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Christ as Second Adam: Girardian Mimesis Redeemed

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Abstract

Analysis of several chapters of the book of Genesis beginning with the Fall in chapter three reveals a consistent theme which is well-interpreted by René Girard's concept of mimetic rivalry. This mimetic rivalry can be considered one manifestation of original sin which has been perpetuated generationally since its inception with the First Adam. Since a number of scholars, including James D.G. Dunn, have identified Phil 2:6–11 as a key piece of Second Adam Christology, I examine this pericope for clues to a remedy for mimetic rivalry. Christ's *kenosis* and humiliation—his self-emptying and choice not to seek after self-glorification—become the cornerstones to a counter-program which redeems mimesis. Christ is the Second Adam who fulfills through his obedience the failed role of the First Adam. One facet of Christ's overall redemption is to establish himself as the perfect Girardian 'model'—one whose imitation leads not to violent rivalry but ever-increasing humble charity.

Keywords

kenosis, mimesis, rivalry, Second Adam, scapegoat, Girard

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, explicitly portrays Jesus as the Second Adam, the Last Man whose life unto death represents the obedient antithesis to that of the first Adam. Adam's sin of disobedience is both his own 'Fall' as well as that of humanity as a whole. It initiates a cycle of sin which perpetuates and broadens in type through each generation. The juxtaposition of chapters three and four of the Book of Genesis helps to express the generational transmission of our fallen nature in Adam. Literary critic René Girard has established a burgeoning framework which proves particularly useful for interpreting the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden, the struggle of Cain over-against his brother Abel, and many other passages throughout the Old Testament. Moreover, this hermeneutic also proves agile in straddling much of the New Testament when

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Christ is understood to be the unveiler of this perpetual underpinning in human social sin. Jesus' words, actions, ministry, life, passion, and death all function consistently to bring into the light this debilitating motif which sets brother against brother.

From birth to death, Jesus stands and functions in opposition to what Girard describes as mimetic rivalry, which springs from mimetic desire and fosters the continual identification of and persecution of scapegoats—the "scapegoat mechanism."[1] Christ transforms and redeems mimesis in such wise that Paul can take the life of Christ as a unifying rather than divisive example to both imitate and propose for imitation. Nowhere is this better expressed than in his letter to the Philippians. Christ's obedience in particular contrasts with Adam's disobedience and moves in the opposite direction against the cycle initiated by it. Philippians 2:6–11, also known as the 'Christ hymn', articulates well the foundational nature of this sentiment as an inherent element in the mission of Jesus. This hymn helps us to understand not only that Christ came as the Second Adam, but when viewed through a Girardian lens, provides us one perspective of the way in which Christ's life served as a counterpoint to that of his predecessor-in-the-flesh. Paul uses the hymn in the letter to the Philippians to serve as the central motif for exhorting the church in Philippi to "go and do likewise"—to imitate Christ.

Girardian Analysis

If Jesus then is the Second Adam whose role is the fulfillment of God's program which Adam failed to accomplish, let us first consider the application of Girard's thought to that primordial Fall before we address Christ's particular remedy. Central to his schema is *imitation* and *desire*: "All human learning, and especially the acquisition of language, takes place through imitation. What Girard insists has been neglected is an understanding of imitation which is expansive enough to include desire."[2] Girard distinguishes between needs or appetites which are natural (the lower end of Maslow's hierarchy of needs) and *desire*, "which is much more conditioned by culture and social interaction."[3] We first identify in someone else a model which we are inclined to imitate—parents, mentors, professional elite. Desiring to be like them, we adopt their desires whether for a particular

[1] Cf. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 8–14, 143–9, 265–66.

[2] Michael Kirwan SJ, *Discovering Girard* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2005), p. 17.

[3] Kirwan, p. 19.

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object or a general goal (status, acclaim, level of competence).[4] Girard refers to these two variants as "acquisitive mimesis" and "metaphysical mimesis."[5] The upshot of imitated desire is well understood by economists who observe its effects according to the nature of supply and demand. Michael Kirwan articulates just how mimesis generates rivalry:

> [If] the object is cordoned off from [the] possibility of shared enjoyment, as is the case with sexual relationships, or jockeying for social prestige, mimesis will lead to competition. Once the desiring subject wants to possess the object for him or herself, the person who first brought the desired object to recognition becomes a rival and an obstacle. One word which Girard uses to describe the model who has become a rival is the biblical Greek word *skandalon*, scandal, or 'stumbling block'.[6]

Kirwan distinguishes Girard's mimetic rivalry from the philosophies of Hegel and Hobbes contrasting 'desire for recognition by the other' (Hegel) and 'glory as a principal motive for strife' (Hobbes) with desiring the *object* desired by the other.[7] The commonalities between these perspectives do serve however to highlight that the violence of human rivalry has deep roots in the pursuit of self-glorification.

So it is that we look first to Genesis 3 and find self-glorification lurking behind the temptation of the serpent. It (the serpent) seduces Eve into eating the forbidden fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden saying, "You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and *you will be like God who knows what is good and what is bad*" (Gen 3:4–5). This primordial mimetic desire is directed towards God who becomes the Girardian model for Eve and Adam.[8] She recognizes the fruit as "*desirable* for gaining wisdom" (Gen 3:6) yet the wisdom she desires is not for its own goodness' sake but as a means of imitating God in His omniscience. Discord ensues following the forbidden meal and we find a struggle to identify a scapegoat. When questioned by God, Adam is notably the first to redirect blame away

[4] Cf. René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), p. 17. See also Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 145.

[5] Kirwan, p. 22. Cf. Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel,* c. 3.

[6] Kirwan, p. 21. Cf. also Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, pp. 143–9.

[7] Kirwan, pp. 33, 43.

[8] "The essence of the sin described in this passage is one of mimetic desire. An object (the fruit) became desirable when it became a way of appropriating something proper to someone else (the knowledge of good and evil proper to God). It was *only* when the object was seen as a way of appropriating what was proper to someone else that it became desirable. Hence the temptation was 'to become like God.'" From James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), p. 246.

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from himself and toward Eve. The progenitor of humanity is identified as the progenitor of sin in this way even though the logical order of sins in the previous passage is the reverse of the interrogations. Adam was given the first chance to repent and refuses responsibility for his own contribution to the nascent disorder. Next Eve blames the serpent. Ultimately, Adam and Eve find themselves in tension with God (Gen 3:22) and set over-against each other in a mimetic rivalry: "Your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master" (Gen 3:16b). In typical Girardian fashion, this rivalry is characterized by pain (Gen 3:16a), suffering (Gen 3:17b, 19a), and death (Gen 3:19b).

Immersed in their new existential turmoil, the arrival of the next generation is born out of and into this same rivalry. "[Eve] conceived and bore Cain, saying, "*I have produced* a man with the help of the Lord" (Gen 4:1). John Sailhamer highlights a critical nuance in the Hebrew: "Her words, however, can be read in a less positive light: e.g., 'I have created a man *equally with the Lord*.' In this sense Eve's words are taken as a boast that just as the Lord had created a man, so now she had created a man."[9] Based on the parallel between Eve and Sarah—each of whom bear two sons, one of blessing and one not—and the contrasting responses to the birth of Cain versus that of Seth, Sailhamer considers the second interpretation of Gen 4:1 (Eve boasting) to be the more probable.[10] In a way then, from his conception, Eve objectifies Cain as a means to her own self-glorification—the 'product' of her own handiwork.[11] This serves as a transitional rivalry between the first generation and the second.

Traditionally the firstborn son would receive a double share of the inheritance (Deut 21:15), and be consecrated to God under the Mosaic Law (Ex 13:2, 22:29b; Num 3:13), to carry on the patriarchal lineage. We would expect then that the son of privilege would be Cain and that Abel would be the 'jealous one'. "The Hebrew common noun *hebel* means "puff, vanity."[12] As the story unfolds, the tables are turned and Cain becomes jealous of Abel since the Lord looks with favor on Abel's offering and not on that of Cain (Gen 4:4b-5). Cain's mimetic rivalry then with his brother Abel falls under the Girardian category of metaphysical desire and is the source of his murderous

[9] John H. Sailhamer, 'Genesis' in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 2:60.

[10] Ibid., p.61.

[11] "The Hebrew name qayin ("Cain") and the term qaniti ("I have produced) present another play on words." Donald Senior and John J. Collins, eds., *The Catholic Study Bible*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). See footnote for Gen 4:1.

[12] E.A. Speiser, *Genesis*, vol. 1 of *The Anchor Bible Series*, ed. William F. Albright and David N. Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), p. 30. See note 4.

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vengeance in verse 8.[13] When questioned about the whereabouts of Abel, Cain parallels his parents' evasive responses in the Garden and becomes subject to a parallel curse. Adam and Cain both receive a curse related to the tilling of the soil (Gen 3:17–18; 4:11–12). Adam and Eve are banished from Eden (Gen 3:23) and Cain is banished from soil to wander in the desert (Gen 4:14) both of which actions represent banishment from the presence of God.[14]

These parallels point to the tradition of sin passed from each generation to the next as do just two further examples. The first is Gen 4:23b-24 in which Lamech, four generations after Cain, kills again. Only this time "the spirit of vengeance has increased" even beyond the measured divine retribution in Gen 4:15.[15] The second is the birth of Jacob and Esau in Gen 25. If mimetic rivalry is Girard's original sin,[16] then surely here is a text in which our fallen nature is transmitted first and the effects are subsequently manifested by the quarreling brothers who, not yet parted from the womb are set over-against each other in an attempt for glory (Gen 25:23). Jacob and Esau, yet unborn typify Girard's concept of *ressentiment*. Neither brother is as yet the firstborn, and so each is effectively on equal footing with the other. Adopting Thomas Hobbes, description of 'diffidence', Michael Kirwan's description of Girard's *ressentiment* aptly articulates the dynamic of this pericope: "[P]recisely because they are of equal ability, with no one noticeably stronger than the others," the siblings joust in self-assertion, "since each desires the esteem or recognition of the [other]."[17] The slavish desire for superiority exemplified by Jacob's grip on Esau's heel as they were born is played out in Jacob's usurpation first of Esau's birthright and then later in Gen 27 of Esau's blessing.

While many more examples could be adduced, these should suffice to show that since the beginning, the sin which Adam commits passes in a mimetic form from generation to generation. If we look then at the Christ hymn in the letter to the Philippians and find that indeed Christ serves as a Second Adam figure, we may also then examine the hymn for characteristics which show how Christ defies this mimetic cycle which so significantly colors Adam's disobedience.

[13] Cf. John A. Dadosky, 'Reconceiving the Immaculate Conception', *Theological Studies* 72, no. 1 (March 2011), p. 28.

[14] Eugene H. Maly, 'Genesis' in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown SS, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer SJ, and Roland E. Murphy O.Carm (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), no. 32.

[15] Ibid., no. 33.

[16] Cf. Dadosky, p. 24.

[17] Kirwan, p. 30. Cf. Also René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* pp. 49–51.

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Christ as Second Adam

Many scholars have seen in Philippians 2:6–11 the basis for the presence of a three-stage Christology in the faith of the earliest Christians. In a three-stage Christology, Christ's *kenosis* would begin from preexistence as divine *logos*, transition to the incarnation, and only then descend to the shame of the cross. Since the argumentation for a two-stage, Second Adam Christology is extensive and compelling, as well as open to the organic theological development of the three-stage Christology early in the history of the Church's doctrinal faith, I will focus here primarily on that evidence which illumines the hymn as emblematic of Second Adam theology.

Kenosis

Christ's *kenosis* has been considered primarily via two lines of thought: his incarnation and his death. For those who interpret his *kenosis* in terms of his death, what has been abdicated is not necessarily equality with God, but according to some viewpoints that state of perfection that had been attributed to Adam before the Fall. Much of what differentiates the two approaches is found in the interpretation of two words appearing in verse 6: *morphe* (form) and *harpagmos* (a difficult word which in this instance seems to connote some form of robbery or seizing). Let us first consider the objects of *ekenosen* as an act before determining a possible range of nuances for verse 6.

In Philo's *De Ebrietate,* he uses the active form of the verb in terms of humble submission: "For what is the meaning of the expression, 'I will *pour out* my soul before the Lord,' but 'I will consecrate it entirely to him?'"[18] Gerhard Kittel tells us that the primary connotation used in the New Testament for the adjectival form is that of 'hollow' or 'vain'. Citing 1 Cor. 15:10, 58; 2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16; and 1 Th. 3:5, he notes that "All these passages express a strong sense of responsibility in face of the greatness of the divine gift and of the task thereby imposed, yet also a strong confidence in the gracious power of God which normally guarantees success."[19] This reliance on God's providence plays itself out in the second half of the Philippians hymn particularly when a Second Adam hermeneutic is used. Kittel also translates the active verbal form used in Phil 2:7 as "to make empty" or "to deprive of content or possession" and finds

[18] Philo, *De Vita Mosis I,* n152, in C.D. Yonge, trans., *The Works of Philo* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), p. 220. [italics mine]

[19] Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* vol. 3, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (1965; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1977), s.v. 'κενός'.

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a parallel use of *ptochos* in 2 Cor. 8:9: "though he was rich, yet for your sake he *became poor*."[20] In general, what we find is that Christ already possesses something (yet to be determined in our discussion) and of his own will obediently sets it aside or offers it either to-for God and/or to-for us. Determining what-it-is that he forgoes or offers is perhaps the greater difficulty.[21]

We can distill the nature of the "object offered" by examining a pair of concepts from Phil. 2:6. The first is the *morphe* (form) which constitutes that state in which Christ is found to be in (*hyparchon*) at the start of the hymn. The second focus is 'equality with God' (*to einai isa theo*) and in what sense Christ did not consider it something 'to be grasped' (*harpagmon*). Denny Burk makes a robust case against presuming that 'equality with God' is something inherent in Christ's 'form'.[22] He argues that *to* in *to einai isa theo* is only used to distinguish the accusative object (*harpagmon*) from its accusative complement (*einai isa theo*) and that the presence of an articular infinitive need not always be anaphoric to a subject. Thus 'equality' need not derive from the 'form'. Whatever Christ possesses, such that he sets it aside in the context of the hymn, seems to be associated with his *morphe* in which he exists. If the pre-existence of Christ presumes equation of *morphe* with equality-with-God (*to einai isa theo*) then an argument can be made in favor of alternate positions starting with non-Aristotelian uses of *morphe*.[23]

If we appropriate the semantics of the Old Testament, one of the difficulties that arise from attribution of the divine essence to Jesus is the "fundamentally alien and impossible thought that God should have a form open to human perception."[24] Ralph Martin finds in Ezekiel 1:26–28 ("one who had the *appearance of a man*. . .*surrounded with splendour*. . .*the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*") the development in Jewish thought that "God cannot be seen in His essence. . .but only in His image."[25] In spite of the distinctive nuances between the synonyms of *morphe*, J. Weiss, O. Cullman, and others find interchangeability between the Septuagint uses of *morphe*, *eikon*, and *doxa*.[26] This *doxa* or 'glory' of the

[20] Kittel, s.v. 'κενόω'.

[21] Rightly, Jose M. Bover: "Pero no está en estos diferentes matices del [kenosis] la principal dificultad, sino en señalar qué es aquello de que Jesu-Cristo se despojó o desprendió y cómo." In J.M. Bover, S.I., *Teología de San Pablo*, 3rd ed. (Madrid, 1961), p. 249.

[22] Denny Burk, 'On the Articular Infinitive in Philippians 2:6: A Grammatical Note with Christological Implications', *Tyndale Bulletin* 55 (2004), pp. 253–74.

[23] Cf. note 6 in Denny Burk's article.

[24] Kittel, vol. 6, s.v. "μορφη."

[25] Ralph Martin, *Carmen Christi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), p. 111.

[26] Martin, *Carmen Christi,* pp. 104–110.

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Lord is manifested in His *shekinah* which Moses gazed upon and returned to the Israelites with face aglow and also around the heavenly throne as in the aforementioned passage from Ezekiel. The suggestion is that this *doxa* is what Jesus shares with God – a share in divine splendour instead of divine essence. Moreover, since *doxa* is interchangeable with *eikon*, a parallel comparison opens up between Jesus and Adam in virtue of Genesis 1:26–27.[27]

James D.G. Dunn prefers a two-stage Christological interpretation of the hymn challenging presuppositions of *hyparchon* and *genomenos*. He sees the timelessness of pre-existence and the human birth of the incarnation as projections onto the meanings of these two words in the hymn.[28] Paul's thought is replete with references to the First Adam and characterizations of Christ as the Second Adam (Rom. 1:18–25; 3:23; 5:12–19; 7:7–11; 8:19–22; 1 Cor. 15:21–22). Dunn sees not the earthly Jesus as the Second Adam but rather the *risen* Christ, who comes in existence (in his glorified state) at the resurrection.[29] "If Christ walks in Adam's footsteps then Christ need be no more pre-existent than Adam. . ..Christ's odyssey presupposes the plight of Adam, . . . [thus] the temporal order is clear: Adam first, Christ second – Christ is *last* Adam, *Adam precedes Christ*."[30] Through a comparison with Psalms 8 and 110:1, Christ is identified as the one who fulfills the program established for the First Adam who failed to complete it. If we exchange *morphe* for *eikon* in Gen. 1:26–27, then Phil. 2:6 may be understood as Christ similarly participating in the fellowship with God which Adam enjoyed before the Fall but subsequently forfeited.[31] Ps. 8:6–7 provides a parallel description of that same pre-Fall state and describes the end goal ultimately realized by Christ in Phil. 2:9–11.[32] Ps. 110:1, (The Lord says to you, my lord: "Take your throne at my right hand, while I make your enemies your footstool"), identified with Christ early on in the Church, was often associated with Psalm 8 in reflections connecting Christ's redemptive work with the First Adam's program.[33] In Phil. 2:11 we see Christ receiving the title of *Kyrios* upon his exaltation thus completing the echo of Psalms 8 and 110:1.

[27] Cf. LXX.

[28] James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1980), p. 114.

[29] Dunn, p. 108.

[30] Dunn, p. 119.

[31] Dunn, p. 102.

[32] NAB.

[33] Dunn, p. 108.

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Res Rapienda

To sum up briefly what we've considered thus far: the nature of Christ's *kenosis* is to be understood in terms of possessed rights or attributes which he set aside and which pertain to his specific role as the Second Adam. We will now consider what these rights and attributes are and in what manner they were given up. One of the distinctions that delineate the content of Christ's *kenosis* comes from the interpretation of *ouch harpagmon egesato to einai isa theo*. Multiple authors have staked out their positions along three main conceptions of *harpagmon*– that equality with God was a *res rapta* ("something already possessed, with the temptation to hold onto it, something seized or clung to"), *res retinenda* ("something already possessed, but not yet to its fullest advantage, with the temptation to exploit it to the full, something of which to take advantage"), or *res rapienda* ("something not yet possessed, but rather something to be snatched at, or to reach out and take hold of, something not yet in one's grasp but to be grasped at").[34]

In concert with the interpretation of the Philippians hymn which proposes Christ as the Second Adam, *res rapienda* becomes for Christ what it was for Adam. As has been said before, Paul compares and contrasts Adam and Jesus Christ throughout his letters and particularly develops this thought in the letter to the Romans. James Dunn summarizes Adam's failure in Genesis 3: "man's plight was that he had attempted to escape his creatureliness and to snatch at divinity, and thereby had forfeited the glory he already enjoyed and failed to attain the fuller glory God had intended for him."[35] Early Jewish thought prioritized lust or desire as the foremost of the capital sins and so Christ's task in the hymn is precisely not to grasp after divinity in imitation of Adam.[36] This glory (*doxa*) which Adam enjoyed before the Fall, which has been shown to be synonymous with *morphe* and *eikon*, Christ too enjoys at the beginning of the

[34] Donald Goergen OP, *Jesus, Son of God, Son of Mary, Immanuel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1995), p. 68. See also Martin, *Carmen Christi*, pp. 134–53.

[35] Dunn, p. 103.

[36] Dunn, p. 103. Cf. Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* no. 152 : "And she, in like manner, beholding a creature greatly resembling herself, rejoiced also, and addressed him in reply with due modesty. And love being engendered, . . . adapted them to each other, implanting in each of them a desire of connection with the other with a view to the generation of a being similar to themselves. *And this desire caused likewise pleasure to their bodies, which is the beginning of iniquities and transgressions, and it is owing to this that men have exchanged their previously immortal and happy existence for one which is mortal and full of misfortune*." In Yonge, 21. Also Philo, *De Decalogo* nos. 142, 150: "Last of all, the divine legislator prohibits covetousness, knowing that desire is a thing fond of revolution and of plotting against others; for all passions of the soul are formidable. . .*but of all such passions the worst is desire*." In Yonge, pp. 530–1. [italics mine]

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hymnic "odyssey".[37] In this scenario, Christ's humiliation is to enter into *fallen* humanity picking up where Adam left off and abandoning himself to death, the avoidance of which would have been his right even as a creature existing in preternatural glory. For death only entered the world—and this through sin on account of the Fall—subsequent to the original glory enjoyed in the Garden.[38] Christ then emptied himself of the fellowship with God which was present in the Garden at the beginning and assumed the role which Adam abdicated, that of the just and obedient one. E. Schweizer notes that in the post-Maccabean period, Judaic thought presumed that the righteous chosen by God would inevitably endure suffering and shame in order to ultimately be exalted.[39] He identifies Christ as the Just One *par excellence*. Old Testament literature presents myriad anecdotes of the suffering just: Dan. 3, 14; Is. 53; and 2 Macc. 7 for example. Likewise, early Christians had at hand a similar genre to prefigure Christ in the Wisdom literature (Wis. 2:10, 12–24; 3:1–8). "For God formed man to be imperishable, the image of his own nature he made him (Wis 2:23)," provides an additional backdrop for the Adamic typology of Christ. If Christ's role as the suffering, just One is in conjunction with his role as the Second Adam, then according to Dunn, his pre-existence is not a necessary condition of the hymn. Moreover, he considers the exalted Christ, *at the time of the resurrection*, to be the one who, *only after* completing his designated task, assumes the identity of the Second Adam.[40]

Mimesis Redeemed

If Jesus' obedience to the Father involving *kenosis* and suffering remedies the disobedience of Adam and its effects, then Jesus' life must be antithetical to mimetic rivalry. John Dadosky categorizes mimetic rivalry into two forms: horizontal (between human beings) and vertical (trying to be like God).[41] If as Girard states, "the Devil, or Satan signifies rivalistic contagion, up to and including the single victim mechanism," then surely we find in Christ's temptation in the desert (Mt 4:1–11) a rejection of both the horizontal and vertical forms of mimetic rivalry.[42] Jesus rejects self-sufficiency in the form of bread just as Adam and Eve sought to "be like God"—to know good

[37] Dunn, p. 119.
[38] Cf. Rom 5:12.
[39] Martin, pp. 191–2.
[40] Dunn, p. 108.
[41] Dadosky, p. 29.
[42] René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), p. 43.

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and evil independent of God.[43] "The object [in this case, knowledge of good and evil] is only a means of reaching the mediator [e.g, God]. The desire is aimed at the mediator's *being*."[44] Raymund Schwager associates Satan with self-deification which he says, "originates, in fact in an instinctive mechanism of reciprocal imitation, of anxiety and the quest for honor."[45] Here in this first temptation, we see one example of how Jesus "did not regard equality with God something to be grasped (Phil 2:6b)." Schwager's observation applies to the second temptation also when Jesus refuses the use of manipulative religious power—at the peak of the temple—as a means to self-serving purposes. Finally, he rejects rivalry at its source turning down Satan's offer: the world in return for the worship due to God alone.[46] To take on the role of the victim rather than the vengeful victimizer is Jesus' chosen path. James Alison describes how Jesus embodies the freedom of those liberated from mimetic rivalry whilst living in a society imbued with it: "Now the evidence is that Jesus taught, before, and on his way up to, his execution, exactly this sort of open-eyed freedom-towards-being-lynched, and indeed that this is the whole drift of his moral teaching."[47] According to Petra Steinmair-Pösel, nothing less will redeem us than the playing-out of this freedom to its end in Jesus: "[T]he mere message of the merciful Father is not enough to correct the distorted image of God. Rather, people drag Jesus into their own, perverted notions of God; they consequently accuse him of blasphemy and finally kill him. In this situation of intensifying conflict, a correction of the image of God is only made possible by Jesus' own way of acting."[48]

The self-glorification which was the goal of Adam at the Fall and which is the goal of metaphysical mimetic desire necessarily requires a distinguishing between and separation from those who are 'lesser'. Jesus' teachings provide a reversal of values which defy this rivalrous subordination. "It starts with the beatitudes, where the people chosen as exemplars of proximity to God are all marginal, dependent

[43] "This rivalrous imitation of God [by Adam and Eve] means that human beings try to be like God, but not in accordance with their creation and vocation, not by gratefully receiving their being in the image and likeness of God, but by trying to be like God out of their own effort, without God and against God." Quoted from Petra Steinmair-Pösel, 'Original Sin, Grace, and Positive Mimesis', *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 14 (2007), p. 6.

[44] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, p. 53.

[45] Raymund Schwager SJ, *Banished from Eden: Original Sin and Evolutionary Theory in the Drama of Salvation*, trans. James G. Williams (Herefordshire, England: Inigo Enterprises, 2006), p. 151.

[46] "The Tempter here no longer imitates the words of God but God himself. It becomes ever more clear that the tempting voice is nothing but a covetous and perverse imitation of God." Cf. Schwager, p. 28.

[47] James Alison, *Knowing Jesus* (Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers, 1993), p. 45.

[48] Steinmair-Pösel, p. 8.

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people."[49] Jesus dines with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. In healing the sick and the leprous, he dares to touch them and obliterate the social barrier which provides a metric for station and stature. "But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:26–28). Pope Benedict XVI identifies Jesus' foot-washing at the Last Supper (Jn 13:1–17) as the quintessential pedagogy of *kenosis*: "[T]his is rendered visible in a single gesture. Jesus represents the whole of his saving ministry in one symbolic act. He divests himself of his divine splendor; he, as it were, kneels down before us; he washes and dries our soiled feet, in order to make us fit to sit at table for God's wedding feast."[50] He points out that the theme presented in the foot-washing is that of 'purification' which makes one 'clean' to return to the presence of God.[51] Jesus demonstrates the way back to God's presence and nullifies the banishment of Adam, Eve, and Cain. Jesus is Paul's transformed Girardian model for mimesis. Paul tells the Corinthians, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). He exhorts the Philippians to do the same and offers himself as their Girardian model (cf. Phil. 3:17). Contrary to self-glorification over-against others, Paul describes the kenotic program of self-abasement which rejects mimetic rivalry: "Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others" (Phil. 2:3–4). To restate in Girardian terms, "All the heroes surrender their most fundamental individual prerogative, that of choosing their own desire."[52] Epitomized in the Christ hymn, this sentiment is precisely what Paul desires will take root in the church in Philippi: "Have among yourselves [this] same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). "Choice always involves choosing a model, and true freedom lies in the basic choice between a human or a divine model."[53] Jesus redeems mimesis by removing its sting. He provides a model which all can imitate without violent rivalry, and, thanks to the resurrection, without fear of death.[54]

[49] Ibid., p. 42.

[50] Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two, Holy Week From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), p. 57.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, p. 55.

[53] Ibid., p. 58.

[54] Steinmair-Pösel describes this outcome as "positive mimesis." Cf. Steinmair-Pösel, p. 10.

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