

Preparation, Killing and Communion

An anthropological and scriptural exploration of male sacrifice, the priesthood, and the Christian nation

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Sacrifice is the oldest form of religious action.(7) It is the first recorded act of the first men born after the fall. It literally means “to make holy.” It is a defining liturgical practice of hunting tribes as well as a central ritual enactment in more urbanized pagan civilizations. Anthropologists of communal life and religious practice insist that the power to kill and respect for life need each other. Or as Paul wrote, “without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.”

In surveying cultural forms of sacrifice, three elements emerge:

- 1) A preparation or setting aside
- 2) A killing—often tabooed as “the unspeakable act”
- 3) Restitution and communion

Why sacrifice?

But why this ubiquitous act? G.K. Chesterton says the story of life is found in the recurring themes of fairy tales which he called “the ethics of Elfland”. One of Elfland’s ethics is that every fairy tale assumes there has been a catastrophe — a terrible shipwreck long ago. At a conference on the meaning of sacrifice in the Christian liturgy a questioner asked the panel why God needed sacrifice. If only the Trinity existed -- would there be sacrifice? If there had been no rebellion against the Trinitarian communion, there would be no need for sacrifice. Sacrifice has become a pivotal act in moral history because there has been a shipwreck.

The original *communio* was disrupted and it is important to remember that the first disruption was not by a human in a garden but by an angel in the heavens. Before there was matter and certainly before there were any human beings — there was a rending of the moral universe. We were created late in the middle of a great spiritual war and dropped in a protected garden at the edge of its battlefield. There is sacrifice because there has been a disruption of *communio*. Humans participate in sacrifice because we were alienated from the state of original communion when we sided with the Great Deceiver instead of the Living God.

A separation and a killing are necessary because original sin does not simply diminish our faculties. Original sin has left us in an actual state of captivity. Our first parents left the garden to enter imprisonment by a jailer who did not allow their offspring freedom just because the kids were “not old enough to sin.” Sacrifice is necessary because the world is in a certain

condition that only sacrifice can resolve. “Through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subjects to lifelong bondage.” (Hebrews2:15) The state of the world which requires sacrifice cannot be understood if all the actors in the drama are not named. If the Prince of Lies is a character who is real, then “sacred violence” is a category which cannot be dismissed.

The setting apart-the elect

The first element of every sacrifice is a separation - an election - a setting aside. This can be a setting aside of space — the garden, the ark, the mountaintop or the temple. It can be the setting aside of a special time - the morning or evening sacrifice, the weekly offerings or the yearly atonement. It is a setting aside of the spoken word by silence or the eating of flesh by fasting. Throughout scripture there is a setting aside of both victims to be sacrificed and a priesthood to do the sacrifice. First born males, whether animal or human, are picked out of the herd all the time. The Nazarite was set aside for God for a period of time. He abstained from hair cutting, wine drinking and touching the dead. (John the Baptist, Samuel, and Samson were all life-long Nazarites). The Jews are a people set aside - a chosen race. The sign of the covenant with Abraham was a selecting out of “every male among you” for circumcision. The Levites were selected out in the place of the first born males. “They are formally assigned to me from among the Israelites: I have taken them for myself in place of all the first issue of the womb, of all the first born of the Israelites. For every first born among the

Israelites, man as well as beast, is Mine.” **Num 8:16-17**

There must be a setting aside because life as we find it is profane and the purpose of sacrifice is to transcend life as we see it and restore sacred order. There is some thinking in Christian circles that the whole category of sacred and profane and the need for a “setting apart” has lost its meaning because of the Incarnation. Without engaging the whole argument here let us remember that in the last hundred years there have been three *ex cathedra* statements of the Church. Two of them are “setting aside” decrees and one establishes the authority to make such decrees.

The setting apart of the ultimate sacrificial priest and victim begins with the Ark in which he is carried. Mary was set apart in a spectacular sparing from both the stain of sin and the decay of death. From the moment of her conception to her last breath of earthly air, she spent no time a prisoner of the Evil One. And it may well be that for no better purpose nor future use is papal infallibility to be employed.

The Church through Peter countered the transgressive profanity of the modern age by authoritatively reminding man of “the setting aside of Mary” as the most personal and sacred of spaces who received our King and Savior. So assert the matured Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption.

And as if to balance Mary at the foot of the cross with John, the Holy Spirit manifested in the same age the apostolic witness of the ones who were to “behold thy Mother.” The Holy Spirit caused an ingathering of the males who have been set aside down through the ages to serve the priestly function of the apostolic Church. This time the sons of Levi did not skip the census – all the earth’s bishops were summoned to be counted. This body of celibate

men were drawn together in a single space within earshot of one another by the Holy Spirit in that great spiritual Pentecost of the First and Second Vatican Councils. The Church represented most fully by her bishops in council with the Petrine Bishop (all of whom have freely sacrificed their own offspring) once again answered God's ancient command: "You shall not put off the skimming of the first yield of your vats. You shall give me the first born among your sons." **Exod 22:28**

When men are set aside as a special group they can mimic one another's unbridled appetites and sink to the basest degeneracy. Adult males are also capable of loving some common good and uniting their protective instincts to cultivate some sacred space or corporate identity to be cherished in common. This is almost always identified as feminine—the country, the motherland, Lady Liberty, and in catholic culture—*Maria, anima* and *ecclesia*.

Man's affinity for degeneracy needs little reminder-- "locker room talk", the fraternity as animal house, the "gay bathhouse", the destructive mobs after soccer games, the bloodlust of the revolutionary French fraternity, the brutal systematic raping of the women of Berlin by the Red Army.

But what of the other capacity — certainly the sacramental goal of Catholic priestly culture. This capacity is hinted at by the stoics in which manly self discipline cultivates a sense of interiority where resides the human soul. The classic painting of the ideal of the French revolution was "The army of 500,000" - an all male army of free men protecting in their midst a female statue of France and a constitution written on two tablets of stone.

The all male priestly group at an altar (precisely because there is no female in their midst) has the capacity to elicit an interior space - the temple,

the tabernacle – the meeting place of the individual anima and the corporate ecclesia. It is the nature of the male group to turn all eyes outward (with priests - upward to the Father) and so encircle some protected inner sanctum.

Because the all-male group in its public ritual enactment is not linked to individual wives or offspring, there is a public and inclusive nature to the social protection offered. The all male group creates an interior space that socially protects the widow and the orphans as well as wives. This fraternity of fathers spiritually extends the father's welcoming arms to the prodigal son. This setting aside of the priestly males to create a tabernacle where God might dwell among us unites our memory of the Levites carrying the Ark to our experience of concelebration to our hope for the coming of the new Jerusalem.

While this setting aside of celibate males to establish an interior space where the human and Divine might communicate is one characteristic of the Catholic priesthood, there is another seldom contemplated dimension. Remember David encountering the priest and asking for food for his men, "Now then what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever is here. And the priest answered David, "I have no common bread at hand but there is holy bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women. And David answered the priest, 'of a truth women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy; even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?' So the priest gave him the Holy bread for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence..." **(I Samuel 21:3-6)**

David reminds us that preparing for war is also a setting aside - a making holy of the men before their sacred duties. Refraining from sexual contact with women is a preparatory act of war. Much later in Scripture we

find a similar band of men, “who have not defiled themselves with women.” They are introduced as the eventual conquerors of the beast and the dragon. John describes them: “Then I looked, and lo on Mount Zion stood the Lamb and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.” These men “sing a new song before the throne” that no one else could learn. “No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes: these have been redeemed from mankind as the first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found for they are spotless.”(Rev 14)

Again the setting aside of the first fruits, the first sons to follow him into the final battle in order to protect the woman who had fled into the wilderness after the dragon had “stood before the woman that he might devour her offspring when she brought it forth.”

Another reminder that it is often men shaped by battle who best cultivate the interior is the centurion’s gift to our liturgical life. Before we receive Our Lord we repeat the Roman soldier’s words, “Lord I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof.” Christ marveled at the faith of this man who was both subject to authority and who knew how to give orders.

It is no coincidence that a clerical culture of pacifists bred the sin of pederasty. Neither is it an accident that the Christ who suffered the little ones unto him chose fishermen as his companions and honored centurions as his heralds of faith. It is a centurion who, in the midst of Good Friday’s midday darkening, uttered the simple creed of the Triduum. And it was a soldier who was our Gentile forefather in faith leading many “from the east

and west to sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”. We come to that very table with the centurion’s words on our lips.

This then comprises the first element of sacrifice--- the election of the men, the setting apart—a setting aside of the men and then a setting apart of the interior space where events both terrible and holy shall occur.

Sacred Killing - the unspeakable act

In the anthropological study of sacrificial rituals it is the killing act that is most shrouded in mystery. Christians stutter too. How seldom we acknowledge that it is not a necessary evil but a necessary act which bloodies a nation’s sword. And who explains the blood drenched history not of Islam but of the Church herself. We speak here not of historical excesses of churchmen but of the event which defines us - the Paschal mystery. There is something about the sacred killing that is horrible, awful and awesome, seeming unspeakable and thus often spoken of in the impenetrable language of the last book in the Bible. But there is also a tradition of simple biblical clarity calling on the blood of the lamb — a clarity received more readily by “Christians of the South” than in the more antiseptic, less virile and pacifist North.

So let us speak of men and killing. Before we taste the wedding feast, there is a battle to be fought. Blood will be shed and priests will be in the middle of it. And if it happens that nations draw blood and the priests are excused from those duties, it is not because they are too holy to shed blood. The priests are being saved for the final killing of the definitive enemy of the

kingdom -- the horrible beast, wounded but not yet slain who sets nation against nation and a man against his brother. For he was a “murderer from the beginning” (**John 8:44**) and "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.”(**Genesis 9:6**)

When God spoke the ten words that bound Israel to Him He ordered them to worship Him above all others. He commanded an ordering of both language and time to honor Him. He then turned to relations among men and commanded filial piety to father and mother. His first command of human relations that steps outside the family was: “Thou Shalt not Kill.” So when we speak of killing there can be no nonchalance or historical perspective that lessens the gravity of every slaying. At the same time, there is no indication that the commandment was violated when the nation Israel engaged in wars under God’s order or priests executed men who violated the law. The picture that is drawn is of a nation continually at war to create a space where God’s name might be glorified. All the men even the slaves are implicated in the blood of the original covenant:

“This is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised; every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house, or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting

covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.

Genesis 17:10-14

Abraham was promised the land of Canaan. He would be the father of a multitude of nations. Later (**Gen 17:23-27**) he is circumcised with all his slaves and his first born son - Ishmael (mother: the Egyptian slave woman-Hagar). Abraham submits to circumcision at 99. Ishmael was 13. Isaac will be circumcised on the eighth day.

All males are marked for sacrifice. At the birth of Moses and the birth of Jesus -- all the Jewish males of their birth cohort are slaughtered. Israel is freed from slavery as the angel of death passes over their homes, but only at the bloody expense of a year old male lamb without blemish. For the Egyptians the cost was higher: every first born male -- whether of Pharaoh or of prisoners or of the cattle -- was taken.

The day the Israelites escaped from Egypt, God commanded that all first born males of man or beast be consecrated to him. He established the remembrance of the Passover and allowed slaves who had been circumcised to eat of the meal. Sojourners were not allowed to eat of the meal unless “all his males be circumcised then he may come near and keep it.”(**Exod 12:48**)

Just after God had told Moses that the slaying of the first born would be the final punishment for Pharaoh's hardened heart, God threatened Moses for not following the Abrahamic tradition. “The Lord encountered him at night camp and sought to kill him. So Zepporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched his leg and said, ‘you are truly a bridegroom of blood to me.’” His wife's fast action saved them. God had a claim on the males and spared them their young lives only if they were circumcised. But

this is still a marking for sacrificial duty - this will not be the end of the male blood oath.

When Moses descends from the mountain with the Ten Commandments and finds the calf and the dancing he asked, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Come to me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And there the Levitical priesthood was born with each man ordered ... “and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.” Three thousand men were slain. In a bloody ordination which cannot be insignificant for our own day, Moses said, “Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and his brother...” (**Exodus 32:26-29**)

The priesthood would not be a simple hereditary extension of kinship groups or private friendships. It was built on a radical ordering of male loyalty to God through Moses. Adult males must always be willing to sacrifice kinship bonds for obedience to God.

The Levites now took the place of the first born as the consecrated. In the book of Numbers, there was a census of the fighting men - counting all males over twenty. The Levites were not counted. All the other men were encamped in a circle under the standards of their father’s houses. But the Levites were in the center around the tabernacle of testimony. They were not counted in the males over twenty - these were counted because they constituted the nation’s fighting force - “every man able to go forth to war in Israel.” The Levites were charged with the tabernacle and its furnishings. While they did not fight in the outer perimeter they were still empowered

with lethal force. And if “anyone else comes near he shall be put to death.”

Numbers 1:51

Aaron and his sons were even closer to the center of the tabernacle in their prescribed duties. The desire to mimic a role that is not ours to play once again reared its head. Korah, the dissatisfied Levite, led a rebellion with “two hundred fifty leaders of the congregation chosen from the assembly - well known men”. These were able men, competent men, well regarded men. Their protest to Moses and Aaron has a familiar ring.

“You have gone too far! For all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord.” The next day after Moses warned men to depart from Korah “the ground under them opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households and all the men who belonged to

Korah...”(**Numbers 16:31**)

The Lord reaffirms the Aaronic high priesthood with the blooming of the rod of Aaron and the Lord reminds Aaron that priests will bear iniquity in connection with their ordination. He reiterates the lesson of Korah: “ I give you the priesthood as a gift and anyone else who comes near shall be put to death” (**Numbers 18**). So we have the picture of two corporate bodies of male warriors — one on the outside ready to do the wars of Israel and one on the inside ready to defend the tabernacle.

The same arrangement holds after the forty year desert experience in retribution against a cowardly generation of men who thought the giants in the land of Canaan were too formidable for the God of Israel. God waited for the generation who did not trust him to die and then allowed the crossing of

the Jordan into the Promised Land. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant but they are under the command of Joshua, the national leader, who is in communication with the God of History. While the priests tended the Living Presence of God among the people, it was Joshua who was given authority in the practical problems of entering and taking the Promised Land.

God authorized his command: “This day I will exalt you in the name of all Israel that they may know that as I was with Moses so I will be with you.” And so Joshua ordered the priests to approach the river Jordan and when their feet touched the river the waters walled up and the nation passed through the waters into the Promised Land... Then twelve men from all the tribes took twelve stones from the Jordan where the priests had stood and made a memorial. And the Lord said to Joshua “Command the priests who bear the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan.” **(Joshua 4)**

Once in the Promised Land, out came the flint stones and the circumcising of all the nation was done. Everyone who had come out of Egypt had been circumcised but this was a whole new generation born in the wanderings and now consecrated again.

When Joshua was by Jericho he lifted up his eyes. “Behold, a man stood before him with a drawn sword in his hand and Joshua went to him and said to him, ‘Are you with us or our adversaries?’ And he said, “No, but as commander of the army of the lord I have now come.” And Joshua fell to his face on the earth and worshipped and said to him, ‘what does my lord bid his servant?’ And the commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, ‘Put off your shoes from your feet for the place you stand is holy.’ ” **(Joshua 5:13)**

As General Eisenhower once said—“Never make war in anger. Go to war in prayer.” Once again Israel assembles itself with the armed men going first, the priests blowing trumpets and carrying the ark, and then an armed guard in the rear. Jericho is destroyed. Except for the harlot who had befriended the Israelites, the entire city “men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep and asses” met the sword. The sacred violence is not peripheral to the narrative but at the heart of the story.

But wasn't that the Old Testament? 1,300 years later, there is a new sacrifice outside the gates of Jerusalem on Golgotha's hill. Will the killing be reversed by the Father who offers his Son for sacrifice and the Son who freely assents to the killing? Will ordering Peter to put down the sword reverse the cycle of violence by assuming the unexpected posture of a suffering servant rather than a conquering King? Didn't this radical redefinition of a non-violent Messiah scatter his bewildered followers? To be washed in his blood, are we now absolved of all blood letting in the future?

For once in history, the ultimate alpha male did not exercise his prerogative. He suffered instead of inflicting pain. He healed the man wounded by his compatriot and allowed his men to flee. He even assented to the horrible separation from his Father when he took on the sins of the world and all the alienation they bespeak.

And yet that pacifist hope is not quite what happened. It was a centurion still armed who says “truly he was the son of God”. And when the temple veil is torn and the earth opens up, there is a fury, some violence occurs that we cannot see...

“...that is through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.” **Heb 2:14-15**

Jesus told Peter it would not be Jewish priests or Roman soldiers that he would fight. His kingdom was beyond their jurisdiction. They were not quite the proper foes. So he bore their infirmities and forgave them because they did not know what they were doing. But He knew what he was doing ... and His fury was a destroyer. “Dying, you destroyed our death.” says the Liturgy. He was killing. He killed death. He was drawing blood - not just his own. He wounded the horrible beast that now still flails, but the wound is mortal.

So, might we announce the killing of Satan on Holy Saturday even though the beast still prowls? We know that before Holy Saturday, the agony in the garden was not just a suffering by Christ but an “agon”— a contest -- the beginning of the Paschal struggle with the Evil One. And when Jesus was tempted in the garden, it was not to run from the battle but to wage it in his own way. Still, he conceded to His Father — “Not my will but Thine be done.” That Christic fiat initiated the mortal wound we know the Beast still carries, but for now seems healed. And we know that sometime in the future, “...behold a white horse. He who sat upon it is called faithful and true and in righteousness he judges and makes war... He is clad in a robe dipped in blood and the name by which he is known is the Word of God... And the armies of heaven followed him. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. . . .and then I saw an angel coming down from heaven...and he seized

the dragon, the ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan and bound him for a thousand years and threw him in a pit and shut it and sealed it over him that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a while. “...and when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth...but fire came down from heaven and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet were and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. ..then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This will be the second death - the lake of fire.” **(Revelation 19 & 20 read in the last days of the liturgical year).**

So there *is* a killing by the sacrificed one – an unspeakable act of killing - initiated with the struggle in the desert, climaxing during the crucifixion and resurrection, and to be conclusively completed in the last days. Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again -- all three of those statements are about killings — the sacrifice of Christ, the destroying of death, and the final slaying of Satan.

But still we have not faced the most unspeakable killing. For who really killed Christ? Because he freely accepted his death should we stop asking who killed him and just rename the act as self sacrificial love? Certainly Christ’s acceptance of unwarranted suffering was a revolutionary and transformative act. Certainly his absorption of violence commands imitation from Christians in both everyday life and more heroic acts of witness. And yet.. the event was not his alone. Who killed Christ? The Jews? They claimed more than a little responsibility, “Let his blood be upon us and upon our children.” The Roman soldiers? The eyewitness could not be more clear—scourging and crucifixion were Roman acts. Each one of us

with our sins? That is a well received tradition of the teaching church. Who was the authority who commanded his death? Was it Pilate? No matter how well he washed his hands he could have freed him and he sent him to his death. Yes there at the scene were all the guilty ones implicated in the death he freely allowed. There was Pilate and the Jews and the Romans and each of us but who sacrificed Christ? “Christ Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped...he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him...” Who killed Christ—who sacrificed Him? “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son...” **John 3:16**

Restitution and Communion

The anthropologist presents us several images of communion and restitution. He sees the hunting tribe foreswearing contact with females in preparation for the male bonding of the hunt leading to the kill and culminating in the eating of the flesh of the animal sacrificed. There may be certain parts of the animal which can be eaten by the hunters only. The remainder of the kill is available to the tribe back home.(4) Another notion is that when man was hunted by predator animals, he left the weak and wounded to keep the predator busy while the group escaped. Later in a ritualistic redramatization of this sacrificial death an animal is sacrificed and eaten to make communion with and apologize to the victim who died that the tribe might live.

It was no little cultural revolution when adult males—the strongest of the group built their honor code and status system on the willingness of the adult males to face the predator instead of throwing the weakest member to

be devoured while the tribe ran. The heroic warrior cultures maintained communion after the death of a hero by granting him a kind of immortality “by keeping his name on the lips of men.”

Christ’s sacrificial death was just such a cultural revolution except it occurred on a cosmic stage offset by an eternal background. What was restored is sonship. Adam was called to be the beloved son of God. He was destined to dominate the earth and engage the Evil One who prowled that earth. He never got out of the garden, falling in his first encounter with the enemy and leaving his descendants to make their way in enemy territory. Christ comes to reintegrate fallen man into a more perfect sonship which is his relationship to the Father in the Trinity. After the Son becomes man and takes on man’s alienated status (“becomes sin” as Paul says) Christ returns to the Father’s household sitting at His right hand. The Beloved Son’s return is a reconciliation with the Father not because of the Son’s rebellion but because he is bringing fallen sons (as adopted brothers) back into the household. The Son is returning to the Father now united in a new way with physical matter and human creation. He is both King of all creation and He is incorporating the “personalization of matter” into His one Body. This is a cosmic transformation of all matter hinted at in the Real Presence of the Eucharist. Christ is coming home to the Father after a painful separation and he is bringing friends home for the feast. (To fully appreciate these central Christian relationships one must forgo the spousal nuclear family as the icon of kinship. This is not a call to leave one’s wife or relinquish all spousal imagery. However the father’s household is organized around a different set of relationships than dad, mom and the kids. There is no more common -- good natured -- wrong headed error in the modern imagination. It

domesticates our understanding of Scripture, parish life, as well as the nature of the Church and the Kingdom of God.)

The primordial relationship which governs all of reality is a Loving Father and His obedient Son. This is not at all obvious if one depends on the psychology of Freud or the cosmogony of the ancient Greeks. Quite the contrary. Freud saw social relationships emerging from an original rebellion of a brotherhood of sons banding together to kill the father and gain sexual access to the females of the group. The Greeks original myths (Theogony of Hesiod 750BC) tell of Kronos plotting with his mother Gaia against the sky god, Ouranos, and castrating him. Kronos and his siblings, the Titans, will be overthrown by his son Zeus and his siblings, the Olympians. So much for filial piety and obedience deep in the Grecian ethos of man.

The obedience of the adult son to the father has a jaded past in human history but it is intrinsic to the Father and Son in the Trinity. To draw man back into this ordered relationship was the mission of Christ. To confuse and frustrate the rule of the father (to overthrow patriarchy) is the plan of Satan. Original Sin, said John Paul II, was a rebellion against fatherhood. Divine filiation then is a restoration of men to sonship under the Father by being united with Christ. When we say there is no male or female in Christ it is because both males and females are brought into sonship through Christ. We can say "Our Father" not because of our relationship with each other as his creatures but because we have been adopted by our incorporation in the beloved Son who is the only one who properly calls Him "my Father". The communion that is being restored by the paschal sacrifice then is a son to the father and the Son presents himself both as an incorporated body (the Church) and the King of kings ruling the nations. The Kingdom of God will be perfected when the light of the nations (the Church - Lumen Gentium)

and the nations are reconciled under Christ the King who returns all to the household of the Father. This will not be merely a historical political event, but a cosmic one. It will be a public event in salvation history with cosmic “weather events” as well as corporate national actors. It will not be everyone lining up as individuals and saying yea or nay to Jesus. The Second Coming is not simply a replay of all the deaths that went before. The Final Judgment is not a simple arithmetic addition of personal judgments. We are all going to be judged but something bigger - more cosmic, more corporate, and more historical will be occurring and the Catholic priesthood will have some crucial role in the drama.

“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” Pope Benedict (*Deus et Caritas*.)

If the Pope’s words are true of our encounter with Christ in history and the sacraments, imagine how much more earth shattering (and yes, frightening) will be the encounter in the end. Christ did not say “Be not afraid” because things are not scary.

The apostolic brotherhood – the communio stronger than death

The sacrificial death of Christ and the mortal wounding of the Beast allows a space on earth for the Kingdom of God to be instituted. “As my

Father loved me so have I loved you. A new commandment I give to you — love one another as I have loved you.”

It was a great shame to the men who loved Christ that when he was attacked they ran. He had denied them their usual way of fighting and they scattered. So what a relief that He returned and gave them another chance to show their courage and prove the loyalty that defines masculine fraternity.

The new Israel was a kingdom that was not of this world. It would have an entirely different orientation than the political kingdom they had envisioned. It would be centered on a miraculous fact which they witnessed - Christ's resurrection and it would predict a certain fact which He had promised -- His return as a King. To confirm their role as witnesses they would be sent special help that they did not have at the time of their first test. The Spirit would come to embolden them and spiritually unite them for their mission. They would definitely be warriors but now they could better see the horizon of the battlefield and the true enemy who they were called to confront. They were given the power to forgive sins and cast out demons. They were given the second chance of the soldier who has run from fire - a chance to requite himself at his brother's side in the face of the enemy. And with the Holy Spirit, this time the apostles do not fail. Almost all of them are martyred proclaiming the gospel.

Their spirit inspired Shakespeare 1600 years later:

“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers, For he to-day that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.”

They drank from the blood of the new covenant and the church was built on this brotherhood of sacrifice. The Twelve were constituted as a new Israel. So constituted, they define the public character of the church. (In Judaism, there were certain prayers that could only be performed by a public

body — a quorum of Jewish men - a minyan.(4) Throughout Jewish history — the men ordained as the leaders or representatives could and did act in the name of the body as a whole. The “men of Judah” selected David their leader and then later the “elders of Israel” confirmed the anointing by Samuel, which made David king.)

The Twelve still had work to do because on that Holy Saturday, Christ did not obliterate Satan. He rose from the dead and offered his friends a role in the hunt. St. Irenaeus taught that God had developed exactly the kind of world with just the proper amount of suffering and strife that was most conducive for soul maturation. The world he said was a veil for soul making. Participation in suffering and struggle was necessary for the task to be done. Christ allows men to complete his sacrifice – to add to its perfection by incorporating us in His definitive act. It may not have looked like it from a Roman coliseum or in a Communist gulag or the forests of Katyn or the Mexican persecutions, but we have been invited to participate in a clean up operation against an enemy already defeated. For a defeated enemy he has tortured and killed a lot of our people and that is to the shame of the nations who have not helped to bind his flaying tail. The tortured faithful Christians are martyrs who honor the church and give glory to Christ. But every innocent who dies by the tyrant is a shame to those of us who are given the duty of the nations. Every time a temple of God is desecrated it is a shame to those of who are charged with the walls of Jerusalem. Men who are born into strong nations should not be carefree about the salutary spiritual benefits of African and Asian martyrs.

The nature of the new communion which was made possible by Christ’s sacrifice is a love that lasts forever. It is a love that confers immortality. It is theosis -- becoming part of the love in the Trinity.

The first sacrament of this love is the priesthood which keeps Christ present in contemporary life. As Nancy Jay pointed out in her outstanding feminist critique of paternity and sacrifice — the males build a relationship which they say will replace giving life through a female. They invite young males to participate in the all-male ritual and then boast: The conjugal love with a woman will yield a body which can only live a lifetime...but join us and you will live forever.

Professor Jay describes this with a protest in her voice and at the end of her book she says in modern times no one believes this anymore. Sometimes the best way to describe something is by seeing the phenomenon as a true outsider. The feminist who finds this so incredulous has described the apostolic strategy in a far clearer language than any bishops' conference. This is because she employs sexual language if even to criticize. Christ is incomprehensible if one cannot explain the relationship of immortality to love. Christ has loved his all male band of apostles in a special way. This is irrefutable and it does the church no good for the bishops to speak a neutered language while the feminists and “queer theorists” offer their wounded critiques of the all-male same-sex relationship at the heart of the Church. The Church is built on the *philia* of adult men not the *eros* of an adult man and woman. That is a fact of salvation history and the sooner we embrace Christ's plan and stop apologizing for it the sooner the light will dispel the darkness.

There is also an “elect” in Christ's ordering of the loves. Christ loves his apostles in a way that those of us who are not bishops or priests or deacons do not share. The mystery of election continues through salvation history. All Christians are the beneficiaries of this new love that restores creation to the Father's household. We are incorporated by baptism. We

Catholics come closer in the Eucharist and are more specifically incorporated in a particular church under a local bishop in confirmation. Our sacramental life does not originate from baptism but from Holy Orders and the Eucharist which inextricably binds Christ and apostolic church. This communion of men at the heart of the church has been twisted by the foulest of tongues into some other perversion. This strikes at the core of the church because the church is about love because *Deus est caritas*.

The stammering of an all-male clergy in defending the masculine character of Christ's ordering of love is as troubling as the sick miscreants who have befouled the air with their accusations. It is as if we are amplifying Peter's bad night with the maidservant in the courtyard with thirty years of timorous churchmen being hectored by accusing feminists. Certainly Peter does not appreciate this reminder of his treacherous evening with this prolonged and pathetic replay. As if that is not enough the "scholarly queer theorists" now have offered their own sick twisting of the life of Christ. Especially their distortion of the father-son love which Jesus showed to John demonstrates again how closely linked are the malformations of homosexuality and incest. The great obedient filial love that John had for our Lord and the obvious attentiveness and listening heart he brought to the Fatherhood discourses in the 14th and 15th chapters of his gospel should inspire us all. Yet with hardly a whimper from churchmen this relationship becomes so contorted in the modern mind that a proper reception of the salvific meaning of apostolic brotherhood is seriously compromised.

Just as God called Israel his first born son (Exod 4:22) so Jesus looked on John, the apostolic church at the foot of the cross, and orders his beloved- "Son, behold thy mother." If we do not understand the love relationship which forms the church — the twelve stones upon which the city is built

then how will we know what protective love we have being baptized into.(2)

Pope Benedict described the relationship that instituted the Church: “The Lord has placed his hand on us. He expressed the meaning of such a gesture in the words: ‘I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father’ (John 15:15). I no longer call you servants, but friends: In these words one might even see the institution of the priesthood. The Lord makes us his friends: he entrusts everything to us; he entrusts himself, so that we can speak with his I, ‘in persona Christi capitis.’ What trust! He truly delivered himself into our hands.”

The Eucharist: Apostolic communio draws us into the Love of the Father

Anthropologists describe a community’s highest ritual as “a performative status act.” It is an act which ritually restores the proper relationship between the human and the divine. For Christians we would have to somehow be present for an act that reincorporates humanity in the love of the Trinity. Only by being present at the actual act which reinstated the proper relationship of God and man could we witness “the highest performative status act”. So is the paschal mystery - so is the Mass! Through the priest, we are joined in this act of the Trinity by being incorporated into the Son and allowed to hear, “I no longer call you slaves, but friends.”

Oratres fratres-Civic Friendship and the Christian nation

If my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight... (John 18:36)

The communion that has been restored between God and man is a return to sonship centered on Christ and the Twelve.⁽³⁾ As the Father loved Jesus, so Jesus loved them and commanded that they love one another. The church is engaged in battle establishing the kingdom of God and we fully expect that our priests bear the brunt of this spiritual battle. But in the world -- for now -- the sword of Peter is sheathed. The centurion however was not disarmed by his act of faith. As the Church has grown through the centuries, men who are shaped by the brotherhood of the church sought to baptize the two natural communities that men form — marriage/family and the city/nation^{5}

Early in the life of the church the sacramental monogamous male female character of marriage was confirmed. Ordering the life of men in public has been a bloodier dispute. The natural tendency of men to live in social community informs the Church's consistent teaching that men have an obligation to obey political authority, respect the Law, and militarily defend the country. At certain times of great social disorder, the church's own fellowship has superseded men's natural political society. This was not always bad in the short run and often was a great blessing. It invariably is bad in the long run but no one should be too facile in applying the bloody

lesson of church-state separation to failed states whose only form of social organization and protection may be a church diocese.

Most of the earth's map however is not of failed states. The map shows men bound together in territorial communities organizing their common life under some kind of authority/leader and ruled by some form of law within some territorial limit. Language, ethnicity and religious loyalty have all shaped the military configurations which ultimately settle border disputes and impose order. A significant determinant of communal identity becomes the shared memory of sacrifice and battlefield deaths that define a body politic – its meaning and the reaches of its borders.

Let us here consider an analogical resonance between church and nation which is inaccessible to the confused modern mind hostile to God and gender differences as a source of social obligation. Note this analogical approach is a difference in category from the rationalist notion that public ethics is applying “universal principles of social justice” to political life.

National identity is inscribed in men when there is a body of men prepared to sacrifice for and defend a corporate body. This is obviously strengthened when there is a shared memory of ancestors who have fought and died for such a corporate existence. Unlike the church, there is no guarantee that any nation shall live forever. The rise and the destruction of great cities, kingdoms and nations comprises a great deal of human history. Still the Church lives amidst the nations and the Church has been present for long enough that it has shaped not only herself but the corporate communities which surround her. The first covenant that God made with Abraham who was to be the father of a multitude of nations was marked by circumcision. Every male in the household was bound by the blood letting of circumcision.

These men and the duty to sacrifice for the whole people formed the outer circle of duty surrounding the other circles of the Law and the inner circle of the priestly service to the temple and God's presence. The Christian nation is likewise built on a brotherhood of civic friendship and military sacrifice which forms a fence around the law and the Church at worship. This fundamental bond of sacrificial loyalty (who sheds his blood with me this day shall be my brother) deeply resonates with the eternal brotherhood instituted by Christ (greater love than this hath no man but that he lay down his life for his friends). The national brotherhoods of sacrifice are "imperfect unions" that are limited in territorial authority and temporal duration. They are kingdoms of this world and yet under God.

Secular means "in this age". It does *not* necessarily mean atheistic. The development of armed corporate actors exercising the lethal force of the state and yet allowing the freedom of the Church has been a hard won victory in Christian history. Understanding our history in terms of the natural and religious fraternal roots of national existence will be indispensable as we formulate a response to the emerging brotherhoods of Islam. These natural territorial fraternities can provide the crucial social capital needed for the development of just nations in the Islamic cultures. These Islamic nations pose a significant obstacle for any definition of an Islamic ummah which considers territorial loyalties a non-Islamic social construct. This is analogous to one of the great lessons of the Cold War — whichever side could better harness the patriotism of national identity would win in that local theatre. The Islamic ummah without limits is encountering the independent nations of the Islamic world. The five most populous Islamic nations speak dominant languages other than Arabic. That

fact may be considerably more important in formulating a just foreign policy than principle III..c in a scholastic treatise on just war.

Jihadists of the non territorial ummah will consider **any** territorial definition of the State of Israel as an affront. It will view the unprotected Christian churches of the global south as an opportunity to advance. The Church whose founder clearly states that His kingdom is not of this world remains unarmed. The Christian nations who are of this world however must fulfill the obligations of those in civil authority — to employ force when necessary to insure justice. This is the vocation and the duty of the Christian nation—we are the fence around the temple, the armed men of Joshua surrounding the priests who carry the ark. It is essential that prudential judgment, not pacifist bias, determine the use of the Christian sword.

Likewise religious men must be aware of the hatred for religion that many secularists in Israel and the United States harbor toward Muslims. We cannot allow this to turn our nation's war against the jihadists into an all out war against Islam. For those of us educated by nuns, we have to turn a hard eye to the kind of bigotry that says a woman in a veil “doesn't fit in America”. We should also be careful with those libertarian Americans who see strip clubs and pornography as free speech but are offended by the public prayer of both Muslims or Christians. The Christian trumpet in the war against the jihadists and for the restoration of our own moral footing as a Christian nation has not yet been fully sounded.

That the church does not wield a sword does not make the sword ungodly. For while the priests blew the trumpets and carried the ark into the Promised Land, Joshua.. “lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, a man stood before him with a drawn sword in his hand and Joshua went to him

and said to him, Are you with us or our adversaries?' And he said, "No, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." The nation under God does not confuse its will with God's, but it wields its sword in fear and trembling with a willingness to repent when wrong but with no fear of fighting for the right.

On the day he was assassinated, John Kennedy had prepared these remarks:

"We in this country, in this generation, are -- by destiny rather than choice - - the watchmen on the walls of world freedom. We ask, therefore that we may be worthy of our strength with wisdom and restraint, and that we may achieve in our time the ancient vision of 'peace on earth, good will toward men.' That must always be our goal, and the righteousness of our cause must always underlie our strength. For as was written long ago: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain"

Now, as then, Christian nations face a dangerous world requiring a fighting faith and Christian leaders who understand the duties of the nations. For in the same breath that Christ defended the disarming of his Church, he recognized the sword of the nations.

Jesus answered , "My kingship is not of this world , if my kingship were of this world , my servants would fight...

There is deep confusion about the right ordering of Christian love and the proper public roles of men in both the fraternal nation and the apostolic brotherhood of the Church. The confusion began long ago when Satan could not imagine bowing to the Son of God. Since then he has waged a relentless

war against the Father and obedient sonship. The deceiver sharpens the sword of the confused heretic as he blunts the protective sword of the nation by perverting the order of the Church. Unable to win a fight in open battle he slips behind the lines to confuse the love of the brotherhood Christ instituted to carry his presence in the world. The command to sacrifice is for every age – a separation, a killing, and a restoration of communion. To separate ourselves from the confused death culture which protects abortion, honors sodomy and strengthens our jihadist enemies abroad, we must extract the feminist implant from the Christian’s brain and remove the atheistic cataract from our nation’s eyes. We must be willing to destroy the Destroyer by killing his executioners. The Lord will keep our city and the watchman shall not watch in vain when with no apology or faltering voice we restore the brotherhood of courage that girds both our Church and nation.(6)

Notes

1) This essay is built on a variety of anthropological works and scriptural expositions. I have not deliberately stolen sentences but nothing here is original. I have absorbed the works in the bibliography and attended the “Letter and Spirit Conference on Love and Sacrifice” by the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology in Pittsburgh, Oct. 27-28, 2006. This unique gathering of disciplines by Dr. Scott Hahn allowed a face-to-face oral tradition to inform a new equally impressive text. Professor Hahn and managing editor David Scott have produced an ingenious combination of classics and new articles in *Letter and Spirit* – a yearly journal dedicated to scripture theology and liturgy. It was a rich experience and this essay is a response to the event. The lectures by Dr. Tim Gray on *The Todah and the Eucharist* and by Dr. Brant Pitre on *Jesus and the new Priesthood* were especially inspiring. At the conference I rather incoherently complained that for a Catholic understanding of sacrificial liturgy there was way too much spousal and familial imagery and not enough priestly “blood oath of the warrior band.” The last night’s liturgy with the altar filled with the apostolic brotherhood was a better comment than any I made. (As someone very sympathetic to a generous renewal of the Tridentine mass, I am struck how much more conducive the Novus Ordo is to both the proclamation of the word and the iconic power of apostolic concelebration.) This reflection is sent in appreciation to David Scott and in hopes to Dr. Brad Pitre that he might utilize approaches he may not otherwise consider in his scriptural work on the Catholic priesthood. I have tried to bring the insights of religious sociology, the anthropology of male groups, the anthropology of sacrifice and violence and my own reading of Scripture to this question.

2) Have we been reduced to the bizarre contention that the Catholic Church is a two thousand year old front for a gay adoption agency? It makes one yearn for the *DaVinci Code*.

3) a) *Benedict on the Twelve*

“An evident sign of the Nazarene's intention to gather together the community of the covenant in order to manifest in it the fulfillment of the promises made to the forefathers, who always speak of summoning, unification and unity, is the institution of the Twelve. We have heard the Gospel of the institution of the Twelve.

I now reread the central passage: "He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons: He appointed the twelve ..." (Mark 3:13-16; cf. Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16).

In the place of the revelation, "the mountain," with an initiative that manifests absolute awareness and determination, Jesus constitutes the Twelve so that they might be witnesses and heralds with him of the arrival of the Kingdom of God. There is no room for doubt concerning the historical character of this call, not only because of the antiquity and multiplicity of testimonies but also because of the simple fact that the name of the Apostle Judas, the traitor, appears despite the difficulties that including his name could imply for the incipient community.

The number 12, which evidently refers to the 12 tribes of Israel, reveals the meaning of the prophetic-symbolic action implied in the new initiative of founding the holy people again. After the downfall of the system of the 12 tribes, Israel awaited the reconstruction of this system as a sign of the arrival of the eschatological time (this can be read in the conclusion of the Book of Ezekiel 37:15-19; 39:23-29; 40-48).

By choosing the Twelve, introducing them into a communion of life with him and making them sharers in the same mission of announcing the Kingdom with words and deeds (cf. Mark 6:7-13; Matthew 10:5-8; Luke 9:1-6; 6:13), Jesus wants to say that the definitive time has arrived; the time for rebuilding God's people, the people of the 12 tribes, which is now converted into a universal people, his Church. **(Pope Benedict; Wednesday Audience, 3/15/06 beginning his catechesis on the apostolic nature of the Church. This talk entitled - Church: The presence of Christ among men.)**

b) Israel as first born son

“I fell in love with Israel
When he was still a child
And I have called (him) My son
Ever since Egypt” (Hos 11: 1)

For I am ever a Father to Israel,
Ephraim is my first born. (Jer31: 7-9)

4) Dr. Tim Gray's talk on Todah at the Love and Sacrifice conference is deeply implicated in the argument here but I am not able to integrate his insights in my text. I am remembering Gray's talk two months later without notes. He presented the Eucharist as a kind of Todah with these similar characteristics: a) as a public prayer (requiring a minyan — ten Jewish men), b) as dealing with a life and death matter, c) as a remembrance of the deeds of God and d) as a type of sacrifice meal which the whole congregation could share in. e) as a prayer only to God.

I would only comment on the relationship of the public nature of the service and the inclusion of the whole congregation in the sacrificial meal. I think of the priesthood as a sort of walking minyan dedicated only to God the Father. The priest in collar is often considered *in persona Christi*. Can we also think of him as belonging to the Twelve — as a corporate member of the public body who represents the whole people. As well as the individualistic “priest as Christ” identity which is a true part of his character, we might also see him in his communal identity as a member of the Twelve. It is in that capacity at the liturgy that the priest represents the whole Church — the priest is a walking minyan not because he is leading a congregation but because he is sacramentally tied to his fellow priests and bishop who is tied to his fellow bishops and the pope who are tied to Peter and the apostles.

The fact that children and women are brought into both Baptism and the Eucharistic meal is a fundamental liturgical statement about their liberated status in the Church — but it is not what many of our feminist, egalitarian or anticlerical friends contend. (I mean “status” here without connotations of self seeking but as one's rightful place in the ordered community.)

5) For all the talk of the Church's "rich tradition of social teaching" there is a dearth of reflections about the nature of the nation which along with family is considered by the church a "natural community." The Church indeed has been an opponent of many national movements including the early development of the Italian state. These positions have often been born of practical defenses of institutional prerogatives. The Philippine Bishops are one body which has written a more reflective statement about the nation as a form of public life. Pope John Paul II was striking as both a faithful pope and an ardent patriot of a nation he unabashedly loved. In his book Memory and Identity he talked about "not a theory but a witness" of his own nation-Poland. He noted that "the nation is a community of men united by ties above all of culture... the nation is the great educator of men of community and it possess a history which goes beyond the history of the family and individual." He recounts Polish military battles and he considers military deaths to be sacrifices for the common good. He recounts as Pope the response of peoples in Africa and Asia to his discussion of the importance of national culture and the hesitancy of Europeans to embrace the same vocabulary. He suspects of Europe a "post nationalist" sentiment but he says that is only possible because the French, Germans, and Italians do not imagine their European Union will really abolish their national identities. Pope Benedict XVI seems more in search of a Christian Europe than a defender of his particular homeland. These two popes reinforce the suspicion that papal encyclicals about the "social questions" are often the most biography dependent and age worn of all church utterances. The Church increases her authority and accentuates her own unique role as the Lumen Gentium by recognizing these limits of her competence. She rightly concedes as did Our Lord the limited but significant authority borne by

religious patriots who hold public offices of civic authority. It should be obvious to faithful Catholics as well as men of good will that when the Church is confronted with the two natural communities of nation and marriage she speaks with much more authority about the sacramental nature of marriage than when she reflects on the right ordering of the nations.

6) The nation is the fence around the temple. It is the men in arms who keep the sacred goods of worship, free speech and labor, family and property inside the homeland safe from the crush of the world without. Chesterton explained this best and if you have a friend who cannot read all these pages to be reminded of the nature of the nation -- refer him to footnote 6.

From Orthodoxy:

“Go back to the darkest roots of civilization, and you will find cities knotted around some sacred stone or encircling some sacred well. People first paid honor to a spot and afterwards gained glory for it. Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because men loved her. In so far as theories of social contract meant that there is at the back of all historical government an idea of content and cooperation, they were demonstrably right. But they really were wrong that men ever aimed at order or ethics by a conscious exchange of interests. Morality did not begin by one man saying to another, “I will not hit you if you do not hit me.” There is no trace of such a transaction. There is a trace of both men having said, “we must not hit each other in the holy place.” They gained their morality by guarding their religion. They did not cultivate courage. They fought for their shrine and found they had become courageous. They did not cultivate cleanliness, they purified themselves for their altar and found that they were clean. The history of the Jews is the only early document known to most Englishmen and the facts can be judged sufficiently from that. The Ten Commandments which have been found substantially common to mankind were merely military commands; a code of regimental orders, issued to protect a certain ark across a certain desert. Anarchy was evil because it endangered the sanctity. And only when they made a holy day for God did they find that they had made a holiday for men. “

7) **A Tribal Tale of Sacrifice and Salvation History:
 The Elect, the Killing, the Communion**

The Father God set aside a garden on the earth in a warring world. In the garden he set aside man in his image to order the cosmos by killing the Evil One who was Chaos. But man fell to the dragon. Then the Father set aside his Son and sacrificed Him against the teeth of the dragon to free men from bondage and win a foothold on the earth. His Son speared the dragon and circled spaces where the dragon could never rule. The freedmen were set apart as a royal priesthood to forgive sins and cast out demons in preparation for the final Sacrifice. In the end, the Priest-King will come for the Final Sacrifice. No more will our lambs and sons be fed to the one who prowls. The Beast shall be the Victim. Justice will be restored by the killing of the Evil One and the twisted ones who served him. There will be great feast and it shall last forever.

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