
Anthropological and Religious Dimension of Sacrifice

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Nikola Bižaca, Jadranka Garmaz, *Preface* 5–15

One of the major topics that are still being discussed in religious and theological anthropology is the category of *sacrifice*. Starting from *The Religion of the Semites* (1989), written by the Scottish Protestant theologian and historian of religions W. Robertson Smith, up to now, comparative history of religions and religious phenomenology have offered many interpretations of the meaning of sacrifice in religions from archaic times to the present. Christian theology, which understandably has always dealt with the interpretation of sacrificial dimension of the passion and death of Christ, has formulated its interpretations in the last hundred years, to a greater or lesser extent, also through a dialogue with the results of historical-religious approaches to the phenomenon of sacrifice. Particular theological interest has always been awoken by the historical-phenomenological interpretations of the origin and meaning of sacrificial rites dealing with blood sacrifices. That it is so even today it is enough to throw a brief look at one important segment of current discussion about sacrifice. That applies to those historical-religious interpretations of blood sacrifice that really do encourage and inspire theological intensification of Christian understanding of sacrifice.

Let us mention the interpretation of blood sacrifices in the last decades given by the Swiss historian W. Burkert. Studying the meaning and developmental forms of sacrificial rites through history, starting from prehistoric times, he comes to the conclusion that “sacrificial killing is the fundamental

experience of the *holy*¹. In that famous statement the author undoubtedly summarizes several anthropological and historical facts. Because it is a historical fact that human development is largely the result of decisions made somewhere in the early stages of history “to kill in order to live”. Becoming carnivore, man has managed to make a decisive step away from his ancestors.² In the world of hunting, people realized that “life implied death i.e. that life rose from death”³. In accordance with that comprehensive logic of “life out of death”, the civilization of hunting introduced soon and to large extent the practice of blood sacrifice, the sacrifice of animals and in some places of people into man’s relationship with the holy.

In prehistoric time people wanted to establish communication with the world of supernatural beings and forces (gods) by sacrifices, they wanted to invoke their actions or respond to them. Blood sacrifices were most often the expression of individual or group’s fear before the coming disaster attributed to higher forces’ action i.e. to the wrath of the gods. The chosen sacrifice was expected to eliminate the realization of their threats of various disasters, i.e. to calm down their already present destructive effects. There is every indication that in archaic times by those sacrifices people tried to beg permission from “Lord of the Animals” to kill animals in hunting, indeed necessary to sustain life, to express gratitude to the supernatural for the catch and to pray for the release of guilt related to the killing of animals.⁴ These archaic rites of blood sacrificing certainly mediated fascination with blood as the bearer of life and often provoked ecstatic states among

¹ W. Burkert, *Homo necans. Interpretation altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen*, de Gruyter, Berlin – New York, 1997, p. 343.

² Cf. M. Eliade, *Storia delle credenze e delle idee religiose*, vol. 1, Sansoni Firenze, 1979, p. 15.

³ W. Burkert, *Antike Mysterine Funktionen und Gehalt*, C. H. Beck, München 1991, p. 94.

⁴ Cf. A. Quack, *Opfer*, in: F. König – H. Waldenfels, *Lexicon der Religionen*, Herder, Freiburg, 1988, p. 480; M. Eliade, *Storia delle credenze e delle idee religiose*, p. 25.

participants and symbolic identification with the divine (*Selbsvergottung*).⁵

The point here is that Burkert's interpretation of blood sacrifice implies the experience of a more or less transcendental sacredness where there exists communicative space in the sacrifice as well as the experience of the holy and precondition for the preservation of life. On the other hand, there is the well known repeatedly formulated R. Girard's theory of sacrifice which places in its centre understanding of sacrifice as a precondition for the functioning of the community. His interpretation ranges on the level of social and psychological prevalence in accordance with the tradition of French religious-sociological school which is, starting from E. Durkheim, prone to claim that the origin of religious images is the society itself which is so much superior to man that it causes in him the feelings of dependency, gratitude and awe. Thus, in Burkert's interpretation, sacrifice is on the point of establishing and maintaining religious relations i.e. neutralizing the wrath of the gods, while in Girard's understanding, sacrifice is in the service of neutralizing the human wrath.⁶ Namely, the mechanism of production of the *scapegoat* in archaic societies was aimed, as Girard holds, at overcoming the *mimetic violence* and, with the help of consecration of the sacrifice, creating conditions for harmonious coexistence without violence.

In recent decades an important segment of Catholic theology has considerably shaped its actualization of talk about sacrifice, Jesus' sacrifice, Eucharistic sacrifice, but also the believers' sacrifice, just through a more or less critical dialogue with the above interpretations of blood sacrifice. Objections have been raised to them, especially to R. Girard's interpretation, for excessively making connections between the archaic cult and blood sacrifice as if the notion of the *holy*

⁵ Cf. A. Hermann Pfandt, *Menschen, Tiere, Kürbisse, Die Meisten Gesellschaften und Religionen kennen Opfer – blutige und unblutige*, in: *Die moderne Sorge um die Opfer*, Bulletin DIJG, no.18 (autumn 2009), p. 33–37.

⁶ Cf. A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündenbock – Eucharistie*, Herder, Freiburg, 2011, p. 12–13.

were inseparably connected with the transgressive situations of violence. Namely, it has not been proved that, since the very beginnings of humankind, sacrifice could not have taken some other form, not only the blood form. Just opposite, it is easy to imagine some non-blood forms of archaic sacrificing. Because even in non-blood and non-violent sacrifices it is possible to express radical giving, essentially demanded in the experience of the *holy*. True, religious history of humankind has known blood sacrifices since the very beginnings, but also numerous cultures have experienced and practiced sacrificing as a peaceful expression of inner experience that does not necessarily take the forms of killing the living beings.⁷ So, one can often hear theologians say that Girardi, because of his one-sidedness, is partly blind when dealing with the breadth and diversity of spectrum of sacrificial phenomena through history.⁸

In this respect, what seems particularly actual in this recent theological discussion on the topic of sacrifice is the insisting on not infrequently neglected fact in the Church that, during the human religious history, sacrifice has more and more adopted the meaning of inner giving and commitment to God or gods, thus becoming a *spiritual sacrifice*, in Christianity but also outside the Christian church. This is a really long historical process that begins with a well known prophetic and psalmist⁹ criticism of sacrificing the tangible sacrifices, blood and non-blood, deprived of inner purity of heart and surrender of the believer's will to God. We are talking about an authentic *spiritual revolution* in the religious history of mankind, as A. Angenendt calls the process of internalization of sacrifice. This

⁷ Cf. R. Boyer, *L'esperienza del Sacro*, in: J. Ries (ed.), *Le origini e il problema dell'omo religiosus*, Jaca Book, Milan, 1989, p. 69–70. K. H. Menke also expresses skepticism towards exclusively one cause of sacrificial rites in religious history of mankind, as Girard claims: A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündenbock – Eucharistie*, 91.

⁸ Cf. Angenendt, speaks about the “narrowed concept of sacrifice”: A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündenbock – Eucharistie*, p. 93.

⁹ “Sacrifice gives you no pleasure... My sacrifice is this broken spirit; you will not scorn this crushed and broken heart.” (Ps 51,19)

gradual metamorphosis of the concept of sacrifice is also evident in Greek philosophical criticism of the sacrifice separated from the contributor's morality (Plato) which is also reflected in the belief of the Stoic Seneca that God wants to be honoured "not with the sacrifice and streams of blood, but with a pure heart and noble intent" and that only "virtuousness decides on the quality of sacrifice"¹⁰. That centuries-long religious process is also present in the New Testament. Here we primarily refer to Paul's speech on *thusia logike* (spiritual worship) in which we are called to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (Rom 12, 1).

Contemporary theological discussion on sacrifice convincingly and consistently reminds that the trend of internalization, i.e. of spiritualization of the perception of sacrifice, was gradually entering into theology and at the same time into Christian spirituality already in the time of early Christian generations. The idea of sacrifice was more and more seen as a life "testimony of truth", i.e. as an expression of self-sacrificing, radical social engagement, as a spiritual commitment. By that changed perception, great spiritual and social potential of giving oneself in serving was being freed.¹¹ Thus, in the area of Christianity, the increasingly emerging opinion was that the sacrifice pleasing to God was not primarily material offering, neither blood offering, but prayers and good deeds, cognition of God and fulfilment of his will. Therefore, the sacrifice of Christians cannot be reduced only to a worship celebration, but it is reasonable to describe it as a whole Christian existence completely offered to God and to neighbours.¹² Therefore, in the centre of sacrifice, understood in a Christian way, there is the logic of proexistential, sometimes even the most radical, self-giving/offering oneself to God and neighbour which, starting from within, from the heart, encompasses the totality of the human being and finds

¹⁰ A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündebock – Eucharistie*, p. 27.29.

¹¹ Cf. *Id.*, p. 121.

¹² Cf. *Id.*, p. 48.

its expression in the concrete situations of coexistence. This way of speaking is much more appropriate to the figure of Jesus' God of unconditional love than the way when speaking about sacrifice as giving reparation. After all, Joseph Ratzinger has already noted it in his post-council work *Introduction to Christianity* when he argues that many Christians are turning their backs on God just because they are being told about him as about God of "merciless justice". That God allegedly demanded human sacrifice, the sacrifice of his Son, to be given "infinite atonement" in that way. But, such a figure of God whose dark justice terrorizes people makes the Gospel message about God of love noncredible.¹³

However, major part of contemporary theology of sacrifice sees the sacrifice of Christ in the light of the mentioned *holistically* understood offering/sacrificing. Thereby it certainly does not stop at Girard's conviction that the death of Christ on the cross has revealed the mechanism of a "scapegoat" and that traditional sacrifices are basically masked violence. Neither is the current theological reflection on sacrifice happy with pointing to biblical foundation of sacrificial interpretation of Christ's death, which Girard questions anyway.¹⁴ It is well known that Girard repeatedly insists that Jesus died without subjecting himself to an "absurd sacrificial order". His death cannot be described as a violent sacrificial act offered to God for people, because Jesus dies that there are no sacrificial acts ever again, or sacrificing of others and use of violence. Jesus' violent but accepted death annuls the justification of mimetic violence and establishes the order of love.¹⁵ Unlike Girard, many in contemporary theology are rightly trying, consistent with the concept of sacrifice primarily as a spiritual sacrifice of complete dedication, to tie Christ's work of salvation to Jesus' entire life. The whole life of Jesus marked by kenosis is a gift

¹³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1970, p. 256.

¹⁴ Cf. A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündenbock – Eucharistie*, p. 96.

¹⁵ Cf. *Id.*, p. 17.19.

of himself to the Father and to people and by that it is also a saving testimony of God's unconditional love for people. Death on the Cross is a culmination of gradual growth of Jesus' double testimonial dedication in love as his response to the Father's mission. It represents the martyr radicalization of pro-existence of his existence caused by the contingent historical circumstances and brought to a climax. And then resurrection creates and opens a spiritual space in which people can shape their own life with Jesus and live it as the sacrifice of double spiritual commitment in the image of Jesus.

Jesus' death on the cross interpreted in this way does not lose its core-character. But unlike the traditional way of understanding sacrifice in religions, according to which man, more or less dramatically renouncing the things or even life, wants to propitiate the angry deity, i.e. to get something from him, according to this interpretation of Jesus' kenotic sacrificial history and death on the cross as the climax of offering, God himself comes down to meet people. So, Jesus shows himself as the one who shows people the way to their definitive life integrity.¹⁶

True, in the long history of mankind and even in recent history, there has been much abuse of sacrificing and willingness to sacrifice. In totalitarian regimes, in political and religious groups and movements, structured and inspired in a fundamentalist way, willingness to sacrifice is often encouraged due to the narrow goals and interests of the group. There has been almost a kind of "obsession with sacrifice". Talk about sacrifice has often encouraged readiness to take greater or lesser risks, to suffer violence but also to be ready to resort to violence. On this line of thinking there is also, among other things, the feminist and theological criticism of the traditional approach to Jesus' saving suffering on the cross, endured in obedient subjection to the Father's will. Such sacrificial-suffering interpretation of Jesus' act has, supposedly, promoted domestic violence and also, by its idealization of

¹⁶ Cf. J. Imbach, *Die Lehre vom Opfertod Jesu ist missverständlich*, *Joseph Imbach im Gespräch mit Ita Neuhaus*, (downloaded from the Internet on 24. 04. 2013: www.de/dkultur/sendungen/religionen/1442143).

suffering, legitimized social violence.¹⁷ As regards R. Girard, he also attributes to Christianity a certain degree of obsession with sacrificing. Namely, in his opinion, historical Christianity was not consistent to Jesus' logic of action which aspires to desacralization of mimetic sacrifice, degradation of sacrificial mentality which is always connected with more or less covert violence.¹⁸ This all resulted in the fact that in today's western world, and especially in Europe, a certain backlash from promoting the willingness for sacrifice has been affirmed in social discourse. So, nowadays, one can talk about a kind of "oblivion of sacrifice". Nevertheless, sacrifices are daily produced in various areas of life. Often without great excitements of those who make a good living. In that new situation the term sacrifice has semantically changed, previously denoting an active attitude of sacrificing motivated by ideals and today denoting those who are affected/ harmed by oppression of their rights, who are abused, humiliated and hurt by violence. All these recent sacrifices (i.e. victims) demand compensation, indemnification, recognition of status of a victim that gives them a certain psychological and even tangible advantage in everyday interest disputes and in distributions of power.¹⁹ Obviously, this is also an area of life that theology is called upon to discuss. It will do it in its effort to offer, in the light of appropriately interpreted Jesus' sacrifice, a vision of life which, far from any masochism or God the sadist who is eager for human suffering and sacrifices, provides plenty of legitimate and even necessary space for the sacrifice through which often passes the Easter transformation of human life.

Therefore, we hold that both Girard and the feminist theological criticism can be reasonably and convincingly referred to the positivism of willingness for sacrifice if sacrificing is not limited only to a separate act of a bloody martyr's

¹⁷ Cf. D. Srahm, *Vom Kreuz mit dem Kreuz. Feministische-kritische-Blicke auf die Kreuzestheologie. Vortrag in der Clarakirche Basel vom 3. April 2007* (downloaded from the Internet on 01. 06. 2013: www.doris-strhm.ch).

¹⁸ Cf. A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündebock – Eucharistie*, p. 19.

¹⁹ Cf. *Id.*, p. 130.

murder caused by violence and suffered from higher motives. The positivism of sacrifice will manifest if it is taken primarily as a process (history) of maturation, growth in love of God and neighbour in which man, on the model of Jesus Christ and aided by his spirit, becomes transparent to God's love, spread in our hearts. Naturally, that growth implies permanent renunciation of our own *small transcendences*, immediately satisfying, short-termed and motivated by individual interests; it also implies permanent keeping up of willingness for sacrifice. After all, although willingness for sacrifice can be abused, without it, it would be hard to imagine any kind of humanism, which is the basic precondition of social coexistence.²⁰

As much as some think that the category of sacrifice in contemporary theology has been tucked away at the edge of theological interests, i.e. that the entirety of human creative-salvific adventure can be theologically grasped even without that category, viewing the issue in the light of the foregoing, we don't think so. The alleged category of sacrifice would not be necessary since God in His revelation manifested as a merciful God who has irrevocably and unconditionally committed himself to man and whom we can always give our infinite trust, in life and in death.²¹ The above presented views and thoughts on the subject of sacrifice testify about the anthropological and specifically Christian-theological importance of the category of sacrifice.

Although we have presented, as much as space and methodology of writing prefaces allow, only a fragmentary sketch of a segment of current Christian reflection on the category of sacrifice, yet from the presented reflections one can indicate its anthropological and religious-theological importance as well as its complexity which, as in the past so too in the present, necessarily encourages numerous interpretations. That it is so, it was demonstrated at the last year's 18th International Conference held from 25–26 October

²⁰ Cf. *Id.*, p. 131.

²¹ Cf. K. von Stosch, *Abrahams Opfer. Eine Annäherung aus dem Gespräch von Judentum, Christentum und Islam*, Herder Korrespondenz, (4) 2013, p. 191.

2012 at the Catholic Theological Faculty, University of Split, on the topic: *Anthropological and Religious Dimension of Sacrifice*.

The lecturers at the conference come from several academic centres, so that their approaches to sacrifice are definitely marked by the theological and conceptual mentalities of the environments they work in, but at the same time the variety of their interpretations and approaches to sacrifice indicate the importance of the category of sacrifice in the self-perception of the Church and Christianity in general.

Taking into consideration the renaissance of the concept of sacrifice in the actual cultural-political debate, *Józef Niewiadomski*, in his lecture, is trying to offer an actualizing interpretation of the binomial of sacrifice and commitment. Doing so, he applies the interpretations and categories of the Innsbruck school of dramatic theology. According to the author's presentation, this school, born as the fruit of critical and creative encounter between the theory of sacrifice of R. Girard and R. Schwager and other Innsbruck theologians, makes it possible, surpassing, as it was on Golgotha, the sacralized necessity of any kind of violence and surpassing the sacrificial logic itself, to get to the theological concept of the image of God and to the relationship between God and the world which is more appropriate to Revelation. Also, the Innsbruck dramatic interpretation of Christ's sacrifice enables better understanding of the Eucharist as a participation in Christ's commitment which transforms all sacrificial human experiences and victimizations into a community of commitment to the God of love.

Carmelo Dotolo also critically considers the traditional religious logic of sacrifice. In his text he holds the view that sacrifice has traditionally and essentially structured religious experience. On the other hand, its correlation with violence offends human freedom and shows the face of an awful God. But, the sacrifice understood in such a way has been deconstructed in Christ, if, in Christ provided gratuitousness, giving and freedom, have simply emptied the inherited logic of sacrifice.

Further presentation of *Marijan Steiner* shows that the author starts from the traditional categories of sacrifice and applies them both to Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and to the Last Supper which he interprets as a "previous ritual execution of blood sacrifice on the cross" that merges with the image of feast.

Marijan Vugdelija dedicated his long study to the analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews which is one of the classical biblical sources essential for the formation of Christian understanding of Christ's adventure under the aspect of sacrifice. Studying the concept of sacrifice in the Bible as well as the meaning and structure of Christ's priesthood and his sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews, in his analysis he provides insight into the nature of Jesus' vicarious, priestly mediation of salvation.

Ante Akrap presents the functioning of the category of sacrifice in the context of the Jewish 20th century Holocaust. The deaths of so many innocent Jews create many difficulties in the process of understanding the image of good God involved in history. The author is trying, using different philosophical interpretations, the present anti-metaphysical view of the world as well as the Holocaust itself, to throw light upon the workings of God in the world of the Holocaust and similar evils, which ultimately remains "secret and mystery".

The text of *Goran Kardum* offers a psychological approach to sacrifice. He discusses the results of empirical researches. Using the knowledge of general psychology, as well as the knowledge of biological, developmental and social psychology, the text provides insights into the motivational structures of willingness for sacrifice which, if urged on by the "motive of accession", can promote happier and more stable relationships. An important conclusion of this work is also the statement of significant methodological insufficiencies of the very empirical researches, which is due to their neglect or insufficient investigation of the influence of religious motivations on the willingness for sacrifice.

The text of *Matthias Scharer* and *Jadranka Garmaz* offers a catechetical approach to the subject of sacrifice. In it the authors discuss the place and the way of presence of

the categories of sacrifice, of sacrificing and of solidarity with the victims of any kind, in the context of the Eucharist, First Communion catechesis in the area of Croatian and German-speaking countries.

At the end of the proceedings *Andelko Domazet* offers an analysis of understanding the sacrifice of Christ in the work of Benedict XVI *Jesus of Nazareth II*. In his personal reflections on the categories of sacrifice the author starts from Ratzinger's insight into the spiritual and existential understanding of sacrifice, but also discusses the contemporary theologians' belief that the idea of the atoning death does not originally come from Jesus and that the idea on reparation is incompatible with the New Testament image of God. He proposes a critical application of a religious-historical category of sacrifice in soteriology which, when describing the death of Jesus, can only have the analogical meaning.

Józef Niewiadomski, *Sacrifice and commitment in the interpretation of Innsbruck dramatic theology* 17–41
Original scientific paper

Summary

The article examines the current cultural, political and theological framework in the centre of which there is again the idea and issue of sacrifice. In the five-part conception the author first discusses the ambiguity of the idea of sacrifice in relation to problematic “mentality of sacrifice” in the Church and in theology, which cannot start the process of “transformation of sacrifice”, and consequently in that context polemics with J. Moltmann is presented. Then sacrifice is viewed within the anthropological perspective of René Girard who has put a challenge to Christian theology especially in the interpretation of Jesus’ commitment as transcendence of the archaic model of “sacrificial deity” and “pharmaceutical mechanism” of sacrifice. In the central part sacrifice and commitment in Innsbruck dramatic theology is presented, primarily in the works of R. Schwager, in which again the Song of God’s Servant is interpreted and a new interpretation of the relation World-Son-Father in Christ’s death on the cross is given. Interpreting the Golgotha event the author continues explaining his thesis that the victory over violence, and therefore the necessity of sacrifice, is the transcendence of the logic of making sacrifice just by God’s forgiveness and solidarity. The consequences of that event are manifested in a radically new relationship between God and the world, not as in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants where the culprits are killed, but in the image of the Resurrection of Christ which is the paradigm of the victory of love and renunciation of violence. The author suggests that such understanding of Christ’s sacrifice opens new possibilities for understanding the Eucharist sacrifice and participation in Chris’s sacrifice, which is illustrated in the film *The Ninth Day*. It is indicated that Innsbruck dramatic theology tends to theological perception of God, and we, just by Christ’s cross and forgiveness, have the right to believe in him as in God of love.

Carmelo Dotolo, *Gift and freedom. Christological
newness of sacrifice* 43–58
Original scientific paper

Summary

Sacrifice and offering sacrifice seems to be an essential structural element for the life itself and as such appropriate for presenting religious experience. At the same time, by its correlation with certain measure of violence and the picture associated with merit and renunciation, it offends human freedom and shapes a terrible face of the divine. But is it really so? And where is the possible newness of the gospel placed, since many interpreters hold that sacrifice is an essential mark of Christianity itself? If we read carefully the biblical text, we see that the Covenant is the historical context (*Sitz im Leben*) of sacrifice and that sacrifices have value if it leads to justice and good. It is, therefore, the change of style which, according to the New Testament, prefers charity to sacrifice.

Assumption that we want to make is that within the language of sacrifice, used to narrate the events related to Jesus Christ, there still hides a different meaning which reveals the voidance of the logic of sacrifice by the category of gift and freedom.

Marijan Steiner, *Christ's sacrifice on the cross
and on our altars* 59–81
Conference paper

Summary

The article deals with the relationship and connection between the death of Christ on the cross (sacrifice) and the Last Supper as its ritual anticipation and the Eucharist celebration which is a sacramental presentation of the Sacrifice of Calvary. The article starts with the general concept of sacrifice, pointing out that there is some connection between that concept in the history of religions, i.e. in the history of Judaism and

Christianity. The whole life of Jesus is to be understood as a path towards death on the cross, which is a united redemptive sacrifice for mankind. Jesus uses the words from the Last Supper “this is my body which will be given for you” and “this is my blood which will be poured out for you” in the sense of sacrifice. Thus his Last Supper with his disciples was a preceding ritual execution of blood sacrifice on the cross. The Last Supper was the long-awaited moment in which Jesus will give the order: “Do this as a memorial of me!” After that, just the implementation of what that moment means follows: death. Ideas about sacrifice and feast are forever fused at the Last Supper. That connection was developing throughout history, until finally the idea of sacrifice has walked into the idea of feasting itself. In the essence of Jesus’ sacrifice “for us” is that He is our food. To be given to Father and to be given to us – is one and the same reality for him.

Marijan Vugdelija, *The nature of Jesus’ priesthood
and his sacrifice according to
the Letter to the Hebrews* 83–174
Original scientific paper

Summary

The work essentially consists of two parts. In the first part the author gives basic information on sacrifices and their meaning in the Bible. In the second part, starting from the fixture of the Letter to the Hebrews, he brings to light the nature of Jesus’ priesthood and sacrifice.

The core idea of the Letter to the Hebrews is that Christians are not without their High Priest and sacrifices. That High Priest is Jesus Christ. The whole letter wants to show how he became a priest, which and what kind of sacrifice he offered, and brings to light the most important consequences for Christians arising from Christ in that role.

According to the Old Testament high priest was consecrated by the ritual sacrifice called *teleiosis*, which later enabled him to offer ritual sacrifices for the people (Heb 5,1).

In Christ's case, there is no ritual sacrifice of sanctification, but the existential transformation by means of a painful event taken over in prayer. That is Christ's teleiosis (cf. Heb 5,7-9), his priestly dedication and profound transformation of Christ's humanness. In that way he was "made perfect" (5,9; 7,28), ordained a priest. In his human nature he achieved perfection. That perfection is eternal now. It enabled him to become "High Priest for ever" (6,20; 7,16-17), a perfect Mediator between God and man.

Christ's existential transformation makes him a perfect mediator, "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him"; that makes any other sacrifice unnecessary. Christ was not ordained a priest to offer gifts and sacrifices afterwards (5,1). He became a perfect priest through the offering which was his own existential transformation. His unified offering is at the same time the sacrifice of priestly consecration, the sacrifice of atonement, the sacrifice of Covenant, the sacrifice of thanksgiving; therefore, his offering takes the place of all sacrifices, just because it realizes a true consecration of man, not ritual but real, not external but spiritual and total.

The author not only proves that Christ's death is a sacrifice but states that it is the only true sacrifice, because it is the only sacrifice that came to God. All others were only attempts of sacrificing, unsuccessful attempts. In Christ's death all conditions of the authentic sacrifice are realized. For the same reason Christ is a real priest, indeed the only true priest who has ever been, the only successful Mediator. His priesthood is not figurative, but real, and perfectly suits to all people's needs; people need high priest who is worthy of faith and gracious, brotherly united with them and admitted into the presence of God. The central theme of the Letter to the Hebrews is the Christological fulfilment of the Old Covenant priesthood and sacrifices that they offered. Presenting clearly the priestly nature of Christ's ministry, the Letter to the Hebrews has assisted in the whole process of other clarifications that have gradually realized. This includes the sacrificial and priestly understanding of Christian life. But one should always hold to the line of Christian fulfilment, keeping the Christian

specific understanding of sacrifice and priesthood. In Christ all divisions have been abolished. Christ has no need to seek sacrifice beyond himself; he offered himself (Heb 7,27; 9,24.25). Instead of sacrificing animals, he offered his own obedience to death (Heb 10,4–10). He did not ask symbolic ceremonies but took his own life. Thus, in Christ the difference between the sacrifice and priest has been abolished, as well as between the cult and life. That existential sacrifice, since it is the fulfilment of God's will, transforms Christ's humanness and unites it perfectly in God. Also, division between the priest and people is abolished, because Christ's sacrifice is the act of solidarity with people, to the point where he takes over their death of sinners, to save them.

Thanks to the sacrifice of Christ, barriers between people and God have been removed. Now everyone is invited to come closer to Christ, without fear. Now all believers have that right which was reserved for the high priest in ancient times. What is more, they have even greater privilege, as high priest himself was not allowed to freely enter the sanctuary, but only once a year at the time of solemn atonement at Yom Kippur (Lev 16,2; Heb 9,7). Now, on the contrary, all Christians enjoy that privilege. "So far then we have seen that, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith we are judged righteous and at peace with God..." (Rom 5,1–2). To use the terms of the Letter to the Hebrews: "In other words, brothers, through the blood of Jesus we have the right to enter the sanctuary." (Heb 19,19; cf. Eph 2,18).

Just because Jesus stood for us and lived for us, our life in relation to the other should also be guided and infused with this same spirit. Jesus was not the individual who wanted to get to his own perfection, but he lived only as the one who took over and carries the Self of all people. His entire life, acting and suffering were advocacy. The way how people should live, act and suffer is shown in him. It is therefore clear that advocacy is not an exclusively iconic term, but signifies a fundamental anthropological axiom. Therefore the advocacy must not be limited to the dying and death of Jesus, but must extend to his whole life and actions. It applies to all those who accept to go his way.

- Ante Akrap, *Holocaust – 20th century Golgotha?*
*Holocaust in the light of Jewish philosophical
and theological thought* 175–208
Original scientific paper

Summary

The interest of theology as well as of philosophy in the “issue of God” is evident. This issue primarily refers to the position of man in the world. Unlike the medieval cosmological-theological vision of the world, in which man is the centre of creation, modernism, moving away from any metaphysical principle, traces man’s path of absolutization and sacralization of the world, complete emancipation of reason and freedom, in which transcendence, denuded of its attributes and traditional values, loses ground in contemporary thinking. Horkheimer holds that the Holocaust (Auschwitz) is the extreme expression of Western illuminism which thinks that everything can be controlled by the power of human reason. The Holocaust victims call into question God and man alike, therefore theology and anthropology are two different aspects of approach to the same reality which we want to come up to in this work. After a phenomenological approach to the term “sacrifice”, in the second part we concentrate on Kierkegaard’s religious dialectics. Fear and trembling is a sign of God’s presence, but also a way of seeking the eschatological good. Buber rejects different variations that Kierkegaard deduces from the sacrifice of Isaac. He sees the picture of his people at the time of the Holocaust in the drama of the Old Testament Job and in that way rejects Kierkegaard’s metaphor of sacrificing Isaac. . The last part of this work deals with the efforts of Jewish philosophy in finding a new speech about God which is the consequence of his role and behaviour during the Holocaust. The headline itself “Holocaust – 20th century Golgotha?”, points to the words of Pope John Paul II, but also of Berlin rabbi Maybaum, in which we can read the thought that we can approach the problem of Holocaust from different positions, we can evaluate it differently, observe in the fold of different categories and

metaphors, but at the human level it will always remain secret and mystery raising the question on the role of God but also of man in the world.

Goran Kardum, *Perception of sacrifice in contemporary psychology* 209-238
Review

Summary

In this work we will try to consider the process of sacrificing from the aspect of empirical research and theoretical approaches that cannot be simply placed in general psychology but we need to draw knowledge from biological, developmental and social psychology. From the psychological point of view we point out the importance of distinguishing the active from the passive sacrifice and differentiating similar, but yet different behaviour – empathy, altruistic behaviour, help and nursing or care. Willingness to sacrifice and sacrificial behaviour are correlated with motivation where the importance of distinguishing the motive of accession and avoidance within social relations is emphasized. Those who are willing to sacrifice and who are guided by the motive of accession are happier over the long term and have stable relationships, both the one who sacrifices and the one for whom one sacrifices, unlike the individuals who make sacrifice in order to avoid bad consequences if they don't act in that way. Numerous empirical findings point out three important psychological processes: attachment, commitment and compassion that affect and moderate willingness to sacrifice. But, we certainly should not leave out of sight the neurobehavioral differences in the background of which there is higher or lower prevalence or dominance of inhibiting or activating electroencephalographic pattern of behaviour. However, almost all available studies are primarily focused on the relationships with loved ones (horizontal dimension) in which sacrifice is mainly viewed according to the model of gain and/or welfare and on the examining the impact of the mentioned processes on sacrificial

behaviour. Thereby religiosity and spirituality (vertical dimension) of willingness to sacrifice and sacrificial behaviour are disregarded, or insufficiently researched.

Matthias Scharer – Jadranka Garmaz, *The issue of relation to the sacrifice in the Eucharist catechesis in German and Croatian speaking countries* 239–266
Review

Summary

The article seeks to answer the following questions: Is the sacrifice a taboo topic in Eucharistic catechetical practice or there is still room for it in catechesis? The authors present the topic in four small chapters trying to view it from the context of Croatian and German speaking countries. In the first chapter, the issue of the Eucharistic, i.e. of the First Communion catechesis in German speaking countries is contextualized. In the second, some content, methodological and ecclesiastic guidelines of the First Communion catechesis in Croatia are presented. In the third chapter, the change of the Eucharistic-catechetical paradigm, on the basis of pictorial didactics of some Croatian and German catechism textbooks, is presented. In the fourth the necessary emphases of today's First Communion catechesis regarding the sacrifice, sacrificing and solidarity with the sacrificed of any kind are summarized. The method is screening and analytical with tendencies of synthesis.

Andelko Domazet, *Jesus' sacrificial journey. Theology of Christ death after Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth II.* 267–284
Preliminary communication

Summary

In this work, on the basis of the book *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope's understanding of sacrifice and particularly Jesus' sacrifice in terms of reparation and sacrifice, is analysed.

Reading the New Testament texts Pope concludes that by Jesus' death on the cross a religious-historical twist occurred. The starting point for spiritual and existential understanding of sacrifice is the New Testament speech about Jesus' obedience. . In the second part of the work we present Pope's reference to some contemporary theologians who think that the idea about atoning death does not come originally from Jesus and that the thought of reparation is incompatible with Jesus' image of God. In the final part the author of this work presents his own critical observations. Jesus' death should not be understood as a sacrifice by which one wants to propitiate God. Consequently the religious-historical idea of sacrifice must not be uncritically applied to Jesus' suffering and death. It is always a question of analogy. Reconciliation with God does not happen by some external actions and rituals, but this happens so that an individual changes his mind and opens himself to his own personal conversion.