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Morphing Crowd into Community: Eucharist as Ritual and Anti-ritual

(Abstract)

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Abstract

When culture develops as a tomb, rituals serve a preservative embalming function on the body of the victims, ensuring peace as only the world can give. The mimetic theory unravels the hitherto prevalent *méconnaissance* about the sacrificial foundations of rituals and reveals the pharmacological use of controlled violence in ritual to mitigate uncontrolled spasms of violence threatening the society. According to Girard, the revelation of the scapegoat mechanism and the victimary resolution of conflicts—the “things hidden since the foundation of the world”—by the Gospels has left the religious rituals ineffective in healing violence. Christianity has thus become the end of all religions. However, the very kenotic-agapeic sacrifice of Christ becomes the essence of the Eucharist, the central ritual of Christian praxis. Is the Eucharist, being a religious ritual, rendered ineffective? The present paper seeks to engage this question by exploring the nature and dynamics of the Eucharistic ritual.

The paper looks at the Eucharist from diverse angles: ritual theory, doctrinal, theological, spiritual, psychological, and socio-political perspectives. It draws specially from the clinical theory and practice of Jung and Grotstein, the contextualized theology of Cavanaugh that explores the relationship between tortured body and the Eucharistic body, and the analytic functions of the Eucharist as addressing the constitutive lack in human nature, as espoused by Pound. Reading these theories within the context of the mimetic theory, the paper argues that the Eucharist is a ritual as well as an anti-ritual, seeking to transform the faithful from being a crowd into a community through a process of conversion and commitment to victims in and through the *Victim par excellence*.