

(142) "WHICH IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE MIMETIC MODEL?"

AND/OR

"WE LIKE THE MODEL, BUT IT IS NOT IN THE GOSPEL."

Both the question is put and the remark is made by people, participating in group-work in Northern Ireland. In this paper I try to give an answer to the question and to give some reactions on the remark.

1. Which is the importance of the Gospel for the mimetic model?

Very generally, without the Gospel probably the mimetic model would not exist, we till would not know, in any case not that clearly, who we are, desiring, violent, hypocritical people. Culture has resisted as good and as violent as it was able to, all humans together have resisted in that manner, in order to prevent that the insights of the Gospel really would become clear. Accepting the insights of the Gospel would mean the very end of this culture and the beginning of the Kingdom of God. It would mean that our hypocrisy, our desiring and our violence would really come to the open. That our life would change fundamentally. We are very afraid of that and at least in a way with very good reasons.

Culture always warded its violence off with rituals, myths, prohibitions. When culture developed, became more complicated, when it became less able to perform rituals for the whole of the group involved, the arts, especially the performing arts and epos, became more and more important as the pre-eminent ritual to ward violence off, to eject it out of the cultural realm

Because of the influence of the insights of the Gospel, and, in the same time the growing intricacy of culture, it became more and more impossible for the arts to perform its, so extremely important cultural task. The own cultural violence became too big, too threatening. If the arts would go on "to mix the sacred with the profane", to bring the sacred into the profane, as is always done in ritual and consequently done in drama and epos, in order to drive the sacred, the violence out, it would, instead, provoke the violence. It was not any longer possible for them to manage the violence. Instead of driving it out, it got overwhelmed by it. Thus from the XIVth century on there came big hesitations about the arts, doing this age-old job.

It was the time in which the gun-powder was discovered and used (according to tradition by a monk, amidst of the sacred). Violence was rising and became more threatening. Thus we had, culture had as a task, to find another device. It was again another ritual, the sciences. In the sciences we tried and try to demythologise everything around us, to get hold of everything in order to protect ourselves against the inherent violence around us, which in fact in the end is our own violence. The sciences are the most elaborated answer of culture to its fears for its own violence, which becomes less and less controllable. The last step of course was the nuclear weapons, carrying the names of the old violent gods, made to ward off violence. Driving the devil out with Beelzebub. It is clear that now, in a sense at the end of the road the means becomes as dangerous as the illness. The violence of science, which now threatens to destroy everything on earth became as deadly as the original violence, on which it was intended to be an answer.

The sciences are wearing off, as the arts fundamentally were wearing off in the XIVth century although, of course, in some manner they went on to perform their tasks, as certainly the sciences will do. So we sought and seek feverishly other devices. One of them could have been deconstruction, simply stating that reality does not exist and consequently there is no single reason to be afraid of anything. It does not work, it is too coarse, too obvious, too "clever".

To put it in another manner: The building, the "house" in which culture is living, the whole of culture is, since it developed, life became more complicated, since peoples became acquainted with each other, crumbling, first a little bit, later more seriously. There came small fissures, through which the truth about culture, the cultural lie, culture's hypocrisy, leaked through. Culture very early had its devices to prevent serious damages: The arts. Philosophy. Later the sciences. But the process could not be stopped. The fissures became cracks, clefts. We all became more frantic to keep things going, as we are in many senses frantic nowadays.

In the meantime there was this insight in the reality of culture, which was given, very long ago, to a small tribe of Hebrews and which fully blossomed in the person of Jesus. This insight is the final danger for culture. So it tried to ward it off, by prohibiting it, killing its adherents and when that was proved not to give the desired results, by translating all the insights of the Gospel back to religion, to the cultural knowledge about violence and the sacred, by warding the knowledge off, choosing from its own, cultural strategies. Because culture now seems to come to the end of these strategies, the Gospel shows its power of demythologising the cultural lie more clearly.

The centre of culture is scapegoating, in order to get rid of its own violence and its responsibility for it by putting it on a random victim and by driving it out with him/her. This scapegoating makes it possible to order cultural society, dividing people into good ones and bad ones, by making random differences which look like eternal realities and to keep the order going by ritual, again performing the scapegoating-process, thus acquiring again cultural order.

The Gospel shows that all this is random, is arbitrary. The scapegoat is not guilty. God does not accept our division between good and bad people, because he lets it rain for both. Although we are convinced, not only that we know what we are doing but, above of that, that we are perfectly right, Jesus prays for us, because we actually don't know what we are doing and, above of that, because he is praying for forgiveness, we clearly are wrong although we are convinced that we are perfectly right.

Thus the importance of the Gospel for the mimetic model, and of the new testamental scriptures, which elaborate the insights of the Gospel, clearly is paramount. Maybe we would have found the truth, hidden by culture, in the end anyway, culture being unable to hide its secrets efficiently. Now and then the insights in fact show up in literature, although of course, besides eventual Greek examples, we will never know exactly in how far even in these cases there is the influence of the Gospel. But, when we only had these incidental insights, we would be clearly at a loss, because very probably we would not have the possibility to put the fragments together and we would not have a Way to go, as the Gospel shows us. We would be sitting amidst of the ruins of culture, interspersed with fragments of truth.

2. "We like the model, but it is not in the Gospel."

There are at least three possibilities, three possible backgrounds of such a remark:

1. There simply is a lack of knowledge. Many people still see the Gospel as a pious tale, far away from life, a fairy tale for the quiet Sunday-mornings when real life is far away. Beautiful, but certainly not real. Because these quiet Sunday-mornings has disappeared for most people, taking "real life" always with them, even when they still go to church, for most people the Gospel is an object of nostalgia, lost like the own childhood. Of course, when the mimetic model is about the very life, the hardness of it, about the cruelty of life, about our responsibility and guilt, which we try to evade at any price, then the Gospel cannot have anything to do with it.

2. The Gospel is for many people something very saint, not of this earth. It is not right, not pious, it is blasphemy, to make a relation between this wonderful reality which Jesus brings, the Kingdom of God, and this sordid life of ours. That life, that culture, in the end of time, as we all know, will be utterly destroyed. So the wonderful Gospel, bringing consolation and hope in the dreariness of this earthly life, cannot have anything to do with the dreariness, the filth of this life on earth. If it would have, the miracle, the Golden New Jerusalem, something which has nothing to do with this world, in a deep sense would have gone. The Gospel would become ambiguous as everything in this life already is. The Gospel is for after death, for heaven, not for this life.

There is a deep hopelessness in this position. The cultural mission of the Gospel has been given up. This earth has in fact been given up. The Gospel has become a message for an individualistic life, in which all hopes for this life on earth are gone. It is not the theme of this paper to elaborate this further.

3. The Gospel is not believed at all. It is something for children and, eventually, for women, but you cannot take it earnest (any longer). Thus, of course, something that is really important cannot be in the Gospel. If it would be, we have to take the Gospel earnest, which we have given up since long.

Probably behind this is a deep ambivalence. Finally it is not possible to say yes to the model and no to the Gospel. We recognise it in daily life and in the Gospel, or we don't in both. Or, another possibility: We recognise it in daily life, for the others, using it again to go on with the scapegoating, but not for our own life. The knowledge we get in this manner is rational, cultural and not existential. If that is the case we "simply" have to reject that this knowledge can be found in the Gospel, because as soon as we agree about that, the knowledge reaches us ourselves and had real consequences for our own life.

Of course these three possibilities are too clear cut. There may be other ones. In real life things very often are muddled, unclear. Often all three aspects, and other ones, which are not mentioned, play a role in everybody's life.