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Eucharist and Sacrifice

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Introduction

There are a number of recent harrowing films about the Rwandan massacres of 1994. In *Shooting Dog*s (2005), the hero, played by John Hurt, is a Catholic priest named Fr. Christopher, who finds himself entrapped in a school compound with several thousand Tutsi villagers. They are encamped there under the protection of the UN troops, only to find that the troops are expecting an order to withdraw. Outside the compound gates, their erstwhile neighbours, armed with machetes and clubs, await the exit of the UN monitors. As the inevitability of their fate becomes apparent, the trapped villagers ask the troops if they would at least shoot their children, so as to spare them being butchered; the soldiers, not surprisingly, are unable to perform even this act of "mercy". The priest has a chance to get on the trucks with the troops, but he insists on staying with the people. He is shot dead.

Earlier in the film, at the height of the tension in the compound, he prepares to celebrate Mass. 'I am a priest. This is what I do', he shrugs to the volunteer teacher who wonders about the appropriateness of celebrating in such circumstances. His repeated appeals to the UN commander to intervene in the massacres which are taking place yards away from the compound gates are ignored. On being told yet again that the troops are there as monitors only, and have no mandate for peacekeeping, Fr. Christopher explodes: 'Might I suggest that you get in touch with your superiors and change your f—— mandate!'

'I am a priest, this is what I do'; there is never a question of this impressive priest abandoning his people to their horrific fate. By opposing this act of love to the "acts of genocide", there is a reminder of the dimensions of Eucharist brought out, for example, by William T. Cavanaugh's description of torture (in this case as practised by the Pinochet regime in Chile in the 70s) as an "anti-liturgy", to be contradicted by the Church's practice of "Eucharist".[1] What happens

[1] W.T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1998). A central theme in Cavanaugh's argument is that the Church had allowed itself to 'disappear' from Chilean political life because of a mistaken understanding of how it should relate to society. Only

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outside the compound fence in *Shooting Dogs* is a diabolical parody of the gathering which takes place inside. The eucharistic logic: 'we are priests; this is what we do' can only be fully understood in relation to its opposite: because the butchery and exclusion are also 'what we do', there is a need for Eucharist.

Thankfully, very few of our eucharistic celebrations are conducted explicitly against such a background. For the most part we have to consciously remind ourselves that what is being celebrated is the 'dangerous memory of Jesus Christ',[2] and that our Eucharist is, among other things, a call upon the powers to 'change your mandate'. I wish to propose that any authentic understanding of "sacrifice" in relation to Eucharist cannot stray too far from this memory; even if some of the *aporias* regarding sacrifice may remain unresolved. As Chauvet declares, 'there is no doubt that the word "sacrifice" is one of the most treacherous in the Christian vocabulary'.[3] He acknowledges the low esteem in which the term is held by many contemporary Christians: the Freudian view of religion as simply the management of guilt is never far away – perhaps even more so when we think we have overcome and outgrown its distortions. Two authors – Dennis Keenan, a philosopher, and John Milbank, a theologian – help set the scene by offering historical overviews of theories of sacrifice, and in so doing alert us to this paradox of our culture's imperative to 'sacrifice sacrifice'.[4] In particular Milbank warns us of the danger of entangling ourselves in sacrificial reasoning, even as we think we are escaping from it.

Regarding the contemporary discussion, three broad theological camps can be discerned: firstly, theories which insist that what is valuable or authentic in Christianity is incompatible with sacrifice, and that the contrast between the Christian and non-Christian dispensation in this respect is so vast as to make any notion of a Christian understanding of "sacrifice" illegitimate. This is a classic theme of liberation theologians, who see in the critique of the prophets a

by recovering its ability to practise Eucharist was the Church able to overcome its 'invisibility'. As an iconic example of such 'eucharistic practice', Cavanaugh cites the decision by Archbishop Romero (after the assassination of Fr Rutilio Grande) to have just one Eucharistic celebration in San Salvador, in order to voice, to the entire nation, his condemnation of human rights violations.

[2] The phrase is taken from Johann Baptist Metz. For an appraisal of the eucharistic dimension of Metz's political theology, see Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis and Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Mn., 2000).

[3] Louis-Marie Chauvet, (1995), *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1995), p. 315.

[4] Dennis King Keenan, 'The Sacrifice of the Eucharist', *Heythrop Journal* 44.2 (2003), pp. 182-2-4 and *The Question of Sacrifice* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2005); John Milbank, (1996), 'Stories of Sacrifice: From Wellhausen to Girard', *Modern Theology* 12 (1996), pp. 27–56.

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rejection of cult in favour of practical justice. Jesus' insistence on the importance of 'mercy not sacrifice' is seen as a continuation and confirmation of this basic attitude. There are also important critiques of sacrifice from feminist theology: the best known are perhaps from Nancy Jay,[5] Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva. These "non-sacrificial" approaches contrast directly with a second perspective, typified by Margaret Barker and Bruce Chilton, and their assertion that Jesus' identity as High Priest is crucial to early Christian self-understanding, and not peripheral, as the anti-cult protesters would maintain.[6]

The third, and arguably mainstream position, is to allow for a Christian usage of sacrifice, but with severe qualification, namely with a recognition that the notion has undergone a process of radical 'spiritualization' or interiorization. Since theories of this third type often agree that Christianity brings about the 'end' of sacrifice, meaning both its fulfilment and termination, there can sometimes be little difference between an espousal of a transformed notion of sacrifice and the first, non-sacrificial position. I propose to follow Louis-Marie Chauvet in designating this third approach as 'anti-sacrificial'; the terminology is potentially confusing, but what it seeks to convey is the recognition that Christian sacrifice can only be understood in tensile contrast with another category: 'sacrifice in the "history-of-religions" sense of the word' (Robert Daly). So the term intends to convey a process of development, with elements of continuity as well as rupture.

Part One of this paper offers a more specific investigation within the parameters of the 'anti-sacrificial' approach defined by Chauvet. Robert Daly proposes a distinction between 'normative' and 'descriptive' meanings of Christianity and sacrifice; he argues that 'sacrifice' has undergone a process of what he calls 'spiritualization', and it is this process which is of prime importance. His analysis coincides largely with those of Keenan and Chauvet. In the second section of this paper I seek to problematise this 'exodus from sacrifice'. I will note, in passing, two specific and contrasting concerns: firstly, the persistence of (sometimes extreme) propitiatory views of the atonement (expressed most vividly in the controversy surrounding Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*), and the fears of reductionism expressed by Pope John Paul II in *Eucharistia de Ecclesia*. I will note the pastoral imperative of how to speak effectively of eucharistic sacrifice within and to a culture that maintains a morbid fascination with

[5] Nancy Jay, *Throughout Your Generations For Ever: Sacrifice, Religion and Paternity* (University of Chicago Press, 1992); especially chapter 9, 'Theories of Sacrifice', pp. 128–146.

[6] Margaret Barker, (2003), *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (T & T Clark, London, 2003); Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1992).

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the theme of sacrifice as immolation, as well as an understandably deep-seated resistance to it. For all the criticisms advanced against it, sacrifice remains one of the key metaphors of salvation. David Ford (in *Self and Salvation,* CUP 1998) offers six criteria for an adequate soteriology: I will ask whether our understanding of eucharistic sacrifice can be reformulated so as to better satisfy these criteria. My specific proposal is that an articulation of the Johannine notion of the pedagogy of filiation may actually do much of the work which we require from the doctrine of sacrifice.

Part One: The Exodus from Sacrifice

Dennis King Keenan traces in the genealogy of Western sacrifice 'an increasing interiorization, spiritualization, and dialecticization of sacrifice', understood as a necessary passage through suffering and/or death on the way to a supreme moment of transcendental truth. As such there is a pay-off, and sacrifice can be seen in an economical sense. And yet we also expect a "pure" sacrifice to be beyond calculation or hope of gain, a selfless and disinterested act, so that the economical and aneconomical meanings of sacrifice work against one another. What happens is that the latter, the aneconomical, is 'inevitably' sublated by an economical approach. Keenan gives the example of Matthew, chapter 6, where sacrificial actions undertaken without hope of terrestrial recognition (prayer, fasting, almsgiving), are nevertheless seen, and rewarded, by your Father 'who is in secret'.

He begins this task of questioning sacrifice with a genealogy of theories, uncovering a number of systematically distorting structural features, namely economics, sexism and Christo-centric evolutionism. This widespread distortion would seem to argue for an abandonment of discourse about sacrifice altogether. However, says Keenan, such an abandonment would be,

> a sacrifice of sacrifice, which, if performed naively (i.e., without dwelling with the question of sacrifice), would unwittingly preserve some form of sacrifice. One would be duped into believing that one could be done with sacrifice, which could then return (relatively unchanged) in far more subtle and pernicious forms . . . one is called to remain attentive to the irreducible ambiguity of the sacrifice of sacrifice.[7]

What is called for instead is a genealogy and a 'going through' of the tradition, one which is alert to the distorting principles of economics, sexism and evolutionism, but more generally to the radical ambiguity of 'the question of sacrifice' as set out above. John Milbank draws

[7] D.K. Keenan (2005) p. 14.

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similar conclusions from his survey of recent attempts at the 'quest for sacrifice'. He sees these authors (René Girard, Walter Burkert, Maurice Bloch, Nancy Jay, Luce Irigaray and others) continuing a distorted nineteenth-century obsession. 'Why is it that sacrifice should have exercised such a lure upon Victorian discourses, to the degree that they were "framed" by what they purport to "frame", seduced by the object of their own fascination?'[8]

Their approach presents a fearful temptation for Christians, one which involves 'a confusion of evolutionism (any account of a necessitated history) with typology, or the idea that the Cross and eucharist both end and fulfil all sacrifice'. This latter claim to fulfilment is indeed correct, says Milbank – but not by virtue of a demonstrated necessity or logical unfolding. It is this uneasiness which shapes Milbank's appraisal of the 'renewal' of the nineteenth-century quest in writers such as René Girard, whose work he considers in detail as representative of this renewed quest. Milbank advances a number of criticisms against Girard, and while some are nearer the mark than others, the general drift is clear; that Girard is one of those 'modern, enlightened reasoners about sacrifice [who have] found themselves captured by sacrificial reason', thereby substituting themselves for the old priests as the new, scientific priests. Whatever the justice of this critique as a reading of Girard, we need to note Milbank's general points regarding the peculiar temptations which face contemporary theorists of sacrifice.

It is also worth noting, however, that Girard's original 'non-sacrificial' approach has been explicitly modified in his subsequent work.[9] His position now is that the term can only be understood in its transformative history: what in the context of this paper corresponds to the third position designated by Chauvet as 'anti-sacrifice', but which may more helpfully be thought of as an 'exodus from sacrifice' (Keenan). McKenna describes this 'strong scholarly consensus' that the Christian usage of sacrifice is to be understood in the context of a long process of 'spiritualization', both in the Jewish scriptures and in the surrounding Hellenistic culture. Under pressure of the conditions of exile, and also of the prophetic critique of cult, 'sacrifice' evolved from the notion of a material immolation (destruction) ritual, towards a more spiritual prayer form, for which no immolation was necessary.[10] Keenan concurs with this description when he traces

[8] J. Milbank (1996) p. 31.

[9] Girard admits that in *Des Choses Cachēes* (1978) his impatience to stress the uniqueness of the biblical revelation over against sacrifice caused him to "scapegoat" both the concept itself, and the "sacrificial" letter to the Hebrews (for Girard's change of mind on the question of sacrifice, see James Williams (ed), *The Girard Reader* (Crossroad, NY, 1996).

[10] John H. McKenna, 'Eucharist and Sacrifice: An Overview', *Worship*, 76.5 (2002) pp. 386–402. See also William R. Franklin, 'ARC-USA: Five Affirmations on the eucharist as

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an increasing concern with interior disposition in the Israelite cult, through the critique of the prophets, the psalms, and in the later Wisdom literature. 'The progressive interiorization and spiritualization of sacrifice did not, however, represent a repudiation of sacrifice, rather the necessity of the proper interior disposition accompanying the outward act.'[11]

'Spiritualization' for Robert Daly denotes an interiorization of the movement of 'offering' demanded in earlier ritual sacrificial acts. He asserts that Christian sacrifice was not a cultic but rather an ethical idea, one which found its focus in the everyday practical life of Christian virtue. He goes on to offer a number of synonyms: dematerialising, sublimating, humanizing, deepening, ethicizing, rationalizing, interiorizing, symbolizing. These are broad terms which include 'all those movements within Judaism and Christianity which attempted to emphasize the true meaning of sacrifice, that is, the inner, spiritual, or ethical significance of the cult over against the merely material or merely external understanding of it'.[12] (1978:7) Daly's argument rests upon a distinction between normative and descriptive understandings of both Christianity and sacrifice. The proposition 'Christianity is sacrificial', can have two correct and diametrically opposite meanings, depending on whether the words are taken in a normative or descriptive/phenomenological sense (rather as one might speak of the ideals of socialism and 'real existing socialism', perhaps). He grounds his understanding of 'normative' Christianity as 'normatively' sacrificial on his conviction that 'the Christ Event has done away with sacrifice in the comparative-religions or history-of-religions sense of that word'. Only in five New Testament passages do we find references to sacrifice which are relevant to our inquiry: Romans 12.1-2, and Romans 15.15-16; 1 Peter 2.4-10; Hebrews 10.19-25; and Hebrews 13.10-16. Daly repeats the conclusion set out in his 1978 study:

> The commonly accepted methods of modern critical scholarship prove beyond reasonable doubt that this primarily ethical concept of Christian sacrifice is indeed the one that is operative in the New Testament . . . in each [of these five passages], either explicitly or implicitly (from the fact that they all occur in the context of practical exhortation), sacrifice is understood as the practical living of the life of Christian virtue and Christian mission. The core of the specifically New Testament concept of Christian sacrifice is, thus, not cultic or liturgical, but practical and

Sacrifice', *Worship,* 69 (1995) pp. 386–390; Joanne M. Pierce, (1995), 'The Eucharist as Sacrifice: Some Contemporary Roman Catholic Reflections', *Worship*, 69.5 (1995) pp. 394–405; David Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalising the Tradition* (Crossroad, NY, 1992); David Power *et al.*, 'Sacramental Theology: A Review of Literature' *Theological Studies*, 55 (1994) pp. 657–702.

[11] D.K. Keenan (2003) p. 189.

[12] Robert Daly, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978) p. 7.

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> ethical. The sacrifice to be offered by the people of God in the new covenant is indeed a 'liturgy of life'.[13]

The inchoate acceptance of sacrificial thinking becomes explicit with Origen and Augustine; here we have a faithful development of the main trajectory of 'spiritualization' which Daly has detected in the New Testament epistles. As noted above, 'spiritualization' has several synonyms, though in the developed Christian sense spiritualize came to mean, effectively, 'Christologize'.[14] At the same time, there is another trajectory which develops, a more ominous one of ritualization or institutionalization: Christians begin to speak in a univocal way of the redemptive activity of Christ, and of their own liturgical activity, as sacrificial. From Hippolytus onwards we begin to hear of the sacrifical action of the presiding priest, and of the bread and wine spoken of as sacrificial offerings. The problem according to Daly is that the patristic authors looked to the past for the origins of sacrifice, but 'had no epistemic access to the process of spiritualization', indeed may have had no idea that it existed. Not the Old Testament, read ahistorically, but the later writings and the oral traditions of intertestamental and early rabbinic Judaism were the places where the process of spiritualization was recorded.[15]

L.-M. Chauvet concurs with the broad outlines of Robert Daly's approach. He declares that the interpretation of Jesus' life and death as a sacrifice is neither the earliest, nor the most important, in the New Testament. Chauvet follows Léon-Dufour's description of three major symbolisms in Paul's theology (judicial, political, inter-personal), none of which have to do with sacrifice or cult. The Letter to the Hebrews does interpret the death of Jesus through the language of the Temple, but it is very much a transmutation or subversion of the Old Testament cult, whereby the priesthood of Jesus (descending, kenotic, in solidarity with human beings) is expressed in terms directly opposite to those of the latter (Israelite priesthood as ascending, separatist). This priestly mediation is a feature of Jesus' whole life,

[13] *Ibid*. p. 82f. See also 'Sacrifice' in P. Fink (ed), *New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1990) pp. 1135–7, and 'Is Christianity Sacrificial or Anti-Sacrificial', *Religion*, 27, (1997) pp. 225–230.

[14] R. Daly (1997) p. 238.

[15] Two respondents to Robert Daly's 1997 paper, Paul Duff and Bruce Chilton, argue for a more dominant trajectory in the New Testament, suggesting that Christianity did not at first reject the Temple (see Matthew 5.23-24; Acts 2.46; 5.42; 21.17-26). Nor should we reject the historical circumstances by which Christianity became separated from sacrificial worship, namely the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and its demolition in 135 CE. The replacement of the Temple is a matter of history, not of Christian or Rabbinic theology. Chilton stresses the dangers of "scapegoating sacrifice" and insists that "the denial of sacrifice is the last bulwark, and perhaps the strongest, of Christian exceptionalism'. See Paul Duff, 'The Sacrificial Character of Earliest Christianity: A Response to Robert J. Daly's "Is Christianity Sacrificial or Anti-Sacrifical", *Religion,* 27 (1997) pp. 245–248, and Bruce Chilton, 'Sacrificial Mimesis' in *Religion*, 27 (1997) pp. 225–230.

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and not just his death: above all, his priesthood and sacrifice were exercised 'existentially and not ritually'.[16]

Jesus' self-renunciation is an acquiescence to 'de-mastery' (a reversal both of Oedipal conflict and the Hegelian struggle for recognition). It is a sacrificial 'letting-be', Jesus' kenotic 'consent to his condition as Son-in-humanity and as Brother of humanity'. Chauvet prefers to describe this as 'anti-sacrifice'. In any case, the language of sacrifice, whatever authority it may acquire in the New Testament, is not necessary to describe the meaning of Jesus' life and death, and remains only one symbolism among others. It should certainly have its place, but not a privileged status. The sacrifice of Jesus is so singular that he wonders, with Girard, whether the word is even appropriate. Chauvet has serious reservations about Girard's account of sacrifice as a scapegoating mechanism, and of Jesus' unmasking and denunciation of this mechanism,[17] but he builds on Girard's insights so far as to propose a third term, "anti-sacrifice", between the Girardian dichotomy of sacrifice and non-sacrifice (as we have seen above this "anti-sacrificial" position in fact coincides with Girard's considered view on the matter). Such a position steers clear of a "gnostic" denial of the sacrificial pattern within each of us, recognizing instead the never-ending task of conversion: 'The anti-sacrificial regimen to which the gospel calls us *rests upon* the sacrificial, but it does so to turn it around and thereby to redirect ritual practice'. It is in ethical practice where the ritual practice is verified.[18] In its Christological setting, the language of cult or sacrifice is used only with reference to Christ, and to the daily life of Christians who were called 'a living sacrifice, a royal priesthood, a temple holy to God'.[19] (McKenna: 389) For Chauvet, the evidence points to 'an undeniable anti-sacrificial and anti-priestly subversion. . . . From now on . . . the sacred work, the cult, the sacrifice that is pleasing to God, is the confession of faith lived in the agape of sharing in service to the poorest, of reconciliation and of mercy.'[20]

What he asserts as the 'basic principle' is drawn from Augustine: 'Christ, who was offered (sacrificed) once for all, is offered "everyday in sacrament" (*quotidie in sacramento*)' – a formula distinct from "everyday in *the* sacrament". Augustine illustrates this process of interiorization and spiritualization described above. He understands Christ's passion as a perfect sacrifice, a complete surrender to God: this is rooted in an ecclesial sense of our unity with Christ, whereby the gifts of bread and wine, which represent the sufferings of the

[16] L-M. Chauvet, *Op. Cit.*, p. 299.
[17] *Ibid.,* pp. 303–6.
[18] *Ibid.,* p. 307.
[19] J.H. McKenna, *Op. Cit.*, p. 389.
[20] L-M. Chauvet, *Op. Cit.,* p. 260.

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faithful, are joined to the Christ-victim. There is no question here of overcoming alienation or of expiation of sin: in fact, the 'work of sacrifice' itself constitutes fellowship with God, rather than being a means towards it. It arises from a sense of identity and union already achieved: the indissoluble marriage (without confusion) of Christ and the Church. At the altar we are exhorted to 'be what you see, and receive what you are':

> So then, the true sacrifices are acts of compassion, whether towards ourselves or towards our neighbours, when they are directed towards God; and acts of compassion are intended to free us from misery and thus to bring us to happiness – which is only attained by that good of which it has been said, 'As for me, my true good is to cling to God'. This being so, it immediately follows that the whole redeemed community, that is to say, the congregation and fellowship of the saints, is offered to God as a universal sacrifice, through the great Priest, who offered Himself in his suffering for us – so that we might be the body of so great a head- under 'the form of a servant' . . .. Thus the Apostle first exhorts us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, as the reasonable homage we owe him, and not to be 'conformed' to this age, but to be 're-formed' in newness of mind to prove what is the will of God – namely what is good, what is acceptable to God, what is perfect because we ourselves are that whole sacrifice . . . . This is the sacrifice of Christians, who are 'many making up one body in Christ'. This is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, a sacrament well-known to the faithful where it is shown to the Church that she herself is offered in the offering which she presents to God.[21]

Part Two: After Sacrifice? The Pedagogy of Filiation

While the "anti-sacrificial" convergence of writers such as Chauvet, Girard, Daly and others is impressive, serious questions remain. The argument runs that Augustine's symbolic discourse comes later on (by the eleventh century) to seem less than adequately "realistic". There is a persistent temptation to regress to the "normatively" sacrificial; though the reasons for the reversion, in the third and fourth centuries, to the earlier understanding of sacrifice as immolation are complex. Chauvet suggests that after the conversion of Constantine, the influx of pagans and the new civic role for Christian clergy led to a renewal of the "cultic" model. The subsequent eclipse of the congregation at the eucharistic worship, Chauvet describes as the 'confiscation of the baptismal priesthood of the entire people of God by the priests'.[22]

From a modern perspective, this is in many ways an attractive narrative, but one needs to ask whether it runs just too smoothly. Is it

[21] St Augustine, *The City of God*, Book X.6.
[22] L-M. Chauvet, *Op. Cit.*, p. 309.

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in fact adequate to designate all examples of descriptive or "really existing" sacrifice as simply regressive? What is missing in particular from the reading of Augustine on sacrifice is the dimension of Eucharist as an oppositional practice, performed in a world which hates the Christian and seeks their destruction. The most striking counter-example is the association of Eucharist and martyrdom which we find in Ignatius of Antioch, who desires to be poured out as a libation, and to be made purest wheat by the teeth of the wild beasts.[23] We may judge Ignatius' use of such metaphors to be edging towards the pathological:[24] can we say the same of his desire that his deeds should be eloquent, that he should 'be a word of God . . . [instead of] again a (mere) voice'?

We shall return to another aspect raised here: for Ignatius, the martyr ideal is not straightforwardly one of visible representation at all; it is only when he 'does not appear to the world' that he will truly be a Christian: 'For good does not reside in what our eyes can see; the fact that Jesus Christ is now within the Father is why we perceive him so much the more clearly. For the work we have to do is no affair of persuasive speaking; Christianity lies in achieving greatness in the face of the world's hatred.'[25] Despite a very strong narrative theme which relies very much upon representation and visibility (the Letter envisages a triumphal procession from the east to Rome) the author yearns in fact to be completely eaten up so as to disappear from view; thus effecting his transformation into a true disciple.

Is it possible to sustain the rich associations without some recourse to the notion of "sacrifice"? As is now widely recognised, and as Chauvet has reiterated, the sacrificial theme is only one of several metaphors for Christ's saving action. David Power emphasises the 'redescription' which has taken place: the Cross of Christ 'replaced the rites of sacrifice with the table of Christ's body and blood'.[26] In the death of Christ, all other sacrifices are fulfilled and rendered obsolete, and there is a movement away from a focus on cult or rite, towards seeing the Eucharist as 'outside the series' of all earlier sacrificial rituals: 'a totally different kind of reality [which] realised superabundantly the end and purpose of sacrifice'.[27] The heart of the

[23] We should, of course, recognise the possibility that this last declaration may not in fact be a reference to the Eucharist at all.

[24] The ground is well covered: see Droge and Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (Harper, San Francisco, 1992), and R.G. Tanner, 'Martyrdom in St Ignatius of Antioch and the Stoic View of Suicide' in E.A. Livingstone (ed), *Studia Patristica*, 16.2 (Academic Verlag, Berlin, 1985) pp. 201–205.

[25] St Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Romans* 3, in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers,* translated by Maxwell Staniforth (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1968) p. 104.

[26] D. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery* (1992) p. 320.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 321.

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problem for Power is the need to "demythologize" the concept of sacrifice in the contemporary world. For Power, the Christian use of the term "sacrifice" is a 'language of reversal', a movement away from appeasement or magical repulsion, towards a stress on 'a communion of solidarity in love in God's spirit that withstands human judgement and prevails in the midst of suffering'.[28] We are speaking here of a reversal, a metaphorical 'story-power' which speaks of the triumph of good, life and light over evil, death and darkness.

But can such a demythologised 'story power' be intense and coherent enough to engage the modern imagination? David Ford in *Self and Salvation* (pp.2-6) offers six interconnecting questions or criteria for an acceptable doctrine of salvation[29] and it becomes necessary to specify just how the root metaphor of sacrifice fits in here, given that part of its power is precisely its inadequacy. Understood here as a language of reversal, can the notion of sacrifice sustain, once again, a 'journey of intensification'?

As we have seen, for Keenan, the task is to 'dwell' within the paradox of sacrifice rather than seek to dissolve it. In this respect we may refer to two pieces of 'unfinished business': the question of propitiation,[30] and the reductive understanding of the Eucharist as a non-sacrificial banquet (the fear expressed by Pope John Paul II in *Eucharistia de Ecclesia*). Perhaps each of these represent the besetting temptation of one of the theological options spelt out at the beginning of this paper, in which the paradox of sacrifice has been dissolved, rather than maintained. A "sacrificial" approach, if there is an overemphasis on the propitiatory or expiatory dimension, may tempt us to stay with an archaic, and possibly pathological, valorisation of divinely-sanctioned violence. However, a "non-sacrificial" approach, which congratulates itself on having left behind the messiness of sacrifice once and for all, will tempt us to sit down prematurely, as it were, to the eschatological banquet.[31] In Pauline terms, we have the

[28] D. Power, 'Sacramental Theology: A Review of Literature' (1994), p. 322f.

[29] Ford asks: does this theology of salvation go to the heart of Christian identity, doing justice to the specificity of the Gospel narrative, the face of Jesus Christ, as well as its universal implications? Is this theology widely accessible today? Does this theology have practical fruitfulness, in what Ford describes as the three main dynamics of Christian living: worship and prayer; living and learning in community; and speech, action and suffering for justice, freedom, peace, goodness and truth? Finally is this theology defensible against diverse attacks, and can it anticipate and deal with the main criticisms and alternatives.

[30] Given new life by the controversy of the Passion film of Mel Gibson: see Simon Barrow and Jonathan Bartley (eds), *Consuming Passion: Why the Killing of Jesus Really Matters* (DLT, London, 2005). The editors of this book express their concern that the popularity of the film and the undiscriminating use of this film as a tool for evangelisation have served to perpetuate pathological notions of penal substitution.

[31] Discussion of this theme at the CTA conference 2006 drew attention to the oddness of the Eucharistic 'meal' as it normally occurs: food which is queued for and consumed standing is more reminiscent of a soup kitchen or a fast food outlet than a leisurely banquet,

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Galatian community, which hearkens nostalgically to certitudes of a sacrificial past, and the Corinthian community, which has moved too quickly into a non-sacrificial, angelic future. Once again, it seems the place to be is within the paradox of 'sacrificing sacrifice', the place of 'anti-sacrifice' as Chauvet understands it. And yet perhaps here the risks are greater, since both temptations are present: forgetting the bloodiness of Calvary, or relapsing from Easter innocence. And the vocabulary of "sacrifice" remains treacherous as ever.

A reformulation of the sacrificial understanding of Eucharist will need to take account of the insights and challenges set out above. It will have to acknowledge a fundamental dilemma: on the one hand, there is John Milbank's warning about how 'the modern, enlightened reasoners about sacrifice found themselves captured by sacrificial reason', on the other hand the dangers, stressed by Chauvet and Keenan, of ever thinking that we have escaped from sacrificial reason. Can we do without "sacrifice"? While I wish to acknowledge the insights that are afforded by the non-sacrificial and sacrificial "camps", it would seem that the approaches which we have designated (with Chauvet) as "anti-sacrificial" best recognise the 'treacherous' nature of sacrificial language and concepts.

For all the difficulties associated with it, sacrifice, understood as 'a necessary passage through suffering and/or death on the way to a supreme moment of transcendental truth' (Keenan) remains one of the most potent metaphors of salvation. We have noted David Ford's six criteria for an adequate soteriology. How does our understanding of eucharistic sacrifice match up to these? My specific proposal is that an articulation of the Johannine notion of a *pedagogy of filiation* may do much of the work which we have traditionally required from the doctrine of sacrifice.

The guiding texts are John 15.12-15, and the citation by Girard and Chauvet of the two biblical 'founding narratives': Genesis chapters 1-3, and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel.[32] For Chauvet, the sacrifice of Jesus rests in his 'reversing the fundamental sin of Israel, which is also the paradigmatic sin of humankind',[33] namely the living in relation to God in a pattern of force and competition, classically expressed in Hegel's master-slave dialectic and in Freud's Oedipus complex. In response to an Adamic grabbing, Christ's kenotic self-offering points to a 'de-mastery', a 'letting-be' of God. His sacrificial death is to be understood as a two-fold consent: 'to his condition as

suggesting that unease with the meal symbolism is implicit in how we actually celebrate the sacrament.

[32] See René Girard, 'The Logos of Heraclitus and the Logos of John' in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (University Press, Stanford, Ca., 1987) pp. 263–280.

[33] L-M. Chauvet, *Op. Cit.,* p. 299.

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Son-in-humanity and as Brother of humanity',[34] which is a corrective of the slave's acquisitiveness and the master's desire for control. It corresponds less to a strictly sacrificial pattern than to the initiatory pattern of 'dying to live'. One thinks here of Jesus' most powerful parable, in which the lost son is suspended for a moment between the status of a slave and that of son, until the father makes clear the restoration of his dignity:

> One sees what is at stake in what we call the anti-sacrificial: not the negation of the sacrificial or of a part of it (its dimension of reconciliation), but the task to convert all the sacrificial to the gospel in order to live it, not in a servile, but in a *filial* (and hence in a brotherly and sisterly) manner. This is precisely why the realization of this intimate association, based on our common filiation, by the ethical practice of reconciliation between human beings, constitutes the premier place of our "sacrifice." This is what the anti-sacrifice of the Eucharist shows us and enjoins us to do.[35]

Hence the Eucharist is indeed once again a 'dangerous memory', because of this transfiguration of identities, and because of the fearsome ethical responsibilities that follow from it. As Chauvet insists, the sacrificial kenosis which we commemorate in our Eucharist frees us from grabbing after divinity, because we are, after all, sons and daughters; but nor will it allow us to abdicate our human responsibility as brothers and sisters, by leaving everything up to a falsely transcendent and non-incarnate God.

Conclusion

The scholarly consensus seems to be as follows. If the concept is carefully circumscribed, and with an explicit distancing from cruder usages of sacrifice, and if the link with the all-sufficient self-gift of Christ is maintained, then to speak of Christian sacrifice is legitimate. This is more than a question of careful language: Daly (following Girard) insists that there should be an express recognition in official teaching that 'the Christ event did away with sacrifice in the "history-of-religions" sense of the word i.e. demanding immolation or destruction'. As J. McKenna points out, our language is 'anti-sacrificial' in the sense of moving beyond immolation to 'a spiritual sacrifice which serves to transform the world': quoting Chauvet, 'the ethical practice of reconciliation between human beings, constitutes the premier place of our sacrifice. That is what the anti-sacrifice of the Eucharist shows us and enjoins us to do.'

[34] *Ibid*., p. 301.
[35] *Ibid.,* p. 311.

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The demarcation for Chauvet is 'between a servile attitude and a filial attitude with regard to the entire sacrificial order'. This is a process of demythologisation, but with limits. Like Keenan, Chauvet thinks it unlikely that we can simply jettison the idea of sacrifice, and in particular that the eucharist can conceivably be celebrated without mythic residue, in the form of archaic sacrificial symbolism. His conclusion as to the 'risks and opportunities of the vocabulary of sacrifice' demands that for pastoral reasons it be used with care – even as the vocabulary remains ineradicable.[36] For Chauvet, as for Keenan and Daly, what matters is the process by which this vocabulary takes on new dimensions. The "anti-sacrificial" process is a pedagogical one, of learning how not to be slaves and how to be sons and daughters.[37]

Will this do? It will certainly be inadequate for those who insist on "sacrificial" or "non-sacrificial" understandings, as we have set out these terms earlier. I began this paper with a graphic cinematic image from *Shooting Dogs* – the two "gatherings", inside and outside the compound fence. Both are "sacrificial"; both are 'what we do'. Only by seeing the genocidal mob, our brothers and sisters, as a mirror of our costly eucharistic self-giving, do we begin to discern what eucharistic sacrifice might mean.

Immolation, in short, is not necessary for eucharistic sacrifice – but it is what happens, in some circumstances, to people who try to live eucharistically. To be a disciple is to be soberly aware of this possibility, and to be ready for it – by the same token, however, to accept that for much of the time and for many of us, this potential will not be actualised. Traditionally, it is the language and devotion of martyrdom which has articulated this truth: but this discourse is itself also undergoing transition.[38] If it is the case that an "anti-sacrificial" discourse has emerged, an "exodus from sacrifice", this can only be a true exodus by being mindful of previous enslavement, and by re-living it so as to commemorate liberation. Finally, as the renewed discourse about martyrdom has made clear, the questions of authenticity and transparency of witness come to the fore, and even their impossibility in a culture where suspicion of even the grandest

[36] *Ibid.,* p. 315f.

[37] I am indebted to the Catholic Theological Association and to Dr Laurence Hemming for comments on this paper. I would also like to acknowledge the book by Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2006) which, while highly pertinent to this discussion, appeared too late for me take it into account.

[38] See Karl Rahner's argument for a renewed and expanded conception for martyrdom for the modern age in 'Dimensions of Martyrdom: A Plea for the Broadening of a Classical Concept', *Concilium*, 163, pp. 9–12. By recognising in this article the complexities of contemporary martyrdom, Rahner moves away from his earlier optimism about martyrdom being a "suprasacrament"; see *On the Theology of Death* (Herder, Freiburg, 1961) and his other writings on Christian death in *Theological Investigations*, volumes VII and IX.

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of narratives holds sway. Who, in the end, authenticates the martyr? and who judges our sacrifices to be "acceptable"? Chauvet asserts:

> Properly understood, this (anti-) sacrificial language thus reveals one of the constitutive dimensions of Christian identity. And its Eucharistic "expression" reveals in an exemplary way the process by which Christians come into the truth of their identity.[39]

The claim, in the end, is comparatively modest. Not everything comes to expression. As well as the great anti-sacrificial drama, there are other constitutive dimensions, whose tone is silence, inarticulacy, invisibility: as we see once again in Ignatius' desire to 'disappear'; in Augustine's self-offering 'everyday in sacrament', in Rahner's revision of the 'supra-sacramentality' of martyrdom, and Keenan's tension between the 'aneconomical' and economical orders of sacrifice to a Father who rewards 'in secret'.

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[39] L-M. Chauvet, *Op. Cit.,* p. 316.

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