I'm very happy to be with you tonight and very proud of this introduction, but I talk about religion without talking about religion. We find ourselves in a very strange situation today, as a result of the scientific movement in the last two centuries. Much of the Western world has turned into unbelievers and they feel that science and religion are forever enemies. And, I don't feel that way at all. In addition, I do not feel that way, I think, for reasons, which are purely "scientific"- scientific myth logically. I don't say that everything I say is true, and that it is scientific in the absolute sense, but there is not going to be any reference to religion, properly speaking, as religion, religious ideas or a pro-religion attitude in what I am going to say. I'm going to start exclusively from anthropological arguments and I'm going to try to show you that archaic religions - most religions that we know about are archaic religions, or of the 1,000 religions we know about, 999 are archaic religions, and we don't even know when they started, maybe hundreds of thousands of years ago. And I'm going to try to show to you that Christianity is related to them, which is one thing that science says, because science recognizes structural similarities - similarities of form - between archaic religion and Christianity.

But, it recognizes these similarities for the purpose of saying Christianity is only one archaic religion among others in myth of death and resurrection like there are so many in the world. And indeed, to a point, it is true and the structural similarities are really there. But I think they have an entirely different meaning from the one, which, until today, has been more or less taken for granted. So, in order to defend Christianity against its attackers from the standpoint of archaic religion, you have to talk about, first, these archaic religions. What are they? What do they mean? And we have to study them, and, of course, in order to be scientific about them, we must try to study their recurrent features, see what they have in common, and if we can interpret these common features and get to some significance of these religions that could be obtained purely scientifically.

This was the project of modern anthropology, which started about the middle of the 19th century with people like Tyler in England, then Roberts and Smith, Frazier, you've heard these names vaguely, but today they are not read too much. But these people regarded archaic religion in a way which interests me very much. They regarded it as a kind of riddle, because they had so many common features, it was a little bit like a puzzle. Can we reconstitute that puzzle? Can we see why these religions are there? Because these religions are - were - all over the world. And even the religions which we do not call "archaic", resemble them very much. And it's very easy to see how they are built: usually, there is a crisis to begin with - there is a community which is in a state of crisis - and then there comes a time when they find, they discover someone who is supposed to be responsible for that crisis. And this someone is going to be punished, usually killed, very often lynched collectively by the whole world, because he is supposed to be responsible for the crisis he or she (caused), and ultimately, that same individual becomes the god - the founding God of some cult. So there is something strange about these things but, what I am talking about really, I think, is a summary that can apply to hundreds and, if we knew more, thousands of them, probably. We don't know why. We don't know what it means. And the
tendency of the old anthropology (the old anthropology was very philosophical in a way; it came from the enlightenment; it was rationalism, and it wanted religion to be). The main thing was that it would be useless, pure superstition. Superstition means something which stands on top, like foam on top of the wave, but that means nothing. That's the way religion was seen. There is one good thing about the evolutionary movement, Darwin and all that, it's that they are aware that religions would not have lasted so long if they were useless - that they must have a function.

The socio-biologists, for instance, no longer talk like these old anthropologists. They don't say religion is just a story, which is non-sensical, because these people were looking for the truth but they couldn't find it because they didn't have any scientific method. This is not true. Religion is not about finding the truth. Archaic religions, they have myth, of course, but myth is about the local foundation of a cult. It's not an explanation of the universe. And the main things about these religions are rituals, sacrifices, and prohibitions. Therefore, the question is why that crisis? Then you find that character - a good example would be a myth that most of us know the Oedipus myth.

The Oedipus myth is an archaic myth - Greek myth, Roman myth, myths from India are the same type. The very stymie society of Polynesia, Indian America, and South America are that same sort - they are all over the world. So the question is why? At least the evolutionist will see religion must have a function. It must be "adaptive". Otherwise, it will have disappeared long ago. Useless institutions don't last - they are forgotten. Religion, this type of religion or types of religion that were pretty close to it, were probably already there in the days of these great caves with animals, the Lasco Schove, all these around the central mountains of France and some in Northern Spain, these great caves are between sixty and forty thousand years old, and probably they already had that same type of religion. Therefore, it is very superficial, probably, to say that these religions have no value to the societies that were there. That is what the old anthropology used to say, because they were inspired by the rationalism of the enlightenment of the 18th century, and religion had to be nonsense, that was the main thing.

If religion makes sense, what type of sense does it make? I think one can find that out. I'm going to have to go pretty fast there, because I don't have much time, and I have to get to Christianity, but in order to show the uniqueness of Christianity, I want to show it in relation to these religions, because to start with, religion - the gospels - if you look at the gospels, they are very close to that, in some ways, to the summary I gave to you, because you have a big crisis to begin with, which is the crisis of the Jewish state during the Roman occupation, before the year, and the Jewish state is going to disappear a few years after Christ. Hardly 35 years after Christ, Jerusalem is destroyed, and then 50 or 70 years later, the whole thing is finished. So you have a big crisis, and then you have a man who is accused, in a way, of being responsible for that crisis. That's what Jesus is accused of being. Jesus is accused of being responsible, for instance, by the high priest Calphas, who says if we don't do something about this man who is disrupting the community, the Romans will come and take over our state. It is better that one-man die and the whole people be saved - you know these words from the gospel of John. But this is very close to what I told you about these archaic religions. That's why these anthropologists of 1900, 1920, it went until...theories of religion continued to be produced until about 1950, the last one, probably, is Freud's theory in Total and Taboo.

Today there are no more of these, but I think there should be. I think there is something to find there. And, my own tendency is, for instance, today in front of the people who say that religion is responsible for conflict - this is a very fashionable view today - to say that religion is responsible for many wars, many modern conflicts today, we have more in Europe - this is a
very fashionable question today. But these people never ask themselves about man without religion. If man without religion would be more peaceful, they take for granted in a way, because they are still back in that enlightenment rationalism that man is fundamentally peaceful, and that religion is some kind of belief that permits us to fight each other when we have different religions. But, is man really peaceful? This is not a religious question I'm going to ask. I'm going to try to ask this question within a purely scientific framework. I really think one can show today that man - and this is what evolutionary theory is doing, and rightly, in a way - that man is more conflictual than most animal species. Animals have a tendency to fight each other when they don't know each other, and when they get acquainted. Usually they encounter a female, for instance, or food or territory, and they fight about it. If someone wants it, another animal wants it, and they are going to fight about it. And the specialists of animal life, the ethologists, call that dominance fights. And these dominance fights among animals are never very long, they are never very intense. They usually end with the surrender of the weaker animal who becomes the dominated animal and the victor becomes the dominant animal. Specialists of animal life today say that animals have societies - they use the word society - and that these societies are founded on dominance patterns that have a certain stability.

Now what about man? Why doesn't human society, why isn't it based on dominance patterns? I think that the reason is easy to find. When human beings are rivals about something, the weaker one, very often, will not surrender. Where the dominance fights among animals usually end with the surrender of the weaker animal, human beings have invented, probably very early in their evolution, something we call vengeance - revenge. Vengeance is not an institution; it's a custom. It's a way for human beings to act with each other. We all know about revenge. Revenge is when you suffer some ill, some violence, you want to do the same thing exactly to the man who has done that violence to you. You have to imitate his violence and return it to (him). We call it two reprisals. Revenge is a really strange institution, it becomes an institution because it goes beyond the two individuals concerned. In societies which have revenge (and they all do, in a sense), the family of the victim will take up the cause of that victim. So, if someone kills me, my brother will have to take vengeance against that man. And if my brother kills my murderer, someone of the other family will have to take (vengeance), and so forth and so forth. If vengeance is natural to man, which it seems to be, how come is there a humanity? Humanity should have destroyed itself completely because vengeance has no end. Vengeance is infinite.

Animals do not have vengeance. Animals forget. Or, if they have immediate vengeance — retaliation - if they may, sometimes - very rarely - kill each other, it will not extend to other members of the family. So what is vengeance? It is imitation. I think imitation is fundamental in man, and imitation used to be very important in philosophy and human thinking, in ancient times, for instance, for Plato and Aristotle, and also for the gospels - the imitation of Jesus. Imitation was absolutely a fundamental affair. We live in an individualistic world and we hate imitation, and we'd like to believe that we do not imitate. But, if we have vengeance, we certainly practice imitation more than we think, and I really think that, man, for instance, is not only mimetic (imitative), but is the most mimetic of all animals. What does it mean when you have these dominance fights, when you fight about the same object? I desire something, you imitate me and you desire the same thing. We become rivals, and where is that rivalry going to end? With animals, it's going to end pretty fast, with men, it won't. The violence will keep going, and through vengeance, will communicate each other to other members of the community, and will be endless. Therefore, one can conclude, theoretically, if what I say is
right, that humanity should not exist, that humanity should destroy itself before it is born. When the level of imitation, the intensity of imitation, the passion of imitation becomes so strong that there is no more surrender, that rivalry becomes lethal (rivalry is a form of imitation), everything should finally be destroyed. Therefore, something must happen at some point when one shifts (assuming the theory of evolution or Darwinism is true), in order to explain how an animal could become man, we have to account for the fact that it becomes more mimetic, because mimesis (imitation) is both violence, as I just showed to you, but its also the intelligence of man (the capacity to learn, it's apprenticeship, the capacity to imitate another individual who can do things that I cannot do). It is what we call education.

Therefore imitation, mimesis - we can use the Greek word - is both the best and the worst in human beings. It is the cause of rivalry, and it is the cause of intelligence. Therefore, man may be naturally more violent than animals because he is more intelligent. That the two go together, that the threshold of hominization would be the moment when the capacity for imitation, mimesis, becomes so great that dominance patterns, the animal-type of society, collapses and disappears. So these are assumptions, but they are based on something we know, something which is there, something which cannot be denied. People study imitation scientifically today, and they know that it is absolutely basic to the education of the infant, that infants at birth imitate. They even have deferred imitation of the smile of the mother. We know that imitation is there from the beginning, in a form which is much more intense and powerful than in animals. So, part of the difference between animals and men can probably be measured in terms of imitation. But, it creates something which is an obstacle to the birth of humanity, which is this violence. Intraspecific violence never lasts long among animals, and, as we know, human beings kill each other. When they kill, they kill mostly each other as a matter of fact, in war, etc. It has always been true. So what must happen?

So, I just talked a little about myth to begin with, and I said myth begins with a big crisis, which can be described in various ways. For instance, in the myth of Oedipus, we have a crisis at the beginning which is called the plague. But if you look at the plague, the Oedipus myth (I always pick that example because everybody, more or less, knows it; because we know it through the tragedy of Oedipus the king - the Sophocles tragedy). There is the plague in Thebes. Oedipus goes to Delphi and comes back with the oracle that says someone is responsible for that plague, and this someone is in the community, and this someone should be expelled, killed, destroyed, eliminated from the community, because the gods are mad at him because he has committed parasite and incest, and on top of that, he gives us the plague, so we have to get rid of him. He's a scoundrel. And he ends up as a god. Isn't that strange? That's what I told you before. He ends up as a god. What kind of god? A god of what? Of marriage, of course.

Archaic gods are always the gods of the laws they start by destroying, by breaking. The laws they break are the laws of which they become the guardians. This is an absolute rule. They transgress the law, they are punished, they are destroyed, and they become the gods of that very law. Very strange. But, I think it can be explained, and I think it can be explained by going back to what I said about human violence: if men are violent, in all communities, there will be crisis of vengeance, of violence, endless, which threaten the survival of the community. So, something must happen to stop this crisis, and these crises are pretty difficult to stop, since they are an endless circle of violence — vengeance - which spreads more and more to the entire
community. I think we can discover what it is about, and, of course, it's a guess at this present moment, but pretty soon, you will see that it will no longer be a guess. What can be the guess? If a community, which is disrupted by all sorts of conflicts - everybody is fighting against everybody - order has disappeared and chaos reigns. And suddenly, we have found a culprit. Everybody is going to unite against him, since in very archaic myths - in Australia, for instance, in Polynesia - it's always a lynching of that victim which re-establishes the peace. In Greece too, we have one of the greatest cycles of religion in Greece, the cycle of Dionysus, which is nothing but lynchings. And the classicists never talk about that. They never talk to you about the horribleness of these myths, which are all built on lynching; the order of the community is built on lynching. Just as we have Oedipus the king, we have the tragedy of the Bacchi where finally, it is the family of King Pantheus that kills him collectively, and it re-establishes the peace and order in the community, and therefore it's parallel to the Oedipus myth.

So, we always have the form of a community on a rampage, and that rampage ends with a single victim killed by everybody who agrees that he is responsible for everything. But, as soon as we say that, we realize it's not true. He's not responsible for everything. This individual, alone, who is responsible for the crisis of the entire community because he committed paraside (?) and incest - Mr. Freud took that very seriously, but I think he's completely crazy - because, even today, when you have riots, every policeman who really is specialized in crowd behavior, knows that crowds that are seriously agitated, will not go back to peace until they have a victim. And I really think that in all these myths, a moment comes when the mimic juice, which is there, the mimetic rivalry, tends to pearlize on fewer and fewer people, through some kind of ?, and finally, only one. Because, if you fight for objects, if everybody is rival for possessing objects, they will never get along. But in the course of the crisis I am talking about, these objects disappear, are broken, destroyed, devoured, and only antagonists are left. And when only antagonists are left, strangely enough, a crisis of this type can be solved. Why? Because when you have many people fighting each other, very quickly you'll have something that gets in there, which today we call politics. There will be alliances against one same antagonist, and these alliances will form instinctively. In other words, an entirely disrupted community will gradually coalesce against a single individual, and no one knows who this single individual will be because he is not chosen for objective reasons. He is chosen because of the mimetic contention which is working there. We know very well that a crowd on a rampage may kill anybody. We do not know ahead of schedule who is going to be the victim. And, there are signs in mythology, that the victim could be random in that sense. They are pretty ugly signs too. If you look at Greek mythology or all mythologies, you will discover that Hebrews and gods, who are always the victim of these myths, they very often have some kind of physical defect. For instance, Oedipus limps. Or they are foreigners - people who are not known by the community. Oedipus was born outside. Or they are very poor or very rich. They are out of the ordinary. They are noticeable. Oedipus is the king; he is a foreigner. So these are what I call preferential signs of victimization. When a crowd is on a rampage, it tends to focus on an individual because of signs that are very insignificant, but that attract the crowd. And as soon as it begins to happen, of course, the phenomenon becomes powerful.

So, if we look at myth, we will see that the heroes and heroines are usually, not always, it's not necessary, but they often have a special sign that designates them as victims. Then there is something strange in these myths - you have one victim who is accused of threatening a whole community, in all these myths - the community is always innocent because the community, when it kills that victim, defends itself against an enemy that is supposed to be
much more powerful. So, the community which is very numerous is supposed to be innocent, and the single victim is supposed to be guilty. Thebes is innocent, Oedipus is guilty. Thebes is innocent, Pantheus is guilty. You have a series of signs that suggest that the hero of a myth is really what we call a "scapegoat" - I say the word with hesitation because it's a cause of great misunderstanding about my theory. When we say scapegoat today, we don't mean the ritual anymore. We mean an individual in a crowd, who has been selected for no reason at all. Nevertheless, the entire group thinks that the individual is guilty. Today, there are psychologists who talk about scapegoats in the family. In a family with many children, one of them will always be responsible for everything. And they say it's a scapegoat phenomenon, not a ritual. It becomes a ritual, but the phenomenon is there first - the idea, which is shared by everybody, that this individual is guilty. If you're outside the group, you realize very well that this individual is no more guilty than the others. But, if you are inside the group, you don't see it. In other words, scapegoating is unconscious. I hate to use the word "unconscious" because immediately you think of Freud. Scapegoating is not conscious. In other words, that's the reason why we think that there are scapegoats all over the place. We say politics is scapegoating and nothing else. We see scapegoats all over the place today because we understand about scapegoats. But, has anyone made the experience of scapegoating himself? There is no subjective experience of scapegoating. All of you, like myself, have legitimate enemies, scoundrels who should be punished, we know quite a few of them, but we have no scapegoats. We don't have any innocent opponents. It's other people who have innocent opponents, but not us here in this room. No, no one has ever seen that. There is an incredible mystery there, which is a social mystery of enormous importance. We don't realize that the secret of society may be there, in the fact that we don't acknowledge our scapegoats. We are unable to. So, you understand my thesis?

My thesis is that a religious system begins with the scapegoating of the Oedipus type, the scapegoat is declared guilty of everything in the community, and as soon as it works, as the community unites against the scapegoat, kills the scapegoat (very often collectively, why so many lynchings in myth?). As soon as they find themselves without an opponent, they are reconciled. And who reconciles them? They know enough about themselves; they are modest enough, to know that they are not responsible for their reconciliation. They know how bad they are, and how much they love this god, and suddenly, they kill that victim. No more enemy. So they say, this character is very powerful for evil, and it hurt us badly, but it is also very powerful for good, and now it saves us. And, this individual becomes an archaic god. I say the archaic god is a "scapegoat". The archaic god is a scapegoat. So, you're going to tell me this is a guess, and this is a guess which is a little bit wild because there are so many things we cannot observe directly there, that it is difficult to see. It is a scientific hypothesis, yes, because I didn't use any metaphysical or religious idea to formulate that hypothesis. I use only possible facts; maybe these facts are not true, but anyway, they could be true. But where am I going to verify my hypothesis? Is it verifiable? Is there, maybe, a text that will show us the scapegoating process in a way which will make it obvious as a social process, and as a process that reconciles a community directly? In other words, is there a text that will say not what a myth says, which is enigmatic and false, but which now I have interpreted as a scapegoat phenomenon which is recounted by the scapegoaters themselves? Therefore, it is recounted with distortions, with a victim seeming guilty, and with a victim seeming divine, because it is recounted by the scapegoaters who have never, never perceived the error of their ways, and have created an archaic religion on this error. And the proof that they do...look at ritual, what is sacrifice?
Religions are essentially prohibitions and sacrifice. After a community is saved, in my hypothesis, it will be very happy, of course, and rejoice. But pretty soon, there will be a tendency for rivalry to come back. But, they will try to prevent this, and they will have what we call prohibitions. Prohibitions separate people, and prohibitions take all the people who have been rivals before and say we are going to separate them. For instance, brothers have a tendency to be rivals for girlfriends and wives. Well, we are going to force them to marry different girls. These are the systems of kinship in archaic societies. Well, you cannot marry the woman you want to marry, because immediately fifteen other people will want to marry her. You are forced to marry someone so that women will be attributed in such a way that there won't be any conflict in the community. And they will not be the women of your group anyway; they will be the women of another group. No group marries its own women, because it's too dangerous, I think. It's too much of a cause of conflict, so it's part of this very complex system of prohibition. But, sometimes prohibitions don't work, and people become rivals, and what happens there is that they have rituals. What is ritual? Killing a victim; Killing a victim chosen on purpose. For what purpose? To reconcile people. When prohibitions don't work, you sacrifice a victim. In other words, you use violence against violence. You try to deflect violence toward a non-important victim. So these are archaic systems. Where am I going to find the answer? Where am I going to find a pattern? You'll tell me impossible, it's nowhere. Well, I'll tell you immediately, you'll find it in the story, in the passion story. Look at the passion story.

The passion story, the crucifixion itself, the crucifixion of Christ is presented to us essentially as a bunch of people joining against Jesus. The clergy of Jerusalem first, but also the crowd that was favorable to Jesus a few days before, turns against Jesus. But we see the phenomenon itself in the crucifixion story, because, we see, for instance, that the contagion of violence, when a crowd is against an individual, if you enter that crowd, immediately you are against that individual too. And the proof of that is in the gospel, because we have the best disciple of Jesus, the one who normally should be the least likely to betray Jesus, who, simply because he follows Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest and finds himself in a crowd hostile to Jesus, as soon as he is there, he denies Jesus. The denial of Peter should not be interpreted as a psychological quirk of Peter, that Peter would be more easily influenced than we are. Not at all. Peter is chosen because he is the best disciple. He is the most faithful. And when he is in a crowd, he cannot defend himself; he has to follow the crowd. Pilot, why is Pilot presented as eager to save Jesus? I don't think it's in order to show this or that for ideological reasons (against the Jews, etc.). It's in order to show that even sovereign power, the crucifixion has to be decided by Pilot, and Pilot decides it, not because he wants to, but because he is afraid of the crowd. And he has good reason, because if the crowd goes on a rampage, he will be noted badly in Rome by his superiors, which is, as a matter of fact, he was fired, Pilot, when he came back to Rome. And probably, in part, because of the crucifixion. But the characters who are most mimetic in the passion story, most caricaturally mimetic, are the two thieves crucified with Christ. Since they are crucified with Christ, you would feel that they cannot follow the crowd, and that they would be with Jesus. That's what the good thief says to the other one in Luke. But in Matthew, the two thieves are against Jesus. Why? Because they want to join the crowd. Because the crowd becomes unanimous against Jesus, and Jesus has announced precisely that. He doesn't use "Jesus" terms like scapegoat, but there is a word for Jesus, which is used, which means exactly the same thing in a much nicer way.

The scapegoat was a goat, which was expelled on Yom Kippur, but for Jesus there is an expression which reminds us of the scapegoats and the sacrificial victims, but which emphasizes
the innocence of the victim, and it is the expression "the lamb of God". If Jesus is the Lamb of God, he is the innocent victim. He is precisely the scapegoat I'm talking about. It's just a nicer expression to say the same thing. As a matter of fact, all the sentences that Jesus used in order to talk about himself, talk about the phenomenon I'm talking about. It is the victim that is rejected by the others who becomes the founder of the community, and there is one sentence in particular that Jesus uses for himself, which says explicitly, which is "the stone that the builders rejected has become the keystone." He asks the people to listen to him, to interpret, and, of course, they don't answer. I think this sentence is perfectly interpretable. It is extremely meaningful, and, in a way, it is a sentence which comes from the Psalms, and which links the Old Testament to the New, which expresses the fact that the victim, the rejected victim, is the founder of the community. But practically everything Jesus says will tell you the same thing. When Jesus says, "I will die like the prophets before me," what does he mean? He means that many prophets have been persecuted. Why? Because they were saying unpopular things. Another preferential feature of victimization is to say the truth which is unpleasant to a community, and I will die like a prophet, if you look at the death of John the Baptist, who is regarded by prophets as the gospel, you will see it is the same story as the passion story, and curiously, the crowd phenomenon is the people who are at the banquet of Hera there, and what do they watch? They watch a mimetic spectacle. A dance, which was used in sacrifices to unite people against the victim, so I think that this Salame dancing has the same significance.

So you are going to tell me now, if you say this, aren't you going all the way with these anthropologists who said these myths and Christianity, are the same thing, same story, exactly the same value, how can you say that Christianity is unique? The more people see the similarities between the two, the less they are going to see the difference. And yet, the difference is absolutely evident, absolutely obvious, and we don't see it, and there should be a way to dramatize it, and I'm still looking for it because it is really at the heart of what I am talking about. But the fact that we don't see that difference shows how little Christian we are at the same time, and how unaware of social phenomenon [we are]. The difference is very, very simple. I told you before in the myths, the scapegoaters describe this phenomenon, which is foundational in communities, this murder, collective murder, and they describe it as if the victim were guilty, as if the victim had been condemned justly. This is a point of view which is present in the gospel, but it's not the point of view of the gospels. It's the point of view of the crowd. And, in the gospels only, you have the myth, which is what the crowd believes, and you have the truth, which is what a few disciples tell us. People don't see that in the gospels we have a comparison between the myth which is what the crowd says, believes, sees Jesus as guilty, deserving of death, and what the disciples of Jesus...the disciples of Jesus they didn't...why do they say the truth? Have they been able to find it by themselves? Are people able to resist that scapegoating? No. And the gospels show you that it's impossible, why? Because they show you that during the passion, there is not one individual to defend Jesus, only the women at the cross, but the women are not important socially, and it is only after the resurrection that a few disciples can come back. But, during the passion, it's not Judas only who is a traitor, but all the disciples who flee, move away. But there is a moment in which there is no truth at all in the world, which is the moment of the crucifixion and the death of Jesus. In other words, the gospels have a small dissident minority that comes after the fact and that is enlightened by the spirit and by Jesus himself, otherwise it would be absolutely impossible to tell the truth. In other words, the gospels, what do they do?
They overturn a history of religion, which is as old as mankind, which is probably more than 100,000 years old, and it is the same thing interpreted in a totally different way - with the victim innocent. In a trial, when someone is accused unjustly, the only important thing is whether you acknowledge or not the guilt or the innocence of the victim. And, if you view things that way, suddenly, you can see, scientifically, the incredible resemblances between all the religions of the universe, because all religions ultimately are centered around a murder, around a victim. But in all religions except in the gospels and many Jewish bible dramas, Old Testament dramas...if you look at Old Testament dramas, you will see that it's already the same thing, but in a less insistent way. If you take the Joseph story, for instance, who is Joseph? Joseph is the twelfth brother, the eleventh really. He's one of twelve brothers; all his brothers are against him. An archaic story would tell you that the brothers are right, and that Joseph is expelled for the right reason. Joseph, in Egypt, is expelled again; he's expelled a third time. Finally, he is victorious. If you take the Job story, the Job story is a myth that fails. Job has been idolized by his community for many years, and suddenly, the community is tired of him, just as they are tired of Jesus in the passion story. They turn against him, and the so-called friends of Job try to convince him that he is guilty and must confess. It's really the Moscow trial where they try to get the victim to agree with the accusers so that the community will be completely unified against Job. But whereas, in myth, Job would confess and Job would be regarded as guilty, in the story of Job, Job resists. If you take the second Isaiah, the suffering servant, you have the story of a prophet who is lynched by a mob, but it is the mob that speaks, and the mob has been repenting after the lynching, and saying we were wandering, we have lost the truth, etc., and which describes this lynching with pity for the prophet, which never happens in myth.

Myths are totally unified against the victim. Only in the Bible and in the gospels do you have the other side of the story. I think its the reason these religions are so unpopular, because what do they tell us? They tell us we are guilty, whereas in archaic religion, always man is innocent. Therefore, they talk much less about violence, and today, many anti-religious observers observe that, that there is more violence in the gospels in the description of the passion than there is in the Oedipus myth. But, the spiritual, the collective, the social violence which is there, undiscovered, present, and foundational for the community in the Oedipus myth is no longer present in the gospels. That's why the gospels may be a cause of disturbance for human society, of infinite agitation, because it makes impossible a certain type of peace, which is a selfish peace of the group which unites against the outside in a certain way, which becomes impossible in our world. In addition, if we are a world civilization, the reason in my view, is probably Christianity, which makes a certain closeness of human communities more and more impossible, even though we do not know that truth, that truth is certainly acting underneath upon us, without our being aware of it. The truth has not been formulated specifically, but it acts constantly upon us. It is not the same thing to worship an innocent victim; than to worship a god who is, both cruel and benevolent, but is morally unfathomable.

Well, I am going to stop here, and let you ask me some questions.

QUESTIONS

Audience Member: I'd like to ask you, do analysis from the ancient myths, the ancient times, with the current times by using this same methodology and imageries... doesn't it seem like we are constantly re-creating even today, that's of the human phenomenon and we do that through
this mimetic frenzy that's typical that's called violence. How do you find that we as mimetic creatures we tend to simply imitate and meet this through some misinformation campaign, maybe the white house, we create this archaic god - a scapegoat - and through some type of, creating of a scapegoat, and then by killing this scapegoat we can redeem ourselves and this ideal of mimetic frenzy and war, it is, in fact, this sort of religious ritual and we carry on that all the time. Do you see some kind of resemblance of truth in what's happening today?

Dr. Girard: Yes, I see some resemblance in what's happening today, but it doesn't happen in the same way. It doesn't become formalized as a social system, as a religious system. But, of course, we live in a world which is extremely complex because the influences that come from Christianity do not necessarily come from people who are formally Christian, and the reverse, for instance, doesn't necessarily come from people who are enemies of Christianity. It's a very complex thing. You can see that certain religious forces are acting upon us in a very deep and profound way. But, we are a combination of archaic features, which are in us. We all have desires of revenge; ambition of success, of domination, of being first. And our communities always have aspects of hostility to the outside, but much less strong than before. We must not sell short our community. After all, if you take private life in the Western world, there is no doubt, I think that we know that scientifically, that there is less violence today than there ever was in the past. But, at the same time, we are in a time of turmoil, because there is a tremendous effort on the part of everybody to prove some point. Everybody has a view about the subjects that I am talking about right now, and is trying to convince his fellow men that his view is right, and these debates are connected with the present situation. But I'm not sure if I understood the whole question, sir.

Audience Member: This religious analysis of anthropology? that applies to the in politics, and we being the most powerful nation, we have this incredible need to redeem ourselves by creating a scapegoat, this so-called archaic god, in this case the evil demon and...

Dr. Popich: I think what Dean is suggesting is that in what you might call "secular-political" terms, we have kind of re-invented in a political form what Rene has been referring to as the archaic myth of the victim, and the lynching, but that we have secular, non-religious forms of that particular phenomenon.

Dr. Girard: Yes. It's legitimate to talk about them, but we have to first see that most of the time, these forms are not directly lethal. It doesn't seem like much, but it is pretty important, I think. We scapegoat each other abundantly in our professions, in our jobs, in intellectual life, in our universities and so forth, and there are victims, no doubt. But, we don't have human or even animal sacrifice in a formal way. We use sacrificial metaphors when we talk about these things, which shows that we understand them to a certain extent, but at the same time, they are usually very bad and I'm not trying to condone them, but they are attenuated versions of the same thing.

Audience Member: Dr. Girard, I think Dr. is trying to perhaps suggest that we have re-masked the scapegoat in Sadaam Hussein

Dr. Girard: Oh yes. We always re-mask the scapegoat. It's the easiest thing to do in the world. And all of us do it just as well. And, we live in a world where...why do we talk about
scapegoats? This is the first thing to ask. Scapegoats, in the Bible, means only a ritual. It means simply re-doing the thing. When we say scapegoat, we understand what we are talking about. Therefore, my whole theory is just trying to explain why we shift from a first ritual meaning of scapegoat to a meaning we all understand, in other words, that communities are likely to mobilize themselves against one individual for reasons of contagion that have nothing to do with the guilt of that individual or they are very remote, but that there are scapegoat phenomena. Sometimes they are very complex because some elements of justice and of scapegoating can become embroiled with each other in such a way that the analysis is interminable and should not be attempted. But, at the same time, as a very general thing, we should see that in our world, in private life, it's much less. In archaic communities it was taking place at the level of clans and families, and it was tied to human sacrifice. We don't do that anymore. I think it's important to show the link in order to show our badness, because we don't want to improve the past, we want to improve ourselves. We want people to understand more and more, and they understand to a certain extent, therefore, there is still a lot to do. We have to be careful, too, that very often we use scapegoating as a weapon, because that's a thing which is the worst. You cannot accuse someone directly. You cannot say, "you look bad to me, I do not like the way you look, and I'm going to hit you." But, our favorite accusation is "you have scapegoats, therefore I have a right to be against you to prevent you from scapegoating others." We are always saving victims. We never persecute anyone, because if we persecute someone, we persecute in the name of rejecting the scapegoating of other people. But our own scapegoats - never. They don't exist. That's why it's better not to get into ideological talks, and it's very satisfying because it's a kind of substitute scapegoat satisfaction too, at the level of language. Language is very important to scapegoating. To scapegoat only through language is very superior to using weapons. Nevertheless, if we see it, we have a chance to stop doing it. Yes?

Audience member: If the Christian tradition is unique among the world's religions, as you have argued, is there an explanation for that? Why is the Judeo-Christian tradition different from all the others?

Dr. Girard: To be Christian oneself is to say there is no explanation, because if there is no explanation, maybe you'll find one. But, that's the indirect way transcendence can get into this. In other words, if there is no worldly explanation, there is a difference there that is hidden, which no one can see. On the contrary, theologians tell me, you don't realize that it's not archaic religions that scapegoat; it's Judaism and Christianity that are always talking about scapegoating. That's what Nietzsche did. That's the most horrible thing Nietzsche did. Nietzsche misunderstood, and thought that Christianity and Judaism were only matters of resentment. That's the worst possible thing. It's very profound because he's functioning at the level of the real substance of these religions. But, in order to indict, the one who reveals, because he doesn't realize that scapegoating must first be revealed, that no one knows about it. In other words, when Christianity overturns the archaic scheme, no one has ever realized that the archaic scheme was upside down, that it's not the single victim that threatens a community, it's the community that kills the single victim. It's not the single victim that's guilty and the community innocent; it's the community that's guilty and the single victim innocent, and so on and so forth. Only Judaism and Christianity can empower us to do that. This, I think, is unimpeachable. If you find a text that will allow you to do that, I would like to see it, but I'm pretty sure they don't exist.
Audience member: Just a follow-up...then you're not willing to suggest a historical explanation, something that links the development of this particular tradition to traditions... (lost in background noise)

Dr. Girard: Of course. This is a history. But I would go beyond what you've said. This isn't an history. It is the essence of history. If Christianity is what I think it is, God is responsible for the scapegoating religions, in a way. We must not scapegoat the scapegoat religions, because it's the scapegoat religions which brought us to a point where we can understand what we have been doing. So, in my view, all notion of original sin is linked to that. Now, it sounds pretty wild, and the theologians are not ready to accept that. But, it is absolutely essential that if there is a Christian meaning of history, it would be something like that. The whole theory is an effort not to justify history, but to understand that man is brought to that level and that no one is to be afraid of science, especially because evolution is necessary to make you understand this possibility. When we talk about the higher mammals, and the superiority of the mammals in connection with reptiles and so forth, we are always talking in terms of mimetic power, already imitation. Yes?

Audience member: You sort of shifted things a little bit to this evolutionary context you are speaking of. I wonder if...it seems to me that what distinguishes some of the heroes of these myths, is that they seem less susceptible to mimesis, they are saying things that the crowds don't say...

Dr. Girard: In the case of the baggle - you mean the prophets. Sure.

Audience member: Yes, exactly. I'm wondering if...it seems to me that there is a sort of range that if human beings are mimetic creatures that some of the less mimetic among us are the ones who tend to stand out and become other than ordinary and the more mimetic are the ones that group with a crowd, and maybe part of the evolutionary momentum that is guiding our awakening to these ideas that you have may have to do with how we confront the problem of mimesis.

Dr. Girard: Oh sure.

Audience member: ...and I'm just wondering how that fits with your ideas.

Dr. Girard: One thing one must not do is to be against mimesis. The modern world seems to rediscover. You see because Plato, Aristotle, Jesus...imitation is very important until the 19th century, when modern individualism becomes excessive, what it is now. They chase imitation. They don't want to hear about it. Today it's coming back in a certain way. But, it has to come back with the understanding...what Aristotle doesn't understand is that mimesis is conflictual. We feel that mimesis is a sheepish feeling, par excellence, we are proud of not being imitators. Mr. Heidiger, when he talks about inauthenticity and authenticity, the inauthentic people are always the mimetic people. Therefore, it always means I am not mimetic. And, one must not be against mimesis, because it's intelligence.

Audience member: I wanted to invite your comment, in a sense going forward, about two events in the passion that you did not mention. I've heard speak about it, but not the master. You spoke near the ending of your dialogue of an effect of Christianity that would perhaps lessen violence
and you would see less violence in a sense, but at the same time, a huge technological increase in which one or two acts of violence could be cataclysmic for the world. Two incidents in the Passion: the centurion, who is not powerless, the who have been marginalized at the cross, who isn't taken in, and says this is an innocent man, and I presume he walks away. Does he stay from the military? I don't know what happens to the centurion. He wasn't taken in, this was an innocent man and the antique mimesis in the wrong direction snapped, linking that to Peter's statement that his taking the sword lopping off an ear and Jesus' statement and later Cortillon's comment upon that of taking the sword and dying by the sword and Cortillon saying when Jesus unbuckled Peter, he unbuckled all. If you're looking for technology, militarism, at the same time the effect, presumably of the gospel through millennia, any comments on those events and the prognosis of the future based on these two events in the Passion?

Dr. Girard: The centurion is the gospel of Luke and that is very important in itself because the gospel of Luke is thereby the author of the acts of the apostle. The tradition is to say that it (the centurion) symbolizes the arrival of the gentiles, and the essential thing about Jesus is to recognize the innocence of Jesus. So, that's what it does. It's not in Mark; it's not in Matthew, and so forth. I'm not sure I really...mimesis is liberated by Christianity. Archaic communities are protected against themselves. If you want to open a piece of land to human activity, development, and so forth, you have to chase thousands of supernatural creatures and so forth. Therefore, there are barriers that prevent man from acting in a certain way. Therefore, you cannot say Christianity is responsible for technology, but Christianity removes those barriers, and is therefore, responsible for the immense development, but man is. And of course, man didn't have to create these weapons. Therefore, Christianity is not announcing that it brings peace. Christianity says I will separate the father from the mother...it's a quote from the Old Testament...but I will make everybody into enemies. I bring the sword and not peace. It says a sentence which is absolutely essential I think: All victims since the foundation of the world will land on this generation. In other words, man will become aware of what he has been doing. This will be the result of Christianity. And at the same time, you cannot say these things are pessimistic, but these things are literally apocalyptic. If you understand that man is naturally violent, that he needs sacrifices and religious barriers in order to limit that violence to make it less, Christianity is necessarily apocalyptic, in that it liberates the powers of man that are naturally going toward intraspecific destruction. Therefore, far from being outmoded as we hear, the apocalyptic texts are always present because every historical development suggests total destruction. And today, it suggests it more than ever.

Audience member: Are all human desires mimetic?

Dr. Girard: I would say I reserve the word desire for appetites, wishes, etc., which are intensified by mimetic competition. You know, the word desire wasn't used in classical times. There were words for sins, classifying them and so forth. The word desire is a modern word which is not fully defined. Freud tried to define it. I don't think he succeeded. I reserve the word desire for...but the appetites of an animal must already be mimetic since when an animal appropriates and thinks there is a tendency for the other to want the same thing, the gesture of appropriation. What is amazing is that the thinkers of imitation have never seen this. One has, who is the greatest political scientist - Hobbes. Hobbes says men fight about what they desire because they desire the same thing. Spinoza saw it too but didn't attach any importance to it. But the idea that
man is unruly and needs order, in Hobbes, is pretty much linked to that. Therefore, if I have a forerunner in political science, it's Hobbes, and Machiavelli to some extent. In Machiavelli you find things that go in the same direction. But politically correct political science will tell you that man is so good that he doesn't need any help.

Audience member: I'm interested in your statement...you said that the gospels are a source of infinite agitation. Is there a psychological power in asserting that the victim was innocent which is equal or corresponding to the psychological power that comes from saying he is guilty and is now dead?

Dr. Girard: Well, I think that the collective murder I am talking about is what the Greeks called catharsis - purification. We know a little bit about the psychology of Greek religion through Aristotle in the Poetics. Aristotle, in the Poetics, tells us the effect of tragedy. What is tragedy? Tragedy is retelling a myth; it's sacrificing the victim without killing the victim. It's the most incredible cultural invention and we must give credit to the Greeks when they deserve it. To invent a show that is like a sacrifice and that makes you peaceful...because, if you see, in Greek tragedy at the end, there is a moment where the hero must die because he's done bad things, he's been very powerful, and then the crowd says, "Oh, this is an incredibly interesting life but it's so much better not to be famous and we go back home, and we are going to drink wine and eat peacefully, and let's leave these heroes to their destruction." This is the moment where the community feels togetherness, which is the social moment of tragedy. That's what Aristotle says, I think, in the Poetics. Therefore, it's good, he says - sacrifice - and when we see movies today it's the same thing if they're not too violent. But, we always worry about the level of violence in our shows. What does it mean? There are some people that say that violence is good in spectacles because it makes people more peaceful. And there are people that say that violence is bad because it makes people more violent. The truth is that it does both things. It's a question of measure. It's the priests who know which victim to sacrifice. Today, violence is out of bounds in our shows. What does that mean? It means that the society is in trouble, that it needs more of the medicine. We can see that Hollywood today is a sacrificial machine; it doesn't kill victims, it doesn't look like a Greek temple. But, in a way, it's the same thing. At the same time, it may precisely unleash the violence it wants to prevent. There is one Greek tragedy, at least, which is the return of Heracles' omen. Heracles is so covered with the blood of his victims that when you get into the community, you must be cleaned, purified, with many sacrifices, just as if you decontaminate someone who has been in a radioactive place. That's the way it was in a Greek city - the warriors couldn't re-enter the city without being purified. Heracles starts sacrificing, and it doesn't work; he's just too bad, too violent at that moment, and he kills his entire family. So, the sacrifice has the opposite result, which shows what sacrifice is. So, it's a question of the right dosing. And, this is the art of religion in an archaic society, and the people who know, know very well what it means.

Yes?Audience Member: The? of ? Kaufman in his book ? which recounted the religion of ancient Israel, gave an answer to the uniqueness of the tradition of Israel. His understanding of this uniqueness was that the pagan religions, by large, tend to have a notion of deity which was rooted in the causive nexus. So, they have simultaneous, traditions of sacrifice and prayer, but also occult and positions, whereby getting access to the deities, they had. They were rooted in some kind of spittle, semen, or blood; they came back to form the nexus. The deity of Israel was ultimately a person...? Now, I think Nietzsche, he tended to adulate the ancient Hebrew tradition and was critical of the way it played into Christianity, which brought back pagan illness, and
really tended to discount the notion of pluralism. So, what I wanted to say...these victims, in a way, they also gain. Mimonedes makes a comment that Job was culpable in a certain way. He was culpable because he lacked a certain kind of wisdom - insight. His losses were all losses. So, my question to you...in the beginning, you made a statement that if we had more mimesis, ultimately, that would take us down to the bottom...

Dr. Girard: No, no, no. I didn't say that. I didn't say that all. I said a consciousness of it. But, Mimonedes' is a very profound theory of sacrifice, because he says that sacrifice is a crutch to mankind, but only a crutch, and that one should be able to do without it. But, that's one of the few things I remember about him. But, I agree with what you said.