lord indicates his desire for thanksgiving offerings instead of flesh and blood sacrifices. This is significant both because of the voluntary humble spirit that guides the thanksgiving offering (e.g. Lev 7:12), as well as the fact that this offering is of bread. I suggest that the contrast is highly symbolic. Both Psalm 50 and Psalm 51 describe violence and flesh-and-blood sacrifice as paired and rejected (Ps 50:13-15, 50:16-23; Ps 51:10-17), while humility, love, and bread (thanksgiving) offerings are paired and accepted. Anti-violence and pro-love (faithfulness) in relation to the Lord and fellow sons of Man is described as the worship (doing the Lord's will) that the Lord desires.<sup>165</sup>

With regard to flesh imagery, while the two ways are contrasted nicely in Proverbs 9 and Psalm 1 (and elsewhere in Wisdom in greater brevity), these iterations do not include the particular terminology that is also significant as background to John 6, and so I focus again on Psalm 50 and 51 instead. There, as already noted above, we find the confluence of the rejection of flesh and blood sacrifices with the rejection of bloodshed, of violence toward one's brother. These two Psalms are by no means alone in the Hebrew Bible in criticising these two things in the same breath (e.g. Hosea 6). The sacrificial apparatus is demoted (if it ever was superior) below treatment of fellow sons and daughters of humankind and is used as a metaphor (in Psalms 50 and 51 as elsewhere) for good and poor treatment of one's fellows; in other words, for contrasting the two ways, and by extension therefore, it articulates the two types of mimesis arising from humanity's neurological and cognitive mimetic bipolarity.

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<sup>165</sup> It is this sort of reasoning that guides the Levitical care for one's neighbour, and the theme Jesus picks up from the Bible when he says that the Lord will say 'whatever you've done to the least of this, it was done to me' (e.g. Matt 25:45).

### 3.11 Early Christian Precedents – the Lord’s Ambivalent Table before *John*<sup>166</sup>

The analysis of the Christian material, which is thought by a number of Johannine scholars to pre-date *John* and be known to *John* (Barrett 1982, 45; Schenke 1997, 217-18), will be restricted to the two ways in terms of the two types of consumption metaphors, or the Lord’s ambivalent Table. The triangles of desire are essentially the same as those that will be suggested as present in *John*. The Synoptic Gospels’ overall narratives follow the combat myth pattern and its subversion, or the mimetic cycle containing the opposing types of Logos (Tables 1 and 2). The presence of the combat myth in these three Gospels has been recognized by a number of scholars (e.g. Yarbrow Collins 1976, 60). The anti-violent reflection narrative overlies the sacrificial combat myth worldview in the Synoptic Gospels. For space and time considerations these latter elements will be foregone, since sufficient evidence for this background to *John* is already identified in the Hebrew Scriptures, and there is ample scholarly support for the view, in addition to my own findings, that *John* was written with awareness of the Synoptic and Pauline writings.

#### 3.11.1 *The Synoptic Gospels – the Son of Man, Flesh versus Bread, and the Lord’s Ambivalent Table*

The material found in the three Synoptic Gospels that is pertinent for John 6:51-58 are the accounts of the Lord’s Table (Matt 26, Mark 14, Luke 22), where eating the ‘body’ and drinking the blood of Jesus is in close proximity to the ‘son of Man’ title and other themes native to eschatological (messianic) banquet material (Barrett 1982, 45-46). I will focus here on the ambivalent Lord’s Table in the Synoptic Gospels, from the lens of mimetic theory.<sup>167</sup>

As often appears to be the case in the biblical material, in the Gospels the Lord’s Table is a test, where a choice must be made between the two ways. This Table, as in some of the Hebrew narratives reviewed, succeeds a narrative in which the violent combat myth is subverted with undercutting anti-violent activity by characters and narrator. The Synoptic accounts of Jesus’

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<sup>166</sup> A number of Johannine scholars agree that *John* is written with familiarity with- and even assumption of the contents of the Synoptic Gospels and much of the Pauline literature (e.g. Barrett 1978, 42-54; Borgen 1983, preface; Brodie 1993, p. 30ff). The subverted combat myth, in my opinion, is part of the plot outline of the Synoptic Gospels, as it is with *John*. I will focus on the meal/table pertinent to John 6:51-58 here, however. Katell Berthelot (2007, 163-4) notes that the Binding of Isaac in *Jubilees* is depicted as a cosmic battle between the Lord and Mastema/the Satan. The latter attempts human sacrifice, but the Lord combats it.

<sup>167</sup> And with the Pauline material as well, addressed below.

activities follow a subverted combat myth (internal mimetic) pattern, and are followed by the accounts of the Lord's Table, or eschatological banquet scene, in the context of which the son of Man is always mentioned (Matthew 26:2, 26:24, 26:45; Mark 14:21, 14:41; Luke 22:22, 22:48), as it is in *John* (John 6:27, 6:53, 6:62, 13:31). At the Lord's Table, the disciples receive the command to eat the body and drink the blood of the son of Man, which is similar in John 6 (and John 13, with a consumption metaphor for violence in 13:18-30).

I think it is possible to identify a contrast of flesh as symbolizing violence and death and bread as symbolizing love and life in these accounts, though less directly, unlike the perhaps more explicit language of John 6. The contrast falls along the lines of a negative description of the flesh portion of the Passover rites and a positive description of the bread portion of the festival, the feast of Unleavened Bread. The negative description of the flesh portion of the Passover feast – the lamb portion for which Jesus is implicitly substituted (Matt 26:2-4; Mark 14:1, 14:12; Luke 22:1-4, 22:7) – forms a condemnation of internal mimesis and the sacrificial cosmos. In addition to the association in each account between the mention of the Passover and the preparation for Jesus' lynching by the religio-political leaders, although the Passover feast is prepared, there is no mention of eating any flesh at the Table, only bread. This confirms the substitution of Jesus for the lamb.

Jesus used as a Passover lamb constitutes a regression from the progress made from human to animal sacrifice made quickly in Genesis and Exodus, and the further progress away from the need for sacrifice at all in the Prophets and Wisdom, which frequently emphasize the love of Maker and Made as demonstrated above. The deliberate articulation of regression in the Gospels is akin to the Hebrew Prophetic critique of regular regressions in Israel with regard to emulating the will (desire) of the Lord for his name (or name/image-bearers; e.g. Ezek 20, 36, 39).<sup>168</sup> It constitutes the revelation of the underlying problem with which human cosmoi struggle and which is the subject preoccupying the Scriptures: the inclination toward the internal form of

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<sup>168</sup> This regression with regard to the rite of Passover has significant similarities to the clearly articulated regression with regard to the rite of circumcision throughout the Hebrew Bible. Omri Boehm, for example, makes a strong argument that the Abrahamic circumcision was designed as a subversive reflection narrative of an originally sacrificial ritual (2007, 54-57, 70-1), that through the Lord's covenant with Abraham becomes purposefully anti-sacred violence. This meaning is lost (regresses), circumcision becoming 'empty ritual' and even associated with sacrifice of the other, as violent boundary formation, rather than distinction because of love/faithfulness. It is for this reason that the prophets chastise the people for abusing circumcision, and tell them to 'circumcise their hearts' in order to rediscover the rite's purpose (e.g. Deut 10:12-22, 30:6, Jer 4:4).

mimesis (arising from mimetic bipolarity), and the violence it sanctions, and even requires, to preserve itself in a collective of humans dominated by internal mimesis.

The positive description of the feast of Unleavened Bread portion of the Passover rites is used to refer (in my view) to the external mimesis and the love Logos of the kingdom of God that Jesus claims to offer. In *Matthew*,<sup>169</sup> the account of the Lord's Table contains the contrast between the two ways in terms of Passover lamb as the sacrifice of a son of Man (~ flesh; Matt 26:1-3) and Unleavened Bread as eating the freely given life ('being') of a son of God (~ bread; Matt 26:17-35). This contrast is preceded by a related contrast, which is a description of entering the Kingdom of God in terms of loving one's neighbour, and not entered the Kingdom of God as not loving (or being violent toward) one's neighbour (Matt 25:31-46).

In Matthew 26, Jesus states that it is almost the festival of Passover, and at that time the son of Man will be handed over to be crucified (26:2). As stated, there is no mention of the selection of the Passover lamb, and I think the narrator wishes the reader to make the substitution of Jesus into that role. This would imply that the violence committed against the son of Man (Jesus clearly referring to himself with this term) substitutes for the flesh consumed by the citizens of the Judaeian cosmos, the Galilean cosmos, the Roman cosmos (etc.) – for the preservation of their metaphysical being and their many cosmoi (e.g. Matt 27:18; John 11:48-53) – in a festival which, ironically, is designed as animal substitution to prevent violence toward humans (Exod 12:12-28).

The actual Passover meal, as observed by Jesus and his disciples (Matt 26:17-30), is prefaced by the narrator as occurring on the first day of the festival of Unleavened Bread. Whether meat (flesh) is actually consumed at this meal is not stated – in either case rendering it immaterial, as Jesus has already symbolically substituted himself for the lamb in the first verse – but the consumption of bread is described, and Jesus calls the bread his own body, possibly implying that the bread is symbolic of participation (abiding in) in the metaphysical life of a son of God, or external mimesis in other words, as opposed to the internal mimesis, scandal, and consumption metaphor for violence implied in the leaders of the cosmos seeking to devour the life of a son of Man like a Passover lamb.

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<sup>169</sup> In Mark and Luke a similar polemic unfolds (Mark 14; Luke 22).

It is interesting that the bread is freely given, if so, rather than something that may be grasped.<sup>170</sup> Jesus says that the son of Man will go the way it is written of him, betrayed and murdered by his brother, his fellow son of Man (Matt 26:24; Gen 4:6-11; Ezek 31:14).<sup>171</sup> Jesus then calls the cup of wine his blood, ‘poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’ (Matt 26:28). So the blood and the implicit flesh denote violence that Jesus willingly suffers, due to his imitation of the external desire of his external mimetic Father; he is a son of Man attempting to be a son of God, and inviting others to share in the attempt.

The violence is intended by sons of Man for the life of their cosmos, while the bread is the life of sons of God. The contrast seems to be expressed in the meal with the contrast between bread and blood explicitly, and the meat (flesh) is only implicit. In the Hebrew Bible, the ‘good’ violence is shedding the blood of a person who has compromised the life of the cosmos by the ‘bad’ violence of shedding an ‘innocent’ person’s blood, blood for blood (e.g. 2 Sam 4). Notwithstanding that sacrificial Logos, Jesus is not guilty of bloodshed, but the son of Man is going to suffer such a death anyway, supposedly for the forgiveness of sin (violence). I take this as simply the scapegoat forgiving his many murderers before the act, in order to re-define the meaning of an intentionally sacrificial act as anti-sacrificial.

What may be concluded from this contrast of blood and bread in *Matthew* is that bread is offered as life (participation in Jesus’ life, the life of sons of God<sup>172</sup>), and replaces the consumption of flesh that normally gives life to a human cosmos populated by internal sons of Man. The blood is described as violence (poured out) that represents forgiveness of violence, since Jesus does not hold the violence against his murderers. Therefore, the Messianic Table is the subversion of the violent Logos, as described in narrative form before and around this Table, replacing it with a love Logos that overcomes the violence by revealing it as a fallacious and impotent Logos, artificially dichotomizing violence, and ineffective for bringing lasting life.

The violence toward Jesus wishes to be perceived as ‘good’ violence for preserving the present social order, but Matthew reveals this reading as false. There is no ‘good’ violence. Since

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<sup>170</sup> The metaphysical being afforded by external mimesis cannot be forcibly taken, as that is antithetical, and is biblically described as untenable in the Garden of Eden narrative for example, as well as others reviewed previously.

<sup>171</sup> Ezekiel 31:14 says that, ‘all sons of Man destroy each other and descend to the pit’ (paraphrase of Ezek 31:10-14). Isaiah 9:12-20 describes how brothers devour each other and are never satisfied. These descriptions are likely what Jesus refers to at the Lord’s Table.

<sup>172</sup> Jesus uses Psalm 82 in John 10 to assert that all humans are sons of God, or ought to be (John 8). Paul expresses a similar view in Romans 8. Jesus expresses this view in defense of the primary accusation against him in *John*, which is that he is a blasphemer in that he claims to be God’s son.

there is no good violence, as internal mimesis is unable to bring life to its practitioner because of its innate death-orientation, the only other option is the loving and creative external mimesis that the son of Man and son of God taught and exemplified, even refusing scandal and violence to the point of death. Matthew uses the framework of contrasting the Passover lamb and the Unleavened Bread to subvert the violence Logos that governs a cosmos with the love Logos that governs another form of kingdom that is ‘not of this cosmos’ (Matt 26:29; John 18:36).

### **3.11.2 In Paul – the Lord’s Ambivalent Table**

There are a few accounts of the Lord’s Table in Paul’s letters. Most notably, Romans 11 and 1 Cor. 10-11, in which Paul is clearly attempting to articulate a distinction of two ways in which the meal may be understood and practiced. In 1 Corinthians 10, it is significant that Paul begins by briefly recounting the Exodus deliverance of the people of Israel, and the Lord’s provision of spiritual food and spiritual drink for them in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:3-4). Paul then describes how the Lord’s provision was not enough for many of them, and they desired other provisions, which caused their own deaths (1 Cor 10:5-13). Paul says that the people were presented with a scandal; a model-obstacle, or double-bind, by the Lord deliberately. The Lord ‘tested’ the people to see if they would satisfy the Lord’s will (imitate his desire), eating his daily bread, instead of their own will, eating the flesh that they enjoyed in violent internal Egypt. So the Lord’s Table, or the eschatological (1 Cor 10:11) Messianic Banquet is a ritual designed to be a deliberate scandal. It is forcing the issue of whose will (what type of mimesis) each participant will abide by, the Lord’s externality, trusting his provision, or one’s own (imitating the internal desire of other sons of Man), counting on one’s strength, one’s violence, to sustain him.

Chapter 11 of Paul’s first epistle to the Christians at Corinth also concerns a distinction in how one observes the Lord’s Table. He criticises many of the people for misunderstanding the Table, and bringing judgment on themselves thereby, like some of the people of Israel in the desert during the Exodus. Some of the Corinthians are taking more than their ‘daily bread’, their share, and depriving their brothers who go hungry. In so doing they are guilty of devouring their own flesh and blood, in a manner of speaking, and engaging in precisely what the Lord’s Table is designed to refute, which is the way of taking life at the expense of one’s brother, which Christ’s crucifixion represents (condemnation of the way of violence and death). So in Paul’s

writing too, we find descriptions of the Lord's Table as using the images of bread and blood, and flesh (body), as symbols for discussing loving versus violent conduct toward each other, which results in life or death to the other and to the self.

### 3.12 Conclusions

A summary of the essential perspective formed by my analysis of background materials is in order. Internal mimesis – grasping at equality with a 'god' (the Other) – began, according to the biblical history, with Adam and Eve the first humans. The quasi-theoretical intent of the text should be recognized, as well as the theoretical lens through which I view it. As Girard says of similar texts, it must be understood in a technical way.<sup>173</sup> Literally speaking, the first son of Man in biblical history then, is Cain. That first son of Adam metaphorically devours his brother, the rival Other, to gain the metaphysical being (life, glory, fullness, acceptance before God) that his brother Abel seems to have and that Cain feels he lacks (Gen 4:1-17).<sup>174</sup> Cain is scandalized by his brother's apparent superiority. Cain has constructed a (inaccurate) theory of mind for his brother. He views Abel as a model-obstacle, and then a model-obstacle-object. That is, he thinks if he can destroy his brother – devour him metaphorically, for such is the language used in this story to describe Cain's actions (Gen 4:11) – he can acquire his brother's apparently greater metaphysical being (life/glory/praise/honour).

The Lord warns Cain that sin is lying in wait (or is a snare, a mimetic scandal) at his tent-flaps, that sin's desire is for Cain, but that Cain must master sin (Gen 4:6-7). In other words, the Lord tells Cain to retake control of the situation of scandal he is in toward his brother, and choose metaphysical humility (the external way), loving his brother as much as himself rather than objectifying him, and devouring the object. Cain is to replace the delusion of the other subject as an object, and reconsider him to be a subject again. Cain is not able to heed the Lord's

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<sup>173</sup> The analysis of *John* in the next chapter is designed to take into account the verbal and narrative patterns, identified in the selected background material, that together articulate the subverted sacrificial combat mythology, forming the thematic elements of the Bible's two ways, which from Girard's theory and neurological evidence for mimetic bipolarity are equivalent to the two types of mimesis and their respective types of Logos.

<sup>174</sup> Girard describes the feeling of metaphysical emptiness (death): "Being in the traditional sense, absolute being, is something I don't have in me. I don't feel it. I feel my emptiness. But the other always seems to have more [being] than I have – unless, of course, the other surrenders to my desire, in which case being flees him very fast and I contaminate him with my nothingness" (2001, 36). He continues, "What you really desire is not the objects of the neighbour. It's some quintessence of the neighbour that cannot even be given a name" (2001, 36). The conclusion being that, "Cut off from any vital contact with God... 'men become gods' for one another, although always only fleetingly. Mimetic desire pursues an illusion, and this makes it at once urgent and insatiable. The race is intense, but there's no finish line" (2001, 36).

warning, and slays his brother. He fails in being his brother's keeper (Gen 4:9); he fails to reconstruct the collapsed triangle of desire into a state of external mimesis (figure 1).

Although internal mimesis triumphs in a sense in this story (and violence always succeeds in expelling love, but only ever temporarily), in another sense it is conquered by the exposing of it as evil, as inconsistent with the image of the Lord, the image in which humanity is made. This is indicated by Abel's voice crying out from his blood in the soil (ground, grave), and from the Lord's interpretation of Cain's thought and action as sin. I think this is why Abel is the first prophet, in Jesus' view (e.g. Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51). Cain sacrifices his brother because he does not have the resort to animal sacrifice that Abel had, in Girard's view (1979 V&S, 4), and he certainly seems to lack the Logos of love that would enable him to stand back from violence. I read Jesus' self-descriptions in the Gospels as reflecting someone who considers himself a prophet, a son of Man, and a son of God, akin to Abel.

This story of Cain and Abel is the Bible's aetiological tale of sin's origin and nature. Sin is equated with the murder of one's brother, and then attempting to cover over responsibility for that violence with a lie. It is clear from what follows in the biblical history's recounting of the origin and nature of humanity that sin and violence are synonymous (e.g. Gen 6:11, Ezek 28:16), in that sin is mimesis turned rivalrous (internal mimesis), a scandal between rival doubles, resulting in violence. The first son of God and the first son of Man both fail to be what they were intended to be, according to the biblical history, and therefore a restoration at the most fundamental anthropological level is supposedly needed. This tale may be considered the Bible's first clear contrast of the two ways, of external versus internal mimesis.

The selected passages that follow these particular Hebrew foundation narratives seem to build on, or at any rate be consistent with, their portrayal of anthropogeny and the human situation as it regards internecine violence. The latter texts also seem to combat the violent proclivity of the sons of Man in a manner consistent with the earlier texts' subversive methods. I suggest that *John* simply carries-over the subversive intent and method for addressing the problem of violence and death that is found in the 'word of God'.

## **Chapter 4: John 6:53 – A Redemptive Return to the Pattern of Myth, as Well as its Overcoming<sup>175</sup>**

### **4.1 Synopsis**

This chapter engages in a fresh contextual reading of John 6:51-58, and especially the troublesome verse 53, in light of my ‘braided’ methodological approach incorporating the combat myth tradition that continues in the Gospels, its anti-sacrificial reflection narrative continued in the Gospels, and these two guided by the lens of mimetic theory. I attempt identification and explication of the articulation and polemical contrast of the two ways in John 6:31-58, especially in relation to the scandal and consumption metaphor phases of the mimetic cycle featured in John 6.

In John 6:51-58, the contrast takes the form of a semi-chiastic use of a single consumption metaphor for violence as well as love, simultaneously. The ‘chiasm’ hinges on 6:53, which is an ambivalent statement that beautifully illustrates, I would suggest, the notion of two types of mimesis (one creative, one destructive) arising naturally out of mimetic bipolarity (the mirror neuron system, or MNS; Garrels 2011, 94). This system may be utilized either appropriatively or empathetically. Which will be chosen is for each to decide with regard to another son/daughter of Man (and Eve) in recurring moments of scandal. Scandal is the site of the choice between internal and external mimesis leading to an either life-giving or death-giving outcome. Apparently, the model-obstacle’s life as well as the subject’s own hangs in the balance, as it were. In this way, the Lord’s Table is quite plainly described by *John* as a test of one’s mastery of mimetic desire.

### **4.2 Introduction to the Complete Integration**

In the previous chapter on the background to John 6:53, I identified and analyzed texts from the Hebrew Bible and Christian Scriptures that describe triangles of desire in the relationships of the main characters, narrative patterns that parallel the internal mimetic cycle and its external subversion (both violent and anti-violent aspects, also recognizable as the subverted combat myth cycle), and that contain an eschatological (telophase, or at the end of the mimetic cycle) Table that typically followed the narrative. At this Table there are two meal

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<sup>175</sup> Phrase borrowed from “The Scapegoat: René Girard’s Anthropology of Violence and Religion” (2001, 31).

options depending on a subject's 'mimetic desire palate,' one of flesh (of the Sea, or Cosmos) and another of bread (of Heaven). The pattern of combat before banquet is in keeping with extra-biblical precedents<sup>176</sup> and the recognized pattern<sup>177</sup> which the biblical material often keeps in form though not in meaning, due to its evident antagonism to the Logos of violence that the combat myth represents (the false-dichotomy between cosmos and chaos, good and bad violence).

However, there are variations of arrangement in the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple writings, as well as in the Christian material. As noted, the Synoptics appear to maintain the traditional arrangement, but John's Gospel plays with it somewhat. In John, some portion of the banquet is moved forward to the scandal phase of the cycle (John 6), and at the traditional banquet scene (John 13 and 18) there is little or no account of feasting and drinking and its meaning, as that has already been described in chapter 6. I think this re-organization is intended to place the choice between the two ways, or the ambivalent Table of the Lord (e.g. Psalm 23) in 'real-time' in the narrative, or at the moment when a subject decides his posture toward the Other in a mimetic scandal.

It is at this stage in the cycle that the decision is made as to which type of mimesis will be adhered to with regard to the model-obstacle. This choice between the two types of Logos, the two ways, is made as scandals arise between sons and daughters of Man and Eve as psycho-social interactions occasion social cognition and mimetic desire. However, people tend to choose the way they have always chosen, as a part of a constructed worldview based on previous models (Girard 2010, 100). In other words, once one has learned to live by the Logos of violence, it is difficult to perceive another way in a moment of scandal.

In keeping with the 'testing' that the Lord performs of his own people (e.g. Ex 16; נִסָּה, *πειράζω*), *John* makes plain that the scene in John 6 is also a test (*πειράζω*; John 6:5-6), or forcing the issue, to see to which Logos the people's loyalties (fidelities) lie, as it were. The son of Man tests to see if the people will desire his Father's external desire, as he does the Father's will (entering into a chain of external, non-rivalrous, mimesis) or if they will continue to imitate the desires of other internal mimetic sons of Man, desiring the 'flesh-pots' of fish of the Sea (Cosmos). The latter may be said to represent the internal mimesis of life through the Logos of

<sup>176</sup> Like the *Enuma Elish*, for example. The ambivalent Table afterward may be a literary descendant of the *Adapa* myth. Alternately, there may have been a shared antecedent.

<sup>177</sup> As per Fontenrose (1969, 9-11), Yarbrough Collins (1976, 57-8), Cohn (2001, 146), and others.

violence. Jesus knows when they attempt to make him king (John 6:15), a violent cosmic ruler, that they have not understood, and challenges them to rethink it with his discourse on the bread of Heaven (John 6:25-65). The people are scandalized by Jesus' proposal<sup>178</sup> and eventually leave him en masse (John 6:66).

Jesus' reaction to the people's misunderstanding of his sign (the multiplication of loaves and fish) and their later choice is like the Lord's reaction to the unfaithful wives in *Ezekiel* (e.g. Ezek 7:1-4, 7:10-11; 24). The Lord allows the violent to destroy themselves (e.g. Ezek 7:11) in keeping with the idea of 'wrath as causation'. He himself does not turn to the Logos of violence, but bides his time at a distance (e.g. Ezek 7:21-23; John 6:15-27), later renewing his suggestion to the people (e.g. Ezek 33:10-11; John 7:37-44). The consequence for abiding in internal mimesis, as the *Proverbs* describe it (e.g. Prov 1:18-19), is that he who digs a grave for another son of Man falls into it himself.

This logic is particularly striking in light of the mimetic researchers' understanding of intersubjectivity (interdividuality, or intercorporeity; Garrels 2011, 103). The latter enables an empirical understanding of how, as discussed earlier, murder of one's 'brother' is a death for the self.<sup>179</sup> As *Ezekiel* says, when his people are metaphysically dead in sin (in the way of violence), the Lord tells the son of Man that he is going to call them forth from their graves (Ezek 37:11-14), to breathe his spirit<sup>180</sup> into them in the 'Valley of Dry Bones', and bring them to metaphysical life.

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<sup>178</sup> Have they merely been offended by his language, or have they been offended by the suggestion that they are violent people who kill to live, and must cease to kill to really live? The latter would require them 'getting' the metaphor, and I think they got it. Few want to confront their own violence, many want to pretend they are not really that bad after all, and that the Other is responsible for the social ills that plague human groups. In other words, people often do not want to leave the mythological mindset, and really live.

<sup>179</sup> Another 'text of mimetic revelation' that comes to mind in this respect may be found in the work of John Donne, who wrote: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.... Any man's death diminishes me, for I am involved in Mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee" (2006, 7<sup>th</sup> printing, 75).

<sup>180</sup> Spirit equates to breath, or Logos: "Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" - Ezek 37:4. John 6 makes the equation of word and spirit also (John 6:63). The Logos of love may then be taken as the spirit/breath of metaphysical life.

This type of description of metaphysical death and life is carried-over in *John*. The people refuse this son of Man ('he came to his own but his own did not receive him' – John 1:10-11), and they murder him (John 18:16-36).<sup>181</sup> Jesus suggests the people are all "dead in their sins (violence)" (John 8:23-24). The Lord sends his spirit (Logos) to revive the people to the life-giving way (Ezek 33:10-11; John 14:25-27). This is the anti-violent, anti-sacrificial description of a God of love, and a Logos that is non-retributive and life-nurturing. It demonstrates that violence belongs to humanity, and humanity must deal with it itself. According to the narrative the Maker provides a model of external mimesis as way of life, so that a son of Man may imitate another son of Man modelling the way of a son of God, and Live as well. In this manner a way is made, out of the violent cosmos into another cosmos founded upon another Logos; it is another Exodus.<sup>182</sup>

I propose that John 6 be read from the view that it is another reflection narrative subverting the Logos of violence with an anti-sacrificial worldview that Girard terms the Logos of love. These two terms both refer to what the Bible describes as the way of life, both life to the fullest *and* life everlasting, consisting in a complete age of life here, and the hope of being raised up on the last day (e.g. Ps 23:6; John 6:40). The second type of Logos, the Johannine or love Logos, is the Girardian scapegoat lens, or the Hebrew reflection narrative that counters the sacrificial way of thinking and living; it counters the internal mimetic penchant of sons of Man.

The external mimesis of the Johannine Logos is essentially anti-sacrificial and anti-violent. Only two options present themselves to an internal mimetic mortal<sup>183</sup> in a moment of scandal: either war with one's brother (violence), or surrogate victimization (scapegoating). Since both of these options are preservation of us and ours over-against they and theirs, both could be understood as scapegoating, in the sense of transference of responsibility for the present crisis solely onto the shoulders of the rival Other(s) – in other words, labeling an Other as chaos monster, with whose elimination peace will return (temporarily).

Alternately, the love that is articulated in the reflection narrative of the violent Logos engages in 'truth' as *honesty* (Fraser 2001, 44-5), or honestly taking personal ownership of a share of responsibility for the crisis, and the choice to move away from the two apparent options

<sup>181</sup> Just as the prophets – witnesses to the ineffectiveness of the Logos of violence - before him from Abel to Zechariah (e.g. Matt 23:35, Luke 11:51, Heb 11:4, 1 John 3:12, Jude 1:11).

<sup>182</sup> A 'way out' of an oppressive order, a tyranny over the mind requiring subversion of the Logos that governs it. It is a reiteration of the 'way out' expressed in the Prophets, the Wisdom, and Torah.

<sup>183</sup> A son of Man or daughter of Eve, to entertain the biblical phrasing and make it gender inclusive.

selecting a third, which is the way of life, of metaphysical humility, or loving the Other as much as the self, which is external mimesis. The Hebrew reflection narrative's purpose seems to be to make one aware of the reality of a choice between the two types of mimesis available in moments of scandal. John 6:31-58 is the polemical contrast of the two ways as articulated in the Hebrew Bible, revisiting these ways during a homiletic Passover midrash on a liturgical text (Ex 16:4/15) which itself contains this motif.<sup>184</sup> Throughout *John* the two types of psycho-social governing logics are described in the traditional terms expressing the biblical two ways (Table 1).

### 4.3 Triangles of Desire – As in *Ezekiel*, So in *John*

In *John*, the object is the Lord's name,<sup>185</sup> his honour, which is contingent upon emulation of his external mimetic desire. This desire is 'on' his chosen people, the people of the word, in the presence of the 'internal' nations. If the people do God's will (imitate his desire and thereby reflect his image), then his name is preserved. Or, the people may choose not to imitate that model's external desire, and choose to take other internal mimetic sons of Man as models for their desire (called idolatry or adultery in *Ezekiel*).<sup>186</sup> But the spirit (Logos) of the Lord is not acquisitive (grasping, violent), so instead of being scandalized in a moment of potential scandal and engaging in rivalry with his people, imitating their internal mimetic desire, he is distanced *out of* relationship with his people (or expelled, "he came to his own and his own did not receive him", John 1:11).<sup>187</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Brown (AB29 1966, 277-80), Guilding (1960, 61-62).

<sup>185</sup> This is consistent with *Ezekiel* and other prophets (e.g. Isa 26:8, 42:8, 43:6-8, 47:4, 50:10, 54:5, 56:6, 57:15, 64:7, 65:1; Jer 7:11, 14:7, **15:16**; Ezek 20:9, 20:14, 20:22, 20:44, 36:21, 39:25; John 1:12, 2:23, 3:18, 5:43, 10:25, 12:28, 14:13-14, 14:26, 15:21, 17:11, 20:31).

<sup>186</sup> In the biblical view other men become gods for one another, and they project the Logos of violence they live by onto the deity, making him in their own image (Schwager 1987, 44).

<sup>187</sup> The people's relationship with other nations with which it is engaged in idolatrous imitation is this latter internal mimesis. The text seems at first to indicate the Lord as in rivalry with the other nations and their rulers and gods – in *Ezekiel* for example – but this is a misreading, because the text also indicates that it is the people who are in triangular relationship with other nations, and they project their rivalries onto their deity (Schwager 1987, 44), which rivalries and problems they would not have if they were obedient to the external mimesis of the 'distant' Lord. The Lord himself 'judges' his people by letting them suffer the violence and death experienced through internal mimesis with other humans/nations. The Lord 'contends' with other nations/gods himself by letting them destroy each other in their own internal mimesis (e.g. Ezek 32). The Lord wins his people back, to restore his own name which they tarnish through choosing internal versus external mimesis, by restoring them when they have suffered enough through their own violence, and cry out to him (this act of humbling oneself before a God of compassionate nature is stepping into an external mimetic relationship – desiring imitation without rivalry). He then welcomes them back. This formula is reiterated throughout the prophets, and also by Jesus in parables, like the 'Prodigal Son' (Luke 15:11-32), and in *John* explicitly (e.g. John 14:2-31).

This sort of ambivalence with regard to other sons of Man, or any being a human can take as model for metaphysical desire, agrees with the notion of a monotheistic (transcendent) and anti-sacrificial-violence inclined Deity as exemplified in many of the passages cited as background in the previous chapter.<sup>188</sup> In *John*, the name of the Lord (externality) – the imitation of the desire of which has long been the Lord’s desire for Israel in the history of Hebrew monotheism (e.g. Isa 26:8) – is still the object in the main triangle of the narrative. The model is the Father God, and *John* asserts that Jesus is in perfect imitation of the Father, a son of God (3:35-6, 5:19-24, 10:29-39 – Ps 82:6). Jesus takes the place of model, suggesting the Lord’s desire for the people to imitate, as is the role of a Hebrew prophet (the role of mediator of the Lord’s desire, like Ezekiel, a son of Man). The word, which provides a guide to external mimesis with regard to the Father, has become flesh to ease the people along the way of life, according to John.

Mimetic rivalry comes in the form of religio-political leadership who claim to be the keepers and exclusive interpreters of the word, ‘sitting in Moses’ seat’ (Matt 23:1-3; John 5:45-6, 7:19, 9:28-9). The religio-political leaders claim to know the desire of God and mediate it to the people, but Jesus contests this view in *John* (e.g. John 7:19). When the people begin to be drawn to Jesus (John 4:1-3), supported by John the Baptist’s endorsement (e.g. John 3:27-36), the leaders of the people, who according to the narrative are actually imitating the internal mimetic desire of the nations (other men) rather than the external mimetic desire of the Father (e.g. John 5:41-44, 12:43), are scandalized by Jesus and sanction violence against him (e.g. John 5:16-18). The violent response by the leaders is the ‘fruit’ that serves as proof of inconsistency with the external mimetic desire (will, work) of the Lord, according to *John*. Such a response indicates that the ‘keepers’ of the word are not living consistently with the way of life articulated there as seen in chapter 3, and are therefore ‘white-washed’ graves (e.g. Matt 23:27, Luke 11:47-8), the living-dead (John 5:21-27).

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<sup>188</sup> The Hebrew Yahweh-Alone movement, not incidentally, coincides with the Hebrew anti-sacrificial movement. This is confirmed by Schwager, Girard, Boehm and others, as explored in the previous chapter.

There are parallels in this regard between *Ezekiel* and *John*, as the son of Man in both books describes the leaders of the people as evil shepherds who devour the sheep (Ezekiel 34, John 10) rather than giving them life. But life comes from external mimesis in relation to the Lord (e.g. Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34, and John 10).

The spirit or Logos of a model is determined by the kind of models a subject has encountered beforehand and by whose desire they have learned, as mimetic creatures, whether external or internal desire (Girard 2010, 100). As in *Ezekiel*, two types of models are contrasted, and the people and their leaders are criticized for preferring internal mimetic models (idolatry and adultery, in *Ezekiel*'s terms – e.g. Ezek 24), to the external mimetic model that is the Lord. In *John*, Jesus describes this contrast (among other ways) in terms of receiving glory (praise, honour, name) from other humans but not from the Father in heaven (5:42-44). Jesus insists that he receives glory from his Father, and from no one else (5:41). He also insists that he relies upon his Father, and entrusts himself to no one else, because of human proclivity for unfaithfulness (lack of the love of God and neighbour) compared with the Lord's unfailing faithfulness (ἰσχυρῶς) (e.g. Ps 23:6, 53:1-4, John 2:24-5, 5:42). *John* describes a contrast between humanity's woefully predictable tendency to choose rivalry and violence in the interest of self-preservation in a situation of scandal, while the Lord consistently remains externally mimetic, as may those who emulate that faithfulness (love Logos).

I must mention, before looking at *John* more closely, that the Joseph narrative features two significant events reiterated in John 6, which also occur in the biblical passages reviewed previously: both scandal and a test. Joseph's brothers are scandalized by him and they expel him as noted earlier (Gen 37). But later, after he re-encounters them, Joseph tests his brothers as to whether they will not also expel Benjamin under similar circumstances (Gen 44-45). So the scandal becomes a test performed by the victimized. This time, Judah loves Benjamin, and offers his life in place of Benjamin (Gen 44:30-34). One is enough, and Joseph forgives all of his brothers. So there in the Joseph narrative is the subversion of the Logos of violence with the Logos of love.<sup>189</sup> A similar subversion, with both a scandal and a test, and consumption metaphors (which also occur in the Joseph narrative), is described in John 6.

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<sup>189</sup> Girard thoroughly argues for this in several works (e.g. 2001, 16-18).

#### 4.4 The Mimetic Cycle in *John* – the Combat Myth Subverted by the Scapegoat Lens

The mimetic cycle, both internal and external aspects, are counter-poised in *John* as they have been in the selected texts from the Hebrew Bible, forming the same polemic between the two ways.<sup>190</sup> The metanarrative of *John*, as for the Synoptic Gospels, appears to be the sacrificial violence of the combat myth cycle subverted. John 6 is positioned at the scandal phase in the cycle (Table 3 and 4), and features a test of whether or not the people will ‘eat’ a son of Man in keeping with the manner of internal mimesis, or whether they will ‘eat’ the word in the way the Lord desires (e.g. Ex 16:4, Ezek 2:8, Jer 15:16). The actual consumption phase remains to be seen in chapters 13 and 18-19 where different characters display ‘fruit’ of both types of mimesis. The scapegoat lens, or reflection narrative, opposing sacrificial (good) violence and subverting the combat myth worldview (the Logos of violence), is briefly depicted in the following figure:

	<b>Exodus:</b>	<b>Matthew:</b>	<b>John:</b>
A	The Dragon Pair ~ Moses and Aaron Ex 4:14-17 <sup>191</sup>	The Dragon Pair ~ Mary and Jesus Matt 1:18-25	The Dragon Pair ~ John the Baptist and Jesus. John 1:19-34, 3:22-26, 5:31-36
B	Chaos and Disorder ~ caused by Moses Ex 7:20-21	Chaos and Disorder ~ caused by Jesus Matt 2:3	Chaos and Disorder ~ caused by Jesus. John 4:1-3, 5:16-18, 6:60-66, 7:1, 11:47-8
C	The Attack ~ the offer of deliverance from the oppressive and violent cosmos Ex 7:1-7, 8:1	The Attack ~ the offer of the kingdom of God Matt 3:2, 7	The Attack ~ the offer of another Cosmos (life of the Father). John 2:13-23, 3:17-18, 4:21-24, 6
D	The Champion ~ Phara’oh v. Moses/the Lord Ex 7:11-13	The Champion ~ the Satan v. Jesus in the desert Matt 4:3-10	The Champion ~ the Satan v. Jesus within the hearts (minds) of the hearers. John 1:10-13, 3:18-21, 7:7, 7:31-32, 8:34-49
E	The Champion’s Death ~ Phara’oh defeated Ex 8:8 (multiple), Ex 10:7-8 <sup>192</sup>	The Champion’s Death ~ the Satan defeated Matt 4:11	The Champion’s Death ~ the Satan defeated. John 7:44-49, 10:31-39
F	The Dragon’s Reign ~ Moses’/the Lord’s Reign Ex 8:9-14	The Dragon’s Reign ~ Jesus’ Reign Matt 4:23-25	The Dragon’s Reign ~ Jesus’ Reign. John 7:37-44, 8:30-59, 9-11:45, 12:12-19
G	Recovery of the Champion ~ Ex 8:15 (multiple)	Recovery of the Champion ~ Pharisees and Judas <sup>193</sup> Matt 12:14, 24	Recovery of the Champion ~ Religio-Political Leaders and Judas. John 11:46-54, 12:4-11, 12:42-43,

<sup>190</sup> As noted earlier, Johannine scholarship has noticed the clear theme of the two ways in John 6 (e.g. Anderson 1997, 194-220).

<sup>191</sup> Citations are examples, they are not the only evidences for each phase.

<sup>192</sup> The Combat is back and forth, Phara’oh is defeated many times, and Moses/the Lord is always in control.

<sup>193</sup> Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth*, 60. Under ‘G’ she writes, “...(2) his son helped him (a) by recovering the god’s lost potency, or (b) by taking the champion role upon himself.”

H <sup>194</sup>	<b>Exodus:</b> Battle Renewed and Victory ~ Phara'oh v. Moses Ex 14:10-12, 14:17-18, 15:9-10	<b>Matthew:</b> Battle Renewed and Victory ~ Pharisees v. Jesus Matt 12:14-50 (and onward it wages) Matt 26:3-4, 14-16, 27:27-54	<b>John:</b> Battle Renewed and Victory ~ Judaeen leadership v. Jesus. John 13:2, 13:18, 13:26-30, 18
I	Restoration and Confirmation of Order ~ attempted to be re- established only Ex 14:5-8, 15:9-10, 15:12	Restoration and Confirmation of Order ~ re-established by murder and a manufactured lie <sup>195</sup> Matt 27:6-8, 62-66; 28:11-15	Restoration and Confirmation of Order ~ re- established by a murder and a lie. John 19:13-37, 19:7, 19:12, 19:15

**Table 6 – The Scapegoat Lens (Reflection Narrative) on the Sacrificial Combat Myth**

#### **4.5 John 6:51-58 in Close (intra) Socio-Literary Context – the Two Ways in Terms of Flesh and Bread (Word, Spirit)<sup>196</sup>**

As stated previously, the dialogue contrasting the two ways – and in so doing describing the two types of mimesis arising from mimetic bipolarity – occurs in the midst of the mimetic cycle at the scandal phase rather than at the end (serving in part as interpretive commentary on the preceding scenes), as it does in the Exodus narrative. The description of the two ways serves the same function in the new position, however, with the added intention of attempting to forestall the violent and death-dealing result of scandal for internal mimetic sons of Man. Girard indicates that the Gospels have three stages in terms of Jesus' activity: 1) the offer of the 'kingdom,' 2) rejection of the offer (more a moment than a stage/phase), 3) warning of the eschaton (telophase) of the cosmos (or 'apocalypse,' in the popular use of that term) (Girard 1987, 196-205). In John, this dialogue on the two ways which scandalizes Jesus' disciples occurs just at the time of the second stage (moment) of rejection, when the people begin to be deeply offended (scandalized) by Jesus' suggestions about them (phase B||B<sub>1</sub> of the mimetic cycle/combat myth; tables 1, 3, 6), about the Logos of violence by which they are governed (the Kingdom of Satan in which they are blindly enslaved). With this moment of scandal, this son of Man begins to be the object of sanctioned ('good') violence for cosmos preservation.

John 6:51-58 contains a "redemptive return to the pattern of myth as well as its overcoming" (Girard 2001, 31), a Girardian notion already described in the methodologies and background analysis (equivalent to the reflection narrative). Girard asserts the Bible expresses

<sup>194</sup> There is a victory for the scapegoats here, which is the revelation of the violence they have suffered as untrue, as unjustifiable (Girard 2001, 30). There is a defeat for the champions here; their violence takes their lives.

<sup>195</sup> Ultimate victory of the 'dragon' (Logos of love/Kingdom of God) is yet to come (John 12:31-33).

<sup>196</sup> As alluded to (or redeployed) using the verbal and narrative cues analyzed in chapter 3 from the biblical background material.

awareness of the reality that, “In order to transcend the gods, one must obey them” (2001, 19). That is what Jesus in *John* is also doing. The following is a reading of John 5:16 to John 6:72 in light of the two types of mimesis and the two kinds of Logos they express, described by Jesus in terms of the test of the two ways. The two ways are symbolized by two types of food, flesh and bread, just as Exodus 16 and Numbers 11 symbolize the two ways. This feast is the Lord’s ambivalent Table.

#### **4.5.1 *John 5:16-23*<sup>197</sup> - A ‘Dragon’ brings Chaos to Cosmos, and Violence is Sanctioned Against Him (C||C<sub>I</sub>)**

Jesus has recently healed a man and told him to sin no longer, so that something worse than being crippled does not happen to him. As shown earlier, sin is the equivalent of abiding in the violent Logos, living a life characterized by internal mimetic psycho-social interactions, which is a metaphysical death (in the grave of desire). This healing was performed on a Sabbath, and Jesus told the man to take his mat with him, which constitutes ‘work’ by a certain definition. Jesus’ deed, in imitation of the Lord’s external desire (giving life), draws the ire of the religio-political authorities (the leaders of the Judaeans cosmos). The son of Man counters their objections saying that he does his Father’s will, which is love (externality), and this son of Man imitates the desire of his Father (behaving like a son of God), loving in kind.

Some of the Judaeans<sup>198</sup> think that Jesus makes himself God by saying he does the Father’s will, and calling God his Father. This interpretation seems like a non-sequitor, as such a posture suggests humility before God if anything, which is a stance taken by one who seeks to imitate the external metaphysical desire of an external mimetic model; in biblical terms, it is a son of Man attempting to be a son of God. Jesus endeavours to love as the Father loves, giving

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<sup>197</sup> Allusions made in this passage include Ezekiel 2-3 and 33-7, of the one *sent* from God, a son of Man to other sons of Man.

<sup>198</sup> I use this term rather than ‘the Jews,’ because 1) it is more accurate, indicating citizens of the cosmos of Judaea (in the narrative there are also Galilean Jews, Samaritans, Romans, etc., members of different national, regional, and ethnic cosmoi), and 2) there is a reading of *John* that takes this as evidence of anti-Semitism, with which reading I do not agree. One significant reason for questioning the anti-Jewish reading of *John* is that Jesus claims his audience has persecuted prophets from Abel to Zechariah (Matt 23, Luke 11). Abel was not Jewish, and neither was the person who slew him. While this statement is recorded in Matthew and Luke, there is a similar statement in the first epistle of *John* (1 John 3:12; Jude 1:11 also condemns the ‘way of Cain’, as likely does Isa 43:27). These things together show that in *Johannine* thought too, Judaeans are not targeted as the only scapegoats of sons of Man, but rather, they represent *all* humans who do the same thing (as Girard says, they participate in the revelation). I view this as part of the quasi-theoretical nature of *John*, consistent with the anti-violence biblical message generally. Just as Jesus plays the role of representative of sons of Man and sons of God in the narrative, so too the Judaeans in the narrative play the role of representatives of all cosmoi governed by the Logos of violence.

life to the dead, should the dead imitate the external mimesis of Jesus, and live also, being released from their graves. Jesus describes his behaviour, and the behaviour of his interlocutors, in a metaphysical way that is in keeping with *Ezekiel* and the metaphysical plane of the Bible as portrayed in the examples reviewed in the last chapter.

John 5:22-23 indicates the sort of Oneness spoken of in the Lucan story of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37), when Jesus defines what a ‘neighbour’ is. Jesus does this in *Luke* because a lawyer has correctly defined the Law (the will/desire of God) as loving God with one’s entire being and one’s neighbour as oneself. But the lawyer hedged, attempting to qualify ‘neighbour,’ trying to avoid the absolute nature of the definition. Jesus’ reply is with a parable that seems to assume the context of the lawyer’s allusion, Deuteronomy 6:4-6, including the ‘Shema’: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One” (Deut 6:4). Jesus, in parable form, describes that the Oneness of God is shown in loving one’s enemy as one loves oneself, a Samaritan loving a Judaeon or vice versa. Where the violence Logos sees ‘cosmos and chaos’, the love Logos sees brothers, two sons of Man and sons of God, the same flesh and blood (e.g. Gen 37:26-7). These two characters could be sons of God, should they both follow the ‘Shema’ as understood by the lawyer and by Jesus, should they both imitate the desire for externality suggested by God the Father of all.

So in John 5:22-23, Jesus says that to honour a son of Man is to honour God, and to fail to honour a son of Man is to dishonour his Maker (e.g. Isa 43:7, 54:5), whose image (name) he bears. Jesus is destroying the notion of difference in the heart of violence here. There is never good violence. All must be received, in the name of the Lord, as sons of Man and sons of God.

#### **4.5.2 John 5:24-29<sup>199</sup> - Going Forth from Graves of Internal Mimetic Desire**

The dead are raised to life – the internally mimetic become externally mimetic – by hearing the voice of the word, imitating the Father’s desire for externality that the word enfleshes and expresses. John 5:26 says the Father has life in himself, and gives freely to the Son to have life in himself, and he gives freely to other sons of Man to have life in themselves. This is a chain of external mimesis that is wholly benevolent, requiring nothing of the receiver but faithfulness to externality, or the love Logos (spirit). In the other direction, a son of Man ‘eats’ a ‘son of God’ who eats the Father (e.g. Jer 15:16, Ezek 2:8), in that each does the will of- or imitates the desire

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<sup>199</sup> Allusions include Ezek 34 and 37, the dead raised to life.

for external mimesis of the external model. This reversal of direction between agents of external mimesis in John 5:26 is what is expressed in John 6:54-58, a cooperative and creative consumption metaphor that subverts the appropriative and destructive consumption metaphor (a reflection narrative of the consumption metaphor).

John 5:28-29 describes the emptying of graves, or bringing people from a state of metaphysical death to a state of metaphysical life. People are in a state of metaphysical death insofar as they abide in internal mimesis, which is described as being under the wrath of God (e.g. John 3:36). The wrath is the logic of Prov 1:18-19 (etc.) that those who devour others violently consume themselves (or divine judgement as causality). That is, the Lord does nothing to the violent but let them suffer the logical consequence of the type of mimesis they have chosen to live by (paradoxically, a death).

This biblical divine judgment leaves violence in the domain of humanity; it begins and ends with humanity. It is God's wrath merely because he allows it, since the Scriptures insist on the Lord maintaining a transcendent purpose for all creation (e.g. Ezek 33:17-20), though that purpose is outside of violence.<sup>200</sup> The idea of the transcendence of the monotheistic God includes allowing humans to choose the way of internal mimesis in the moment of scandal, as Cain did (Isa 43:27; 1 John 3:12; Jude 1:11). The Lord has no further hand in the suffering but that he lets humans choose internal or external mimesis, and experience the principle of causality; the logic of 'what goes around comes around'. It is an implacable logic that insists on responsibility for one's choice of self over other. This whole passage (John 5:24-29) is alluded to and reiterated in John 6:41-50. There is another type of mimesis that gives to the self by means of giving to the Other – true to the reality of human intercorporeity as verified with the discovery of the MNS in the brain (Gallese 2011, 102-3) – and choosing that Logos in a scandal occasions an awakening (ἐγείρω ~ resurrection; John 5:21), a resurrection from one's grave of internal desire (John 5:28; Num 11:33-34).

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<sup>200</sup> As Raymund Schwager asserts, violence is something humans project onto God, making him in their own image, rather than reflecting the image of the God of love (1987, 44).

#### **4.5.3 John 5:30-47- *The Desire of the Father and the Desire of Fatherless Humanity*<sup>201</sup>**

Jesus states that he does not do his will, but he imitates the desire of the Father. Jesus says that his audience imitates each other's desires, but not the desire of their Father. This may be another reiteration of the contrast of internal and external mimesis. Girard suggests that, "Cut off from any vital contact with God... 'men become gods' for one another, although always only fleetingly" (Girard 2001, 36). Sons of Man who operate by internal mimesis imitate each other's desires and this leads to mimetic doubles, double-bind, scandal, violence and death. Humans who have an external mimetic model do not encounter scandal there because of the distance *and* benevolence of the model, and they in turn offer themselves as benevolent models to others. John 5:44 plainly speaks of seeking to acquire (grasping at) one another's glory (imitating each other's desires for 'objects' of metaphysical being) and failing to seek the Father's desires expressed in the Scriptures that they search (John 5:37-40), which is external mimesis articulated in critique of internal mimesis, in the form of reflection narratives, as described previously.

Jesus asserts that if his audience had trusted Moses' writings, they would trust Jesus' words, because Moses wrote of him (John 5:45-47). He refers to the five books traditionally attributed to Moses, certainly (perhaps more), which I have attempted to demonstrate clearly describe the contrast of the two ways.

#### **4.5.4 John 6:1-6 – *Buying Bread without Price (or Gaining Life without Sacrifice?): a Test of Choosing Flesh or Bread*<sup>202</sup>**

John 6 begins by fusing at least two biblical passages with the declaration that Passover was approaching. The first seems to be Isaiah 55 (Isa 54 is directly cited later in chapter 6),<sup>203</sup> where the people are invited to buy bread without price from the Lord, which is his word (Isa 55:2-3), and to cease eating what is not bread (what is flesh, the context indicates), as Jesus says in John 6:27 more explicitly (this verse clearly contrast the two ways). The bread and fish (flesh) that Jesus is about to provide in abundance for the people is intended as a test (πειράζω, 6:6).

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<sup>201</sup> This section includes allusions to Ezek 2-3, Num 11, and the Hebrew foundational narratives.

<sup>202</sup> Allusions include Isa 55, Num 11, and Ex 16.

<sup>203</sup> Aileen Guilding has noted that this is a liturgical Passover text (1960, 63). Peder Borgen has noted that in Palestinian Midrash, one main text from Torah forms the basis of the midrash, with secondary supporting texts taken from the Prophets and the Writings (Borgen 1981, 38, 51). Isa 54-55 seems to function this way in the midrash in John 6. Additionally, it is not only the cited phrase that is brought to bear by its citation, but the context in which that phrase resides as well.

The combined elements point to Exodus 16 (and Numbers 11), in which the Lord gives the people flesh from the Sea in addition to bread from Heaven as a test (ἰσθῆ, πειράζω) for the people. Exodus 16:4 and 16:15 are regarded as the primary text of the midrash, and content of the midrash of John 6:31-58 clearly supports this view (Borgen 1981, 39-41).

I consider this test to be a sort of deliberate scandal, or forcing a choice between the two ways,<sup>204</sup> to imitate the Lord's external desire and Logos or to imitate the cosmos' internal desire and Logos. Jesus' actions and words scandalize the people in turn, it seems. His rejection of 'the praise of Man' in rejecting their desire to make him their king is scandalous (John 6:15), blocking their metaphysical desire.<sup>205</sup> The will to imitate the desire of the people's neighbours, and rival the neighbours in violence, is desire to eat the flesh of the Other (Isa 9:20-21), which is not bread, and does not give the life the Lord offers, but brings metaphysical and actual death to the internally mimetic and violent.<sup>206</sup>

Jesus' description of how the members of the cosmos eat the flesh of the son of Man and drink his blood to gain life is scandalous, blocking their desire to view themselves as 'good'. Jesus scandalous suggestion in John 6:51-58 is that the cosmos and its members are maintained by devouring sons of Man, and they are about to do it again to Jesus himself. By the end of the chapter the people are scandalized ultimately by Jesus' suggestion that they should receive a son of Man as a son of God. Jesus message of warning as a whole is scandalous, then, but like the son of Man in *Ezekiel*, the messenger has now done all he can, and the hearers' are responsible for whatever blood they shed, because they have been warned.

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<sup>204</sup> Situations of scandal occasion the need to choose between the two types of mimesis in an incidental way. It seems that, as the purpose of biblical texts of mimetic revelation is to replace internal proclivity with external proclivity, which implies awareness of human mimetic nature on some level, the Lord's Table here as in examples in the Hebrew Bible deliberately sets up a situation of scandal, constituting a test.

<sup>205</sup> The term ἀρπάζω (John 6:15) is used, indicating *grasping* at a son of Man, clearly articulating the sort of objectification indicative of internal mimetic motivation.

<sup>206</sup> This choice hails back to *Ezekiel*, itself referencing the rebellion in the wilderness out of Egypt, where the people imitated the desire of the nations round about rather than imitating the desire of the Lord. The son of Man, however, ate the Lord's scroll/word and was not rebellious like the people in the wilderness (Ezek 2:8). This test is offered again here.

#### 4.5.5 John 6:7-15 – *The Feeding of the Mob (Pack of Wolves or Flock of Sheep?)*

This section is packed with symbolism. There are seven pieces of food, possibly representing daily provision,<sup>207</sup> and therefore reliance upon the Lord rather than the sword (e.g. Ex 16:4; Ezek 33:25-29), or one's own strength. Jesus commands the disciples to gather all of the bread (but none of the flesh) so that nothing is lost. This parallels John 6:39, where the Father's will is that Jesus should lose none of those given him (those who have received the bread, the word/Logos), but preserve life.<sup>208</sup> The bread represents eternal (fullness of) life. The flesh seems forgotten, as it is in Exodus 16. It is perishing, is mortal (the 'half-life' that is metaphysical death), but what the Lord gives is fullness of life. As in Numbers 11 so here in John 6; the flesh is only eaten by those who desire it (ἐθέλω; John 6:11), while the bread is offered to everyone equally, and as in Exodus 16 only the bread is gathered in the end (John 6:13). This relates to how, in Exodus 16 and Numbers 11, it is never the Lord's intention to give flesh, a son of Man asks for it and the Lord allows it. The Lord offers bread.

The flesh from the Sea (fish) represents the way of death via metaphorical consumption (objectification and abuse) of a son of Man, loving oneself more than the neighbour, or internal mimesis and violence. The bread of Heaven represents the way of life, via metaphorical consumption (subjectification and reception) of a son of God (and in so doing the word of God), loving the neighbour as much as the self.

I would suggest that the significance of Jesus 'giving thanks' (John 6:11) before distributing the loaves of bread is highly important. The feast of Unleavened Bread quickly follows the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, and is also associated with the thanksgiving offering that consists of bread (e.g. Lev 7:12). Ps 50:12-15 states that the Lord desires thanksgiving rather than flesh to eat and blood to drink from sacrifices, and this notion is continued in Ps 51:16-17. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Lord's Table begins by indicating that a son of Man is going to be treated by the cosmos as a Passover lamb, and then the disciples celebrated the feast of Unleavened Bread with Jesus. Flesh is not mentioned in the Lord's Table in the Synoptic

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<sup>207</sup> There are 12 baskets of fragments of bread gathered, possibly another symbol of the eternal provision and therefore eternal life of God. It may relate to the 12 loaves of the Lord's Table (of show bread), which may represent the zodiac symbolizing the eternal reign of God over creation, etc.

<sup>208</sup> This is like Joseph's imitation of the Lord's desire to preserve life (Gen 50:19-21), and the Lord's desire in *Ezekiel* to save lives through the son of Man he has *sent* to warn the people, and bring them out of their graves (Ezek 33:10-11, 37:11-14).

Gospels,<sup>209</sup> because Jesus is going to be treated as the flesh that the internal mimetic agents of the Logos of violence will soon devour.

The eating of bread is symbolic for receiving Jesus, a son of Man, and in so doing receiving a son of God.<sup>210</sup> The eating of flesh is symbolic for rejecting Jesus, a son of Man, and in so doing expelling a son of God, and the Father's desire is rejected. The Father's desire is abiding in external mimesis toward the Other. The imagery of feeding on bread and flesh represents two forms of psycho-social interaction (social cognition, or intercorporeity), also describable in terms of internal and external mimesis. The Feeding (feast, or table) is a tool to force the choice; in other words, a test. Jesus' test is a sort of deliberate scandal, or the model becoming obstacle on purpose, in order to change minds from internal to external mimetic inclination, from sin like Cain's to love like Joseph's.

#### **4.5.6 John 6:16-26 – *Flesh from the Sea*<sup>211</sup>**

I would suggest that Jesus personally symbolizes flesh from the Sea here, walking across it over to where he will make explicit contrast between bread and flesh in his homily, wherein he will also call himself bread. The Logos or wisdom (equated with spirit; e.g. John 6:63) of God over the waters – with God in the beginning – may be another intended allusion with Jesus hovering over the waters here, rendering an ambivalent image depicting the two ways and the two types of mimesis arising from mimetic bipolarity again.

The people must choose whether they will treat Jesus, a fellow son of Man, as flesh or as bread. This is the Lord's test for them, to see if they will imitate his desire instead of each other's desires (just as the two wills are contrasted in John 5:41-44); in other words, whether the hearers will continue abiding in internal mimesis (with the wrath of God abiding on them) or abide in external mimesis (free from the grave). The choice of external mimesis can only be made if the hearers have already been 'taught by God,' however (John 6:45, 5:45-47). That is, presumably, if

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<sup>209</sup> Aileen Guilding notes that, while the use of flesh instead of body in John is sometimes attributed to an anti-docetic intent, it is equally probably that it is simply a term consistent with the liturgical (Scriptural) background to John 6 (1960, 61). Guilding writes, "Israel in the wilderness asked for flesh to eat (Numbers 11:4, 13, 18, 21, 33; Exodus 16:3, 8, 12). There are close similarities of thought and language between John 6 and Exodus 16, Numbers 11" (1960, 61-2).

<sup>210</sup> This idea is expressed in various ways throughout the Hebrew Bible and Christian Scriptures. Another example, from the Synoptic Gospels, is, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did [or 'did not do'] for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did [or 'did not do'] for me." (Matt 25:40, 25:45).

<sup>211</sup> Allusions include Ex 16, Num 11, Gen 1, WisSol 9:1-2, 9:9.

they have already understood the contrast of the two ways as described in the Bible, and chosen the way of life.

John 6:26 indicates that the people have objectified Jesus, that is, they have not received him as a subject, but desire him for the food he can give them. This acquisitive interaction indicates that the people did not understand the sign of the multiplication, but abide in *internal mimesis* toward this son of Man.

#### **4.5.7 John 6:27-29 – *Doing the Deeds of God the Father: Imitating an Externally Mimetic Being's Desire for Externality*<sup>212</sup>**

Here Jesus rebukes the people for objectifying him, their neighbour, and seeking to metaphorically devour him (or what he can give them to eat; this remains symbolic). What the Father wants the people to do with this son of Man, himself made flesh (made in the image of the Maker ~ son of God), is receive him. That is, God's metaphysical desire is externality itself, or faithfulness (love) toward his image (or image-bearers). Therefore, the worker (doer/practitioner) of God's will (desire) receives his neighbour without pretence, without wanting anything from him, without objectification. In this way one receives God.

Jesus words here also make allusion to Isaiah 55 about not working for food that perishes, but for food that remains for life eternal. This is a contrast of two ways, which is plain in John 6:28-9, since it is about doing a certain kind work, or a certain manner of social interaction. One 'taught by God' (John 6:45) knows what this work is (as Proverbs 1-9, for example, make rather explicit).

#### **4.5.8 John 6:30-33 – *The Exegetical Starting Point for Jesus' Passover Midrash*<sup>213</sup>**

The bread from Heaven is not from Moses, not from flesh. The consistent satisfaction of metaphysical desire does not derive from (metaphorically) consuming flesh, but from a son of Man behaving as a son of God sent into the cosmos from the Father in Heaven. The 'work' of God is Jesus himself (John 6:29, 35), which is the gesture of compassion and welcome toward unwelcoming humanity. The people think they will get more physical bread, but Jesus is referring to his physical and metaphysical self as bread, as the work and the sign and the word of

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<sup>212</sup> Or, "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy [as I define it in relation to your neighbours]" (Lev 19:2).

<sup>213</sup> Exodus 16:4/15. Refer to Appendix A for a complete English translation of John 6:31-59.

God. John's description of 'incarnation' (enfleshment) of the word may be taken as a figure for external mimesis in and of itself. Jesus points (rather abstractly) at externality itself as the work of God, which is a son of Man sent among his own to see if they will receive him; that is, to see if the people will imitate the external mimetic desire demonstrated by such a gesture, or continue in internal mimetic desire.

The group must decide whether or not they will recognize and treat him as their own "flesh and blood" (e.g. Gen 37:26-7), or expel and murder him, 'eating' his flesh and 'drinking' his blood. Jesus offers a 'sign,' though perhaps not the sort of sign the people expected when they asked for one.<sup>214</sup> The sign of God is the test of the 'outsider' itself. The two choices are 'receive' or 'reject', though the Prologue has already told the reader what will happen (John 1:10-11), and our knowledge of the (combat) mythological bent of humanity renders it a foregone conclusion. The internal mimetic narrative cycle will be played out again, despite this particular narrative being expressly formed against that Logos and its workings (a reflection narrative).

#### **4.5.9 John 6:34-40 – A Son of Man and Son of God as Metaphysical Food and Drink<sup>215</sup>**

Receiving the externally mimetic Son is the reception of the externally mimetic Father. Entering into this form of mimesis, if abided in consistently, never occasions scandal with the external model, and therefore never leads to violence and death. The distance is too great, the metaphysical humility too strong, to bring about scandal. As Jesus states, "Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty... whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (John 6:35b, 6:37b, 6:38). In this way, Jesus satisfies the metaphysical desire for the 'being' of the Other without the implicit dangers associated with taking a neighbour (brother, fellow son of Man) as model. Additionally, because an external mimetic subject is orientated thus, his presence has a placating effect amongst internal mimetic subjects, because he is aware of- and avoids imitating the desire of a close Other as a discipline, so as to forestall scandal and death. He maintains a view of the Other as subject, loving the Other.

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<sup>214</sup> Paul N. Anderson discusses how in *John*, "Jesus' words and works are *not* 'attesting miracles' – but '*testing signs*'" (1997, 193).

<sup>215</sup> Allusions include Ex 16, Num 11, Ezek 2-3, 33-34.

In John 6:36, Jesus says “ὁμῖν” referring back to John 6:32 when he says, “It was not Moses who gave *to you* the bread from heaven, but my Father... the true bread” (Borgen 1983, 30). This indicates two important things. First, that Jesus is not diminishing Moses’ work or message, but rather he is critiquing his audience’s reception of Moses’ message (the word of God in Torah) as well as their reception of a son of Man’s presence, because, “...you have even seen [the bread] and have not believed” (John 6:36). Secondly, it indicates that the people have rejected the word they received from Moses (according to tradition) *in the act of* rejecting Jesus as a son of Man (John 6:37-8). Despite treating Jesus as an object and an enemy, Jesus says he will receive any who come to him (receive him), because he is not doing his own internal will (characterized by expulsive violence toward one’s “flesh and blood”), but doing the will (imitating the external desire) of the Father, who casts no one out. All sons and daughters of Man and Eve are the Father’s own “flesh and blood”, and those who imitate him behave in kind. Those who understand and behave thus are sons and daughters of God.

#### **4.5.10 John 6:41-50 – *Metaphysical Death, Metaphysical Life*<sup>216</sup>**

Jesus indicates that the fathers who ate the manna in the wilderness all died. An entire generation refused the will of the Lord, and none of them entered the Lord’s Rest, not even Moses. Numbers 11 indicates that the people who desired the flesh of the cosmos instead of the bread of the Lord entered the Graves of Desire. *Ezekiel* describes the people in his time as the people in the wilderness, desiring Egypt instead of the Lord’s kingdom (e.g. Ezek 20, 23), and as in graves (Ezek 37:11-14), needing to be resurrected. This death is a metaphysical death, a metaphysical grave, outside the external mimetic desire of the Lord that engenders life. This metaphor can be taken as for the state of internal mimesis, or remaining under governance of the Logos of violence.

John 5:24-25 clearly states that Jesus (a son of Man and a son of God) is speaking to people he perceives as metaphysically dead in sin (violence, the Logos characterized by internal mimesis), in the grave. Jesus says that those who hear his words pass from death to life, and that to hear (heed) the voice of a son of God is to rise from the Dead and Live. John 3:18 and 3:36 indicate that the wrath of God remains in a son of Man who expels a son of Man; ‘the proof is in

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<sup>216</sup> Allusions include Ex 16, Num 11, Num 14:33-34 (end of wilderness wanderings when an entire generation dies out), Isa 54, Ezek 37.

the pudding,’ as it were, or ‘you will be known by your fruit’ (e.g. John 15:2-16). A person cannot claim to love God and hate his brother (e.g. 1 John 3:10-18), in other words.

A son of Man governed by the violence Logos remains in internal mimesis, grasping (taking) and devouring (killing) the Other, and that person therefore remains dead, in the grave. This is what Jesus means in this portion of John 6. It is a message consistent with the Logos of the Hebrew Bible revisited previously. It is a description of violence consistent with the metaphysical psycho-social interactions of social-cognitive beings. The message is consistent with the potential and recurring metaphysical *and* physical outcomes of mimetic crises between inter-corporeal (interdividual) humans.

#### **4.5.11 John 6:51-52 – The Internal Mimetic Treatment of a Son of Man by Subjects of the Judaeian, Galilean and Roman Cosmoi<sup>217</sup>**

In John 6:51-52 Jesus describes how his life will be taken by some and received by others. For some his life (flesh and blood) will be taken (grasped and devoured) for the life of the cosmos, for others his life will be received for a fullness of life not of this violent cosmos. This duality is lost somewhat in English translation. The Greek is clearer in indicating that in this narrative one moment of Jesus’ life has two purposes, and the purpose is contingent upon the viewpoint of a given subject (character in the narrative, in the audience, and the reader), whether that viewpoint is internally (violently) or externally (lovingly) informed and inclined. In Greek the verses read:

ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς· ἐάν τις φάγῃ ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου  
ζήσκει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, **καὶ** ὁ ἄρτος **δὲ** ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου  
ζωῆς. Ἐμάχοντο οὖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι λέγοντες· πῶς δύναται οὗτος ἡμῖν  
δοῦναι τὴν σάρκα [αὐτοῦ] φαγεῖν; (John 6:51-2)

The “καὶ...δὲ” beginning the third phrase of verse 51 is most often translated simply “and” (NRSV, KJV), or “[period]. This...” (NIV), indicating merely continuity of thought. The NASB properly contains ‘and...also,’ however. This latter translation is more accurate, indicating not merely continuity but an additional thought, which is what “καὶ...δὲ” implies as well. The Liddell and Scott Lexicon (LSD) offers “but also” as a common translation of these

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<sup>217</sup> As suggested previously, these persons and cosmoi are representative of all cosmoi. Jesus in *John* speaks on a metaphysical plane about human interactions, transcending particulars of time, space, and certain individuals and groups to a certain extent. This metaphysical emphasis is, again, carried over from the Hebrew Bible I think.

two words (391). In his *The Greek Particles*, J.D. Denniston starts out his discussion of these combined particles saying, “This is a natural enough combination, the former particle denoting that something is added, the latter that what is added is distinct from what precedes” (1954, 199). How the simple but significant meaning of these two particles in combination was lost in translation is anyone’s guess, but it is important to recognize that Jesus uses them to form two distinct statements concerning how he will give his life, or how his life will be received/taken by others.

Therefore, in John 6:51 “καὶ...δέ” indicates that Jesus proleptically describes his death as having two meanings, which is anticipatory (proleptic) of the ambivalent meaning of his next statement in John 6:53. Jesus’ statement there, the focus of this thesis, is also a response to the grumbling of his audience and their question of how he is able to give his flesh to eat (John 6:52). This question marks the formal start of the third and final portion of the midrash on Exodus 16:4/15 begun formally in John 6:31 (Borgen 1983, 22). The two distinct statements concerning the reception of Jesus’ life (and death) in John 6:51 carry on the theme of the two ways already clearly stated in John 6:27 where Jesus warns his audience not to work for food that brings/causes death (flesh), but for food that abides/remains to eternal life (bread).

#### ***4.5.12 John 6:53 – Articulation of the Choice between the Two Types of Mimesis, by Subverting the Consumption Metaphor for Violence (Reflection Narrative)<sup>218</sup>***

John 6:53 expresses the consumption phase (E || E<sub>1</sub>) of both internal and external mimetic subjects in a mimetic narrative cycle (Table 1). It is the Lord’s ambivalent Table, or the two ways in a single statement, which is a superb illustration of the bipolarity of the single social-

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<sup>218</sup> This statement parallels John 12:52 in addition to John 6:27. The justified consumption metaphor for violence is stated in other words by the high priest of the Judaeian cosmos according to this narrative:

“Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and **take away both our temple and our nation.**” Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! You do not realize that **it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.**” He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that **Jesus would die for the Jewish nation**, and not only for that nation **but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.** So from that day on they plotted to take his life.” (John 11:47-53; also see John 18:14)

As is easily seen from John 11:51-52 above the duality of Jesus’ death, in the eyes of the beholders, is 1) violent consumption and, as such, life through sacrifice of the Other for internal mimetic subjects. But 2) for external mimetic subjects Jesus’ death becomes loving consumption through mimetic emulation of self-sacrifice. These same two ways, or awareness of mimetic ambivalence, are described in John 6:53 with specific regard to the consumption metaphor subverted.

cognitive phenomenon of mimetic desire. As in the foundation and aetiological stories of Torah, as in the prophetic literatures, and as in the Wisdom books, so in John two uses of a consumption metaphor may be observed, one denoting violence toward one's brother in imitation of the acquisitive desire of an internal Other in a situation of internal mimetic scandal, another denoting faithfulness and love toward one's brother in imitation of the deferential desire of an external Other in a situation of testing, or scandal. What is a scandal to an internal mimetic subject, is a test to an external mimetic subject who has heard and learned from God (John 6:45b).

These two uses of consumption metaphors are fused ambivalently in John 6:53 (like the heart of a chiasmus), in articulation of the two ways (or two types of mimesis), like a hinge that allows a door to swing in and out in both directions. The consumption metaphor articulated in John 6:53 aptly describes the two potential paths available in the bottle-neck of a mimetic crisis. These ways arise out of the bipolarity (hinge-quality) of the mirror neuron system (or MNS) in its ability to engender cooperative and creative (life-giving) acts *or* conflictual and destructive (death-dealing) acts. Or as the Lord says to the first son of Man, Cain, "Sin's desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen 4:7).

There is a choice to be made in a relationship between two subjects. The choice may be described as between two underlying guiding logics, the two types of Logos, or the two ways. One Logos is a sacrificial spirit that assumes an either-or relationship with the Other. The other Logos is an anti-sacrificial spirit that assumes a both-and relationship with the Other. One logic objectifies and takes the Other, the other logic subjectifies and receives the Other. In other words, the love Logos 'loves the neighbour as the self' (e.g. Lev 19:34; Matt 5:43-46; John 10:17, 12:25, 13:34-35), and 'lays down his life for [the Other]' (e.g. Gen 44:33; John 15:13).

Girard suggests that the subjects willfully governed by the love Logos are always eventually expelled from cosmoi ruled by subjects governed by the violence Logos, but it need not be so (1987, 270-76). This expulsion is also what the prologue to John describes (John 1:4-5, 1:10-11) in anticipation of a son of Man and son of God's revelation falling on the deaf hears and hard hearts of sons of Man still deeply entrenched in 'cosmos versus chaos,' despite the Hebrew Bible's subversion of that false dichotomy. The Gospels continue the program of the Hebrew Bible in subverting the mythical Logos, and the delusion of difference in the heart of violence, by generating the idea of ownership of one's violence, and responsibility for the image of God and for one's brother.

#### **4.5.13 John 6:54-58 – Voluntary External Mimesis, the Way of Life in Terms of the Subverted Consumption Metaphor**

The four verses that follow Jesus' ambivalent consumption metaphor in John 6:53 are completely devoted to describing the external mimetic denotation of Jesus' metaphor, the way of life, which is abiding in a chain of imitation of the benevolent desire of the external Other, in which the Father gives himself to the Son, and the Son to the Father, and the Son to all other image-bearers, so that sons of Man may be sons of God (as in John 1:12-13, and John 10:33-39 that refers to Psalm 82).<sup>219</sup> The metaphorical consumption as receiving and abiding described here (and as in John 11:52 and 12:52) is the antithesis of the metaphorical consumption as taking and expelling described in John 6:51c (and John 11:50-51), in the manner in which 'cosmos' expels 'chaos'.

Jesus articulates in John 6:54-58 a chain of external mimesis that anyone may abide in by imitating that model of metaphysical desire for externality. Paul also invites his audience to this form of social cognition, in which scandals cannot be precipitated by a truly external model, where he writes, "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). Significantly, Paul says this in the context of a discussion of the ambivalent Lord's Table (1 Cor 10:1-33) and his desire not to scandalize anyone, and that those who abide in Paul should not scandalize anyone (1 Cor 10:32). It is as if Paul is expressing his participation in John 6:54-58.<sup>220</sup>

#### **4.5.14 John 6:59 –Passover Midrashic Homily in the Synagogue at Capernaum**

This verse is simply but significantly the indication that what precedes in John 6:31-58 is a three part midrash of Exodus 16:4/15 (Borgen 1983, 36), which is appropriate liturgical reading for a Passover homily (Brown AB29 1966, 279; Guilding 1960, 61-3). This midrash, in the course of accounting for every word of the phrase it works from – roughly 1) bread from Heaven (John 6:32-41), 2) he gave to them (John 6:42-51), 3) to eat (John 6:51-58) – sweeps together the broad biblical contrast of the two ways polemicizing the will (desire) of cosmic sons of Man

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<sup>219</sup> For the notion of all sons of Man as (or as 'should-be') sons of God (or God as Father of humankind, making Jesus' claim to have God as father legitimate biblically) also see Isa 9:6, 63:16, 64:8; Jer 3:19, 31:9; Rom 8:14-19, Gal 4:6, etc.

<sup>220</sup> Girard suggests that *external* models 'say' to you, 'imitate the imitator that I am' (2001, 23), while humans characterized by internal mimesis 'say' to you, 'imitate me insofar as I am not an imitator' (2001, 23), demonstrating complete ignorance (or self-delusion) of their own mimetic nature, and therefore running the risk of internal mimesis, scandal, violence and death (for you and for him/her). The latter are in 'darkness,' therefore, 'the blind leading the blind' (Matt 15:14, Luke 6:39, John 3:19, 8:12, 12:46 etc.).

versus the will (desire) of an external God of a cosmos founded on another Logos, or internal versus external mimesis in Girardian terms. This test is offered so that sons of Man may be sons of God (John 1:12), “children (sons and daughters of Man and Eve) born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or the desire of Man, but born of God” (John 1:13). The birth would appear to be describable as a metaphysical change of mimetic inclination, characterized by changes in social-cognition and behaviour, from internal mimesis to external mimesis, from the Logos of violence to the Logos of love.

#### **4.5.15 John 6:60-63 – *Scandal***

The audience does not seem to like something, or everything, about what Jesus has been saying in this last third of the midrash (John 6:51-58). Jesus asks whether his word scandalizes them (translated ‘offend’ in the NRSV; the NASB seems better again, translating it ‘cause you to stumble’). They have sought to make Jesus ruler of their Cosmos (6:15) but he has described his purpose as very different from their desire for him. Jesus wishes the people to receive him and his words in a manner different than they wish to use him. Their desire is frustrated (he has become a stumbling-block to them). He has suggested that they gain life through violence (John 6:53), or mistreatment of flesh and blood, and should receive him as a son of God in order to become sons of God themselves. The audience of disciples seems to find Jesus assertions highly scandalous altogether, just as the religio-political leaders of the Judaeian cosmos find them.

Jesus then asks them a rhetorical question (John 6:62), indicating that the son of Man’s (his own) ascension to his Father will confirm his assertions made in 6:51-58, that he and his word give life everlasting from God. This is akin to the Son of Man (Ezekiel) receiving the scroll of the word of God, and being *sent* from God to bring resurrection life to a people metaphorically in their graves because of their distance from the Lord (under ‘wrath’ or in a state of internal mimesis), and because of their sacrificially violent internal mimetic cycles with each other.

In John 6:63, Jesus reiterates the duality (ambivalence) of what he has been saying. He says that the consumption of flesh does not bring life, but the consumption of the Logos (bread, Jesus) gives the receiver/believer spirit and life. This reinforces the flesh-bread ambivalence from 6:51, and the dichotomy set forth in John 6:27. As stated in the previous chapter, the use of this dual imagery to contrast the desire (will) of sin-inclined internal mimetic sons of Man with

the desire (will) of faithfulness-inclined (external mimetic) sons of God is already in the source text for this midrash in Exodus 16, as well as Numbers 11.

#### **4.5.16 John 6:64-71 – The Many Reject Their Own ‘Flesh and Blood’**

The proof from the narrative that most of Jesus’ audience remains predisposed to internal mimesis is that they reject him from the time they are scandalized by Jesus onward (6:66). Most of Jesus’ disciples expel the word at this point in the story (as anticipated in John 1:10-11). They eat his flesh and not his spirit (Logos). Jesus says they do not have the love of God within them (John 5:42). In other words, they remain under the violence Logos, or under (abiding in) ‘wrath’ (John 3:36), rather than under the love Logos, abiding in external mimesis in relation to God and neighbour (brother, fellow ‘flesh and blood’).

Not having the love Logos of God in a person’s mind (heart) is described as not ‘having been taught by God’ (e.g. 6:65, 6:44-45; Isa 54:13, Jer 32:38-41). This teaching seems to be something received individually in connection with understanding the Scriptures, though Paul suggests to the Greeks that being taught by God does not require a particular collection of writings necessarily (Acts 17:24-28).<sup>221</sup> There are a few who do not reject Jesus, despite his difficult word, and they are the Twelve (or eleven). Peter, who is a sort of chief among them it seems, says that they will not reject Jesus because he has ‘the words of eternal life’ (6:68), and because they believe and know that Jesus is the ‘Holy One of God’ (6:69; e.g. Prov 9:10, 30:3-4<sup>222</sup>). In Proverbs 9:10, knowing the Holy One is associated with fullness of life (Prov 9:11), and the way of life, which may be regarded as the way of external mimesis. *John* seems to attempt to characterize Jesus in the light of these ideas from the Hebrew Bible.

John 6 also contains proleptic reference to Jesus’ own murder (John 6:51-3), which he himself asserts will occasion the full awareness of the two ways to those who have heard his Logos (John 6:51b, also John 3:14-15, 8:28), which Jesus has claimed is superior to the Logos that will soon make them complicit (culpable) in his murder. The love Logos subverts the

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<sup>221</sup> Certainly there are other texts of mimetic revelation (Girard 1978, x). The prologue to *John* would also seem to suggest that everyone coming into the cosmos has the light of life within them (John 1:9), without which the image-bearer could not Live. This notion complements Paul, who writes that, “God gives everyone life and breath...in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:24-28), and that anyone may “...perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us” (Acts 17:27).

<sup>222</sup> In Proverbs 30:3-4, the Holy One is described as the one who has ‘gone up to heaven and come down,’ which is also how *John* describes Jesus here in John 6. Proverbs 30:4 even says, ‘What is his name, and what is the name of his son?’ This also parallel’s Jesus’ self-description in *John* as ‘son of God’.

sacrificial Logos of violence. The Cross presents a critical moment to the onlookers, which *John* describes with reference to Zechariah 12:10-13:1 (John 19:34-37), in which the members of the lynch mob may perceive the falsity of their way – the false accusation against Jesus of wrongdoing – and the actual cause of their violence toward Jesus who represents (symbolizes) all scapegoats, all sacrificial victims of the Logos of myth, all brothers labeled enemies (chaos-monsters, demon-possessed; a symbol, or witness, like Abel).

The actual cause for the violence can only honestly be found within each person,<sup>223</sup> in the space where the choice to gain life through metaphorical consumption of the flesh of a son of Man is preferred to the choice to gain Life through metaphorical consumption of the bread of Heaven (the food of sons of God; Ps 78:25). Both of these types of metaphors together point to the selection of internal or external models and imitation of their respective desires. A son of God will be faithful to God's image, and therefore his image-bearers.

#### 4.6 Conclusions

In *John* we encounter a reiteration of the same internal polemic between two types of Logos, two ways of gaining life – both paradoxically bring to the practitioner the opposite of the desired posture with regard to the Other – as is native to the text of the Hebrew Bible, which I attempted to demonstrate in the last chapter. John 6 retains a quasi-theoretical quality that is often overly 'nailed-down' in English translation to presuppositions additional to the text itself, and loses the coherence of the narrative to the extent that it strays from the literal text.

It is the metaphysical intent of John 6:51-58, with regard to life and death in the context of psycho-social interaction (social cognition) and how one takes/receives an Other that should remain front and centre for the reader, I suggest. John 6:53 directly articulates the ambivalence of the Lord's Table, the choice the symbolic fare (flesh and blood or bread and water) constitutes in terms of how a feaster will posture him or herself in relation to God and fellow 'flesh and blood'. This posture may be considered one of two types of mimesis in regular moments of scandal, describable by an ambivalent consumption metaphor as transported from the Hebrew Bible. Persons tend to keep doing what they have always done, so that once internal mimesis has been imitated and employed in relation to others it continues to be (as with all learned behaviours via the MNS), and this sacrificial violence pervades human interactions, and is a metaphysical

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<sup>223</sup> As indicated, for example, in Gen 4:7; Prov 1:10, 3:31; Zech 12:12-14; John 3:14-15, John 6:47.

death. But the way of external mimesis is clearly to be preferred, to preserve life, in imitation of a living God, to be sons and daughters of God.

In the account of Jesus crucifixion (John 19), *John* says that when Jesus (a son of Man) was pierced, both blood and water flowed out (John 19:34-35). I consider this to again describe the ambivalent Table, whereat each person gets what they came for. Some are out for blood, some are out for water, and each finds what they seek. But each is also responsible for his or her choice, and causality seems to be the judgement of God in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. According to *John*, as in *Ezekiel*, all get what they desire in the end (Ezek 33:17-20; John 5:19-30).

When interdividual humans imitate each other it is as if they make each other gods, in that they believe the Other is actually not an imitator himself. The Bible develops the rejection of this assumption, with the notion of one transcendent God who ought to be imitated (followed and obeyed). A transcendent monotheistic God is too far away to ever become the rival of anyone, and when the desire he suggests that humans imitate is the desire to be external models to fellow humans, it constitutes war on a cosmos characterized by internal mimesis. That is, the Bible is at war with sin and violence by infiltration of humanity's mimetic proclivity for internal mimesis.

Voluntary external mimesis of a truly external model infiltrates and cripples the very mechanism that regularly ensnares (scandalizes, cripples) humans in interdividual relationships characterized by rivalry, violence and death. The mere position of a human within that mimetic system is a state of metaphysical death (Ezek 33:10-11, 37:11-14; John 5:24-25), by nature of its very constitution on the Logos of violence. On the other hand, imitating a truly external mediator of desire for externality subverts the internal engaged mimetic system of a subject, resulting in unprecedented freedom and individuality (rather than interdividuality). This is the love and life practiced and experienced in (quasi-imaginary) external mimesis with a transcendent monotheistic God, affording fullness of both metaphysical and physical life.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

### 5.1 Overall Analysis and Integration of the Research and Conclusions in Light of Current Research in the Field

This view of the Bible, or rather portions of that compendium, as quasi-theoretical texts of mimetic revelation (Girard 1978, x) with the purpose of subverting the Heraclitean Logos with the Johannine Logos, is the purview from which I approach John 6:53. The principles of mimetic theory and the way the Bible's anti-sacrificial reflection narratives form the contrast of the two ways are the background that enable comprehension of the contrast of the two ways in John 6, and identification of the ambivalence of the statement made in John 6:53. Essential background texts for this verse (in its socio-literary context) from the Hebrew Bible are those that contrast obedience to God's will (comparable to the notion of external mimetic desire), in terms of rejecting violence (or internal mimetic desire) toward the other son of Man in a moment of scandal (as with Cain, where 'sin' is first mentioned), and loving one's brother (one's flesh and blood) instead. The latter is externality, or humility (faithfulness/love/mercy –  $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ ) before God to rely on his provision, which again is contrasted with obedience to the 'will of Man' (John 1:13).<sup>224</sup> The latter is internality, which was also Cain's choice, the first son of Man who further corrupted God's image in biblical anthropological theory (anthropogeny).

An internal mimetic son of Man violently (faithlessly, sinfully, idolatrously) grasps at equality with God (or a brother perceived to be a god) by 'devouring' the Other in a situation of scandal, rather than relying on God to satisfy frustrated metaphysical desire(s) (like the Psalmist in Psalm 23; table 2). The Psalmist may be said to avoid internal mimesis in Psalm 23 when, though surrounded by enemies, he eats the Lord's Table rather than letting the scandal with his 'enemies' cause him to attempt to 'devour' them, as Cain did. This essential contrast of metaphysical humility and love before God and sons of Man instead of metaphysical arrogance and violence before God and humans is also clearly present in the Exodus, Prophetic and Proverbial material cited and analyzed. It is an eminently practical and literally life-giving

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<sup>224</sup> Cain was 'marked' by God, possibly with a seal of disapproval versus a seal of approval. This may relate to the anointing (seal of approval) as a Christ, which is also referred to in Psalm 23: 'he has anointed my head with oil' because I have relied on him instead of violence. This contrasts with the mark/seal on the head of Cain, which indicates that he is a murderer, but should not be murdered for it, which would only be imitation of his internal mimetic desire. This 'way of Cain' is condemned several times in the Christian Scriptures (1 John 3:12, Heb 11:4, Jude 1:11).

revelation, and the close complementarity between René Girard's notion of an anthropological mimetic duality and the biblical description of the two ways in relation to Maker and fellow is reasonably apparent.

The reading of John 6:53 formed in the last chapter, and rooted in the biblical background painted in chapter 3, is able to account for the lacunas laid out in the first chapter with regard to the exegesis of this verse to date. René Girard's mimetic theory, and the empirical research regarding mimetic bipolarity supporting that theory, when fused with the complementary reflection narrative subversion of the traditional combat myth, enables a comprehension of the ambivalence that pervades John 6, which is already recognized as describing two ways, a contrast native to earlier and contemporaneous biblical literature. How is it that John 6:53 participates in this contrast, and what does it then mean? As to the first part of the question, verse 53 stands at the center of the final section of the midrash explaining the word "to eat" (φαγεῖν) from the Exodus paraphrase in John 6:31.

As described in the last chapter, in John 6:51-2 we find Jesus setting up two separate but related views of his life and death, or the purpose of the word in relation to his audience. First, Jesus says that anyone who eats him as the bread of life gains life personally. He then adds that he will also give his life to the cosmos, which will eat him as flesh for its own life.<sup>225</sup> This latter metaphorical consumption implies his violent death is intended to prevent chaos in the Judean cosmos and forestall Roman 'pacification' (or restoration of Roman cosmos; John 11:47-50, 18:12-14). The narrative clearly states as much. It is the Logos of violence that governs the cosmoi in this narrative, and this narrative maintains a quasi-theoretical emphasis, suggesting that these cosmoi are no different with regard to sanctioned violence from any other human group.

The first statement Jesus made in John 6:51 is elaborated in John 6:54-58, where the metaphorical consumption of Jesus as the word of life is described as an external chain of metaphysically humble imitation – desiring imitation but not rivalry (Girard 2001, 35) – wherein 'eating' the son of Man is also 'eating' God, both of whom freely give themselves to the Other, trusting the Other to treat him as neighbour, brother, and a reflection of the divine image. John 6:53 is one phrase ambivalently articulating both of these types of Logos, and it remains for each

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<sup>225</sup> While the cosmos eats the son of Man in violence, Jesus in *John* also seems to intend the redemption of the cosmos through the revelation of the mythological delusion that his death affords.

hearer to either receive or reject this son of Man. I think this is the meaning of the verse, and *John's* interpretation of the intent of the Lord's Table. John 13, which is the occasion of the Lord's Table in this particular Gospel, seems to confirm this reading, where the son of Man humbles himself before the others, and treats them as fellow sons of God, and then invites the other sons of Man to behave like- and treat others as sons of God also. It is a remarkable gesture, representing a leveling of humankind both by elevating the low and lowering the elevated, creating an equality with mutual respectability *outside* of the oppressive categories formed via internal mimesis and the Logos of violence. This is a quasi-theoretical description of a new type of cosmos, the kingdom of God.

The scholarly views treated in the first chapter were not able to completely account for the clearly violent and clearly anti-violent aspects of John 6:53 in its socio-literary context. By means of mimetic theory and awareness of the mimetic choice arising from the psychosocial reality of mimetic bipolarity, a reading that can explain how the two seemingly irreconcilable images (flesh and bread) in John 6 cohere is made possible. In addition to that, however, is biblical background to John 6 that also articulates the notion of two ways in terms of treatment of the Other, and uses consumption imagery to do so.

After becoming familiar with several surveys of interpretive trends concerning the troublesome John 6:53 (and the so-called eucharistic passage in which it resides: 6:51-58), I selected an exemplar from each of the four broadly defined currents of exegesis that are commonly identified. An exemplar, I think, of what may be called the eucharistic reading of John 6:53 seems to be Raymond E. Brown. While he supports a mixed view of the passage as a whole, he himself clearly argues that John 6:53 itself is exclusively eucharistic.

Brown's reading of the verse was crippled from the outset, I would suggest, by his refusal to continue his investigation of the violent consumption metaphors he began to recognize as background to this verse, because what he found was simply 'unfavorable' (1966 AB29, 284-5). In my opinion all efforts, after that decision, to interpret the verse in context were doomed. I carried on the 'unpleasant' investigation of the violence of the language and its obvious allusions to content from the Hebrew Bible, working with the lens of Girard's anthropology of violence and religion, and found a sensible continuity of imagery and its purpose from the Hebrew Bible to the Christian Scriptures. Brown wants John 6:51-58 to simply reiterate the words of institution of the Lord's Supper as articulated in the Synoptic Gospels (1966 AB29, 284-5), without seeking

to understand those words, or *John's*, in biblical context. Alternately, such an analysis is precisely what I have done here.

The second trend of interpretation I reviewed may be called the Sapiential reading, and is perhaps exemplified by Hugo Odeberg. I must say that I do not disagree with Odeberg's conclusion with regard to John 6:53's meaning, except to aver that it is only half of the picture. As I have suggested, the statement is ambivalent, articulating both of the two ways in a single phrase, leaving the decision to each hearer as to what it will mean for him or her. That is, each son of Man in the audience must choose whether he will receive this son of Man, and in so doing receive God. If one rejects this son of Man, he devours his own 'flesh and blood' for his own life-maintenance, and paradoxically thereby, remains in metaphysical death. This second aspect is not recognized by Odeberg, however, and so he only identifies one of the two ways that John 6 contrasts in keeping with this tradition in the Hebrew Bible.

Odeberg seems to read John 6 from the vantage of a Greek dualism and the notion of 'σῶμα σῆμα'. This dichotomy, foreign to biblical thought,<sup>226</sup> seems to be how he interprets John 6:63 and Jesus' assertion that the spirit gives life, not the flesh. It is an unfortunate misunderstanding. A part of this is the misrecognition of the meaning of 'flesh and blood' as a metaphor only for the sapiential wisdom Jesus offers. By limiting the metaphor thus, Odeberg misses the critique of violence that the phrase – in light of biblical antecedents and socio-literary context – clearly suggests. The contrast is not a spiritual versus an earthly source of life, but love versus violence as means to gain life. The latter paradoxically brings death, the former (perhaps paradoxically) brings life. As John 6:27 suggests, those who work violence earn food that brings death, while those who work love earn food that brings life to the fullest.

The third trend of interpretation I review is a rather diverse group of exegeses that I group as 'Mixed Eucharistic-Sapiential' readings. An exemplar of this reading is perhaps Xavier Léon-Dufour, because he suggests that both of these aspects run through John 6 in equal measure. With this much at least, I am in agreement. Léon-Dufour suggests that John 6 offers an interpretation of what the Lord's Table is intended to give a feaster. He also recognizes the ambivalence of the symbolism articulated by *John*. Where he goes from there, however, I do not

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<sup>226</sup> In the biblical purview, the 'tomb' is not life on earth, in the flesh, but rather is the heart of stone governed and enslaved by the delusional Logos of violence. The God of the Bible seeks to give his children a heart of flesh instead (e.g. Ezek 11:19, 36:26, 37:11-14, 44:7), and lead them out of their 'tombs' into fullness of life governed by the Logos of love, both here on earth, and again on the last day (Ps 23:6; Ezek 37:11-14; John 5:24-29).

follow because Léon-Dufour's recognition of both sapiential and eucharistic elements to John 6:53, while superb, is due not to viewing them as an anti-sacrificial subversion of sanctioned violence (or a reflection narrative) as I understand them in biblical context. Rather, he sees the sacrificial reading of Jesus' death proleptically described there. While this aspect is certainly there, it is there to be condemned.

The audience is left to make a choice, and the choice of the way of metaphorical flesh consumption is clearly condemned, though many still choose it in the narrative. The problem with the sacrificial reading, to my mind, is that it seems to view that way as favourable for the life of the cosmos, in agreement with the decision of the leaders of the Judaeian cosmos in John 11:47-50, in keeping with the mythological delusion of cosmos versus chaos, and the way of death polemicized and subverted throughout the Hebrew and Christian canons. To this extent the sacrificial reading does not read the text, but rather the text reads sacrifice (in *John* just as in the Hebrew Bible), and condemns it.

I group the fourth and final approach reviewed in chapter 1 under the heading 'the sociolinguistic reading'. This type of approach to John 6:53 is relatively new, I think, and my categorization of it is not improbably overly simplistic, which is unavoidable to a certain extent when conducting a survey. In any case, J. Albert Harrill's article seems to exemplify this sort of reading, which focuses on the social element of factionalism in Greco-Roman society of the time, and the notion of hate speech for group boundary formation. Harrill essentially argues that these two elements amount to the meaning of the language of John 6:53.

This reading seems to engage in a form of eisegesis rather than exegesis, which identifies John 6's possible relationship to a social phenomenon in the time and place of the writing of *John*, but then interprets it through the lens of a popular and likely anachronistic accusation against *John* of hate speech, which seems to be due largely to the manner in which the book has been redeployed thousands of years later, and which is founded in highly questionable translation of the text. Harrill provides no supporting evidence from *John* for his reading, but simply points out possible similarities to possible accusations of cannibalism for political sabotage between Greco-Roman factions.

Harrill also disregards the possibility that the metaphor for violence used in John 6:53 may actually point to real violence, and not simply amount to slander. That assumption disregards the socio-literary context in which snares are being set for Jesus' life. It also ignores

the antecedents to this language in the Hebrew Bible that use these metaphors, or a collective idiom, to point to real violence as well. I set out with a different set of questions, and a different theoretical starting point than the sociolinguistic reading. I attempted to understand what *John* meant to say, exegeting the passage by situating John 6:53 in its close socio-literary context in *John*, and then fitting a methodology to the nature of the problem that is religious and cultural violence, as well as looking for background to the intended message in the compendium of authoritative texts (for Jewish religion) to which the midrash in John 6 alludes.

## **5.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Approach and the Findings**

For the first time, to my knowledge, here is a thesis accounting for the violent consumption metaphor of John 6:53 in light of similar metaphors in its biblical background, as well as the relationship of the Hebrew ‘son of Man’ title to the consumption imagery. For the first time, to my knowledge, here is an explanation for the confluence of the bread and flesh portions of John 6 in light of similar biblical background, and the biblical two ways recognized there. For the first time, these nebulous elements are situated in the subverted combat myth themes and imagery that define *John*, and these images of violence are rendered readable in light of Girard’s anthropology of violence and religion, especially the scandal and consumption phases that are central features of John 6.

This anthropology, or mimetic theory, enables comprehension and articulation of the quasi-theoretical dimensions of John 6:53, and John’s Gospel as a whole, as a text of mimetic revelation. The two ways share the same characteristics as the two types of mimesis, internal and external, that characterize human groups governed by two respective logics, the Logos of violence and the Logos of love. They are shown to be akin to the way of death and the way of life, the food (diet) that brings death and the food (diet) that brings life, as metaphors for social cognition and interaction.

While this thesis focused on past and present readings of John 6:53 in particular when reviewing scholarship to date, it became clear that more shrift may have been profitably given to scholarship on the Manna Tradition’s conclusions regarding the contrast of bread with flesh, both in John 6 and in its background literatures. It would also have been beneficial to include both pre-biblical narratives that are certainly background for the Bible’s combat myth tradition (like the Enuma Elish), and background for the two ways in terms of bread and flesh (like Adapa), as

well as Second Temple Jewish literature that makes even plainer the continuity of themes found in *John* with those of the Hebrew Bible (including *Jubilees*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Bel and the Dragon*, etc.). Another limitation of this thesis is that while a thorough survey of previous scholarly readings of John 6:53 was conducted, previous scholarly readings of biblical material considered as background to John 6:53 was less thoroughly surveyed.

An important scholarly current regarding the Lord's Table is that which seriously considers the dependence of texts like John 6:51-58 on Greek Mystery religion, notably the cult of Dionysius for example (e.g. Cho 2010). While I did consider potential Greek influence upon *John* when reviewing the sociolinguistic current exemplified by the article by J. Albert Harrill, for example, it would have been profitable to engage more thoroughly with scholarship looking at the potential Mystery origins for ideas regarding Eucharist in *John*.

The Hebrew and Jewish background to John 6:31-58 is the authoritative background for such a midrashic homily, and the text itself alludes explicitly to the Hebrew Bible rather than to Greek cultural material or activity. It is logical to look for background close at hand before venturing into influences that began to be felt as the Jesus Movement expanded outward geographically and culturally. As such, in combination with 'hate-speech' or anti-language readings of John 6:53 one sometimes encounters the suggestion that the verse may draw on biblical dietary prohibitions against eating meat with the blood in it (e.g. Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998), for offending the sensibilities of the audience. However, consuming a human being, or anthropophagy, would certainly be the greater offence if this verse was to be understood in some literal sense. And in any case, John 6:53 strongly resembles similar consumption metaphors for violence found throughout the Hebrew Bible, and therefore is most likely a consumption metaphor for violence in the category of those identified throughout the biblical background in this paper. This reading also suits the context, enabling a coherent reading of the whole chapter in a way never before achieved (to my knowledge that is).

Methodologically, there are a number of aspects that it would likely have been beneficial to expand upon, were time and space restrictions as well as the need to maintain the focus of the thesis on addressing the research question regarding the meaning of John 6:53, not so oppressive. These aspects include the ties between empirical research on mimetic bipolarity (and the MNS) and the self-awareness with which some authors intuitively and experientially articulate the two types of mimesis that arise from it, as well as evidence in everyday psycho-social life. Many of

the writers of classic works of literature have already been identified by Girard as articulating these ties, and he himself has spilled a considerable amount of ink discussing these many texts of mimetic revelation.

I do not read John 6:53 from the perspective of a two level-drama (popularized for example by J. Louis Martyn) nor alternately, the two Jesuses as suggested by the Historical Jesus reading, because of the strong argument for compositional unity in John 6 (e.g. Borgen 1983, 1981; Palestinian Midrash). Since those particular readings likely do not apply to this verse and passage of *John*, the sociolinguistic or ‘hate-speech’ reading of John 6:53 that views Jesus’ statement there as an anachronistic (as in later addition) articulation, and indicative of schisms in the Johannine community, may be ruled out as an explanation for the language of this particular verse. Additionally, the language of John 6:53 has been argued actually to fit the criterion of dissimilarity (from the Historical Jesus reading; e.g. Ayers 1986), indicating that even according to the Historical Jesus perspective, this particular verse and passage must be original rather than redacted as suggested by readings like the two-level drama. For these reasons I forgo those avenues of interpretation, and instead look to the great complementarity the verse displays in connection with biblical consumption metaphors for violence.

In terms of the combat myth tradition and its biblical anti-sacred-violence subversion, I would have liked to more fully describe first the overlays of what I consider the six phases of the internal mimetic cycle and the phases of the combat myths as researched by Joseph Fontenrose and others, as well as the way in which certain biblical narratives perform reflection narratives (subversions) of *each* phase of that cycle with a view to advocate on behalf of victims, and strip away the illusion of cosmos versus chaos, or the delusion of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ violence. Here, it was most central to the purpose of the thesis to focus on the scandal and consumption phases of the cycle and their subversions in the biblical writings, as these are the central features of John 6 that give meaning to 6:53. However, it would have been helpful to have been equally thorough with all the phases of the internal mimetic cycle (combat myth) and its external subversion. I think especially of the salvific murder phase (D||D<sub>1</sub>), or what I call ‘The Piercing of the Serpent’.

Were there more time and space, and were the focus not so unwaveringly on John 6:53 itself, I would have liked to give greater shrift to the ‘Feeding’ narratives of the Synoptic Gospels, as well as the varied descriptions of the Lord’s Table in those Gospels, for a fuller

background to these aspects of John 6 and John 13. It would have been beneficial to more thoroughly address Pauline background to *John* as well.

I deliberated and mulled over the best way to go about integrating a description of the confluence of the many biblical allusions and antecedents woven together in John 6 – from the purview of the ‘braided’ lens of mimetic theory, the combat myth and the reflection narrative – for interpreting the two ways described in John 6:53 and its context. I hope what is written here is clear and comprehensible despite the enormity of the task. I beg the pardon of those who found my chosen means of articulation inarticulate, and a ‘stumbling-block’ to understanding John 6:53 rather than the thoroughfare I hoped it would be.

### **5.3 Significance and Contribution of the Findings, as well as Potential Applications**

It is patent to my mind that much of Christianity does not view the rite of the Lord’s Table in the way that *John* articulates it, as understood here through the lens of mimetic theory (as I have understood and employed that theory at any rate). This disparity certainly represents a potential application of the research findings. The Lord’s Table is the heart of the Christian faith. If, as it seems, the rite was intended to refute any notion of good violence, then it becomes impossible for persons who claim affiliation with that faith tradition to justify violence in the name of religion. Rather, the rite exhorts persons to personal responsibility for violence, and cessation of justifications for violence, or on the other hand, the blaming of religion for it (or any *biblical* justification at any rate).

This thesis demonstrates that a central endeavour of the biblical material is the rejection of the sanctioning of violence for any reason. As such, some of those representatives of the three great monotheisms of the earth, who espouse violent readings and applications of the biblical literatures, might care to give account for how – in light of the Scriptures’ clear polemics against violence – such a Logos and its derivative actions are justifiable at all. The presence of reflection narratives subverting the violent content throughout the Bible indicates that this content is not there to justify violence, but in order to condemn it. As Girard states, “...in order to transcend the old gods, you must obey them” (2001, 19). This necessity is largely the purpose of such content, I think.

The effect of texts like John 6:53 is to place responsibility for violence where it belongs, on the shoulders of each person individually. It describes a personal choice to be made in the

regularly recurring scenarios of scandal. And John 13, where the Lord's Table 'should' be, indicates that 'whoever wishes to be great must make himself least' (John 13:14-17; Luke 22:24-26, 9:46-48; Matt 23:11, 18:1-4; Mark 9:33-35). This is the life-giving, external mimetic solution to internal mimesis and the violence and death it brings. There is a popular sacrificial reading of the Lord's Table and the Cross that seems ironically to have failed the very test that those narrative events appear designed to pose. The test is a choice of two types of sacrifice, of the Other and of the self. Therefore, disturbingly, a popular or 'classical' reading of Eucharist is 'thanksgiving' for the killing of the Other and thereby preservation of the self, rather than the 'thanksgiving' for revelatory liberation *from* killing the Other that it seems to intend.

I by no means think that the Bible is the only text expressing insight into the two types of mimesis, as well as the problems and solutions that awareness of them offers to human groups. Tying the literary discussions of mimetic rivalry to the empirical evidence for it helps bring understanding of- and appreciation for both the reality and the importance of this knowledge, especially for addressing humanity's essential plaguing problem of violence. Eminent neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran who is currently working on the nature and function of mirror neurons in the brain, has suggested:

... the solution to the problem of the self is not a straightforward empirical one. It may instead require a radical shift in perspective, ... When we finally achieve such a shift in perspective, we may be in for a big surprise and find that the answer was staring at us all along. I don't want to sound like a New Age guru, but there are curious parallels between this idea and the Hindu philosophical (albeit somewhat nebulous) view that there is no essential difference between self and others, or that self is an illusion. (2004, 98)

There are significant overlying insights into the human condition in texts of mimetic revelation at the core of a number of faith traditions, and the findings of the discovery and exploration of mirror neurons and the MNS. Both offer complementary insight into social cognition and the two types of mimesis that characterize human social interaction, and the quality of life people lead.

With the present shrinking of the study of the humanities, awareness of the great relevance and practical helpfulness of texts of mimetic revelation (like the Bible) is critical for addressing such a pressing global problem as human violence. This awareness and understanding enables re-evaluation of the relationships between religion, religious texts, religious expression, and violence, as well as practical solutions to intra-human conflict.

#### 5.4 Possible Future Research Directions in the Field, Drawing on the Work of the Thesis

It is certainly possible and would likely be fruitful to build on the findings of this thesis regarding the Lord's Table and its biblical meaning, moving in a number of directions, including: Johannine studies, further research into the Eucharist rite and related Christian, Jewish and Islamic rituals, as well as looking at antecedents for biblical consumption metaphors and their reception (for example, the 'Hell mouth' of the Middle Ages). There is a need for further exploration of the relationship between the global myth of cosmos versus chaos and mimetic theory, as well as other biblical imagery and its meaning considered in the course of the thesis, including son of Man and son of God imagery in relation to the two ways. Another avenue of interest is the later reception and articulation of the anti-sacrificial message of the biblical literatures,<sup>227</sup> and in what form, if any, this message survives into the present day as well as which, if any, Abrahamic faith traditions presently espouse it. Due to my intense frustration with many English translations of a number of biblical passages encountered during research, including the not infrequent omission of words (!), I am interested in advancing the notion of foreignizing translation mentioned in the third chapter, which may be able to rectify the stumbling-blocks that many modern translation practices form. Additionally, many of the above mentioned limitations of this thesis are concurrently good avenues for future research and writing. I am also interested in apparent intersections (and interactions?) between the two ways of Judaeo-Christian scriptures and the imagery used to articulate them, and the imagery of the ancient alchemical tradition and its reception.

More comprehensive analysis of the articulation of the two ways and the external mimetic solution to internecine violence in the Hebrew Bible alone is necessary, I think, as the Christian material seems to add little if anything, but merely to reiterate a certain reading of that collection of texts. I am convinced that *John* simply reiterates the same 'Gospel,' or good news of a way *through* the problem of violence, as is described there. I do not consider this to be supersessionism by any means, but the continuation of a tradition. It is some later readings of the Christian scriptures that have often, ironically and unbearably, become antagonistic to the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish community.

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<sup>227</sup> e.g. Johannine Christianity among the Celts, including the reading of Pelagius or St. Morgan, who was expelled from the 'Christianized' Roman cosmos.

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## Appendix A – the Passover Midrash of John 6:31-59 (NRSV)

<sup>31</sup> ‘Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” ’

<sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.<sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’<sup>34</sup> They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.<sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.<sup>37</sup> Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away;<sup>38</sup> for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.<sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.<sup>40</sup> This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.’

<sup>41</sup> Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven.’<sup>42</sup> They were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, “I have come down from heaven”?’

<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, ‘Do not complain among yourselves.<sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.<sup>45</sup> It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught by God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.<sup>46</sup> Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father.<sup>47</sup> Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.<sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life.<sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.<sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.’

<sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’

<sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.<sup>54</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day;<sup>55</sup> for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.<sup>56</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.<sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.<sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.’

<sup>59</sup> He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.