



The practice of ritual sacrifice and the role of religion in development. A South African practical theological exploration

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Abstract

The practice of ritual sacrifice within the South African context is explored in the light of the emerging global discussion regarding religion and development. Firstly, some aspects of the theory of René Girard on sacrifice is discussed, as well as African theories pertaining to sacrifice and modern ways in which sacrifice/offering enters language. The following section presents three case studies pertaining to sacrifice from South Africa: one from fiction, one from fieldwork done in an African independent church and a description of a recent sacrifice conducted on a beach in Cape Town. In a succeeding section, the data presented in the empirical part is interpreted in the light of the preceding theories. In the concluding section a thesis is advanced regarding the possible meaning and significance of sacrifice for an African understanding of development.

Keywords

sacrifice; ritual; offering; religion; development

1. Introduction

Some years ago, I was involved in a research project regarding the role of religious rituals in social capital formation. That project stimulated my interest in the role of African Independent Churches (AICs) in development, as it led us to a new appreciation of the way in which different elements of ritual practice in these churches constitute sources of the kind of social capital that colleagues and I argued also hold social development value in the South African context (see Wepener, Swart, Ter Haar, and Barnard 2019). In this article I continue to develop this research interest

by focusing on the very specific ritual practice of sacrifice or even more specifically animal sacrifice. Indeed, our findings and insights from the aforementioned research project reaffirmed the central place of sacrifice in AIC ritual practice (see Wepener et al. 2019), a feature that this tradition of churches share with the broader but related tradition of African traditional religion (Alolo 2007:29), and that I consequently recognise as of the necessary significance to explore further in this article.

This article is steered by an ongoing striving to take seriously the factor of a distinctive and prevailing African cosmology within which AICs but also other individuals and groups from African (including South African) soil operate. From the vantage point of an interest in development, this leads me to take my point of departure from the following working thesis. If development organisations aim to involve AICs but also a wider range of actors from African soil as partners for authentic development, the implication is that they cannot work selectively in this endeavour but crucially need to take cognisance of the cosmology of such actors and all the practices and beliefs that come with that cosmology. Not least, however, this recognition is also particularly relevant for those involved in the nascent field of religion and development, for whom an integral understanding of African cosmology and the concomitant religious practices should receive in-depth attention (cf. Alolo 2007; Awuah-Nyamekye 2012; Ellis 2010; Ter Haar 2011; Ter Haar & Ellis 2006; van Niekerk 1994).

I meet this aim in this article by exploring the practice of sacrifice as a (liturgical) ritual with potential significance for development. As such this is a practical theological exploration making use of a cultural hermeneutic. I do this by first presenting elements of the well-known theory of René Girard on violence and sacrifice, as well as African theories pertaining to sacrifice and the modern ways in which sacrifice/offering is still present in many (secular) cultures. This next lead me to present three South African case studies pertaining to sacrifice: one from fiction, a second from fieldwork done in an AIC, and a third from a description of a recent sacrifice conducted on a beach in Cape Town. These case studies are all in some way connected to violence and were conducted in violent contexts, which undergirds my choice of the work of Girard. In the next section I then embark on a more pointed interpretation of the case study descriptions in the light of the theories presented.

2. Sacrifice

The word “sacrifice” derives from the Latin *sacrificium* meaning “sacred action” or *sacer facere* (to make holy) and is closely connected to, but also differs from, the word “offer” (English, Afrikaans, Dutch) from the Latin *operari* meaning “to serve God through works”, or as Cyprian translated it, “to give alms” (Bell 1997:112; Drexler 2006:1658). Both concepts, sacrifice and offer, are polyvalent and not easy to define; however, there is also an overlap in meaning between these concepts as can be seen in languages such as Afrikaans, Dutch, and German. In Afrikaans, for example, “offer” can mean to make a gift (to G/god(s)), to make an offer (e.g. on a house), to offer something/one to G/god(s) by killing and burning it, or to offer something precious for someone or something (like offering your life for your country) (Luther, Pheiffer and Gouws 2015:858). Bell (1997:112) indicates that some theories make a distinction between sacrifice and offering, arguing that in sacrifice the object sacrificed is sanctified.

The term “sacrifice” and “offer” belong roughly to one semantic domain and both concepts receive our attention in this research. As there are many possible meanings connected to sacrifice and offer, so there are also numerous theories related to sacrifice. The focal points of these theories vary from sacrifice as divining, as connecting, as gift/exchange, as meal, as communicative act, and as purifying (see Bell 1997:111–114; Mbiti 2008:59; Schreurs 2001:220).

For this article I took a decision to combine the well-known theory of René Girard and theories of sacrifice by scholars of African religion and philosophy. I make this explicit choice as I deem the case studies that I present to be closely connected to acts of violence, also violent contexts (cf. Katongole 2011), and they are all performed in one geographical area, namely South Africa, which is part of the continent of Africa. Violence should be understood in a broad sense, such as the violence of colonialism, of apartheid, of exclusion and deliberate physical violence, which will include acts such as murder. Reflections on ritual and religion should not overlook the element of violence. Girard (2018:34) states: “Violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred” and “(r)eligion shelters us from violence

just as violence seeks shelter in religion” (Girard 1996, 251).¹ In this article both the violent contexts in which these rituals were performed, as well as the violent nature of the rituals themselves, are regarded as playing an important role.

2.1 Girard on sacrifice

René Girard is one of the foremost scholars on the topic of sacrifice. In *Violence and the Sacred*, Girard (2018 [1972]) writes that societies are inherently violent. To understand this violent impulse, he discusses the mimetic² character of violence (Girard 2018:92; see also Mack 1987:7–9). By the mimetic character he means that when violence becomes part of a community, it will not burn out by itself and a circle of on-going violence will ensue. This violence can build up over time so that it overflows into a community like a dam overflowing its walls, precipitating a catastrophe. However, sacrifice can serve to stop the rising tide and channel the violence (Girard 1996:245). It is exactly at this point that sacrifice, as well as a scapegoat, becomes operative, in the sense that the violence is redirected in the act of sacrificing something or someone who is innocent. “Because the victim is sacred, it is criminal to kill him – but the victim is sacred only because he is to be killed” (Girard 2018:1). There is thus an inherent ambivalence in the act of sacrifice. However, the important point here is to see how the sacrifice protects society against its own inherent violence and to note that “when unappeased, violence seeks and always finds a surrogate victim” (Girard 2018:2). A victim outside the confines of the society is chosen and this serves to repress the inherent strife, jealousy, infighting and so forth, and hence “protects the entire community from *its own* violence” (Girard 2018:8, 105; original italics). The aim of the sacrifice is to stop the potential wave of violence and to establish harmony in society as well as to strengthen its social fibre (Girard 2018:9, 106). Violence, in this case ritual violence in the form of sacrifice, is thus utilised to stop violence in society and with this goes “the strange propensity to seize upon

1 See also Hamerton-Kelley (1987) for more theories on violence as a dimension of ritual and religion.

2 Mimetic desire is an important theme in his thinking and refers to desire elicited in a person just because someone else desires the same object. This mimetic desire is closely associated with violence.

surrogate victims, to actually conspire with the enemy and at the right moment toss him a morsel that will serve to satisfy his ranging hunger.” Sacrifice as violent ritual thus substitutes the real thing and “(t)hus the circle closes” (Mack 1987, 9; see also Schreurs 2001:221). The more serious the situation regarding violence, the more precious the victim must be (Girard 1996:247).

According to Girard, these sacrifices play an especially big role where judicial systems are not functioning optimally, even though they do not replace those systems. However, neither religion and its rituals of sacrifice nor the judicial system are strangers to the ways of violence and utilising violence in order to keep violence in check (Girard 1996, 247, 249–250). The ritual of sacrifice thus has a clear social function in Girard’s thinking. He writes: “When men no longer live in harmony with one another, the sun still shines and the rain falls, to be sure, but the fields are less well tended, the harvests less abundant” (Girard 1996:244; see also Girard 2018:106).

Important also is Girard’s understanding of religion, namely that it consists of sets of practices which he calls rituals and that these so-called rituals precede myth. The origins of religion are to be found in ancient (violent) acts that became rituals, while myths and doctrine are much later developments in religion. For Girard the heart and core of these ancient practices was the violent act of ritual killing in sacrifice and “(o)nlly violence can put an end to violence, and that is why violence is self-propagating” (Girard 1996:252). Violence in his thinking can also be contaminating; sacrifice also plays a role in this regard and he sees death as “nothing more than the worst form of violence that can befall men” (Girard 1996:255). Sacrifice can thus also serve to curb the spread of this contagion.³

A final aspect of Girard’s (2018:chapter 4) thinking that should also be included here is scapegoating. Scapegoating is the act of “sacrificing” one victim instead of many. This victim can be either an insider of a group or an outsider; however, as soon as the person is recognised as a scapegoat “the threat transforms him into an outsider” (Girard 1987:90). This identification of a scapegoat has an impact on the bonding of the group, which now

3 This idea is closely related to Mary Douglas’s (2008) theory of ritual and contagion in *Purity and Danger*.

feels more united than before. “The alien threat displaces everything else; internal quarrels are forgotten. A new unity and comradeship prevail” (Girard 1987:90). This phenomenon of scapegoating thus has a real impact on the society, specifically on social cohesion, as the death of the scapegoat is followed by “a new mood of harmony and peace” (Girard 1987:91). It is also important to recognise that a scapegoat has power, because even though the person was burnt on a pyre in Medieval Europe, for example, people also thought the person possessed powers that could be utilised for good or bad means (Girard 1987, 94). “A community that actively seeks and finds scapegoats is usually a community troubled by dissension or by some real imaginary disaster” (Girard 1987:103).

Girard’s theory that he develops from his particular understanding of religion resonates well with African understandings of religion, where the emphasis is also more on actions, practices, and rituals than on dogma and a systematisation of belief. Mbiti (2008:67) observes regarding religion among Africans: “They have no creeds to recite: their creeds are within them, in their blood and in their hearts.”

2.2 Sacrifice in Africa

The phenomenon of sacrifice is very complex, and Girard’s theory should be augmented with other insights – specifically for our purposes, with insights from Africa. Girard claims universality for his theory, but that is also one of the main criticisms that can be brought against his work. Bell (1997:113), for example, is of the opinion that most of the theories regarding sacrifice include notions of divine communication, that is communication between humans and G/god(s), which is why the consecration of the victim is important in order for the communication to be possible. This communication takes place when that which is sacrificed is shared, as humans and G/god(s) communicate through commensality. This theory sounds very plausible and should be borne in mind; however, it also sounds somewhat Catholic, as if it has been influenced by Roman Catholic or Lutheran Eucharistic theology regarding transubstantiation or consubstantiation, and could as such thus be anachronistic with regard to some rituals of sacrifice.

According to John Mbiti (2008:58), who wrote about religion in Sub-Saharan Africa, sacrifice is one of the most common acts of worship. He

makes the distinction between sacrifice in which animal life is destroyed, and offerings in which food or items are presented. For Mbiti both kinds, namely (just) slaughtering, but also slaughtering and burning, will in Africa fall under sacrifice. Mbiti (2008:59; 1999) explains that the ontological balance or equilibrium that should exist between God, humans, the deceased ancestors, and the cosmos, is sometimes disrupted. It is here, according to Mbiti, where sacrifice also fits in, namely, to assist in re-establishing the desired equilibrium, as misfortune is the result of such an imbalance. In order to understand the ontological realities within which these sacrifices operate, I now offer a brief reflection on African cosmology.

African cosmology consists of the world of the Spirit and the spirits which form part of the daily lives of humans. There is a delicate network of interrelationships in this spirit world that sometimes gets disrupted and sacrifice serve to restore the balance within the spirit world (cf. Wepener and Müller 2019). This view is confirmed by Douglas Thomas (2005:17–23) in his book on African Traditional Religion. In Africa the spirit world is not seen as a metaphor for reality, but as an integral part of reality (Ellis and Ter Haar 2004:51). According to Jacob Olupona (2011, xvii), the divine realm interpenetrates the daily experiences of humans in Africa in such a way that religion, culture, and society are very closely interrelated. It is within this spiritual ontology that sacrifice in Africa should be understood and for which a “pneumapraxis” for doing practical theology in Africa is needed (cf. Wepener, Dreyer, and Meylahn 2017).

Even though DomNwachukwu (2018:141–157) writes specifically about the Igbo, what he has to say about cosmology and sacrifice is closely related to the work of Mbiti. DomNwachukwu (2018:143, 153) states, for example: “The visible and the invisible coexist in a constant cycle of harmonization made possible through prayers, sacrifices, and appeasements”⁴; and “survival in the world of the living depends on meaningful access to the resources of the supernatural world”. There are many kinds of sacrifice, such as expiation, petition, thanksgiving and warding off evil, and they are practised at various occasions, such as at life passages, the new yam celebration, or after disasters. However, all are aimed at influencing God

4 DomNwachukwu (2018:153) also writes: “Igbo cosmology is an endless interaction between the spirit world, the ancestral world, and the world of living humans.”

through the deities and spirits as messengers of God (DomNwachukwu 2018:144–145). DomNwachukwu (2018:154–155) therefore makes a plea for and develops a theological argument for bringing sacrifice back into Igbo worship as a liturgical ritual, a point to which I return later.

Mbiti and DomNwachukwu's views on sacrifice in African culture are closely linked to a reconciliation ritual from Uganda as well as the ideas on reconciliation in Africa of the theologian Elochukwu Uzukwu. The Acholi people from Uganda slaughter an animal for the purpose of reconciliation. First the blood on the animal is sprinkled on the shrine of God and on the person seeking reconciliation. After that the parties involved in the reconciliation eat bread and drink beer together as symbol of the reconciliation (Docus 2017). Uzukwu (1983:277–278) describes a very similar ceremony in Nigeria which also ends with a shared meal. He points to the fact that sacrifice is often part of reconciliation rituals in Africa. Slaughtering and eating together as part of reconciliation rituals are also part of many cultures in South Africa (cf. Wepener 2009a:152–181).

2.3 Sacrifice in secular contexts

Sacrifice may at a first glance not be an everyday phenomenon in places such as Western Europe. However, sacrifice and sacrificial language are still present in most communities, also in late modern contexts, albeit in a new guise. The Dutch theologian Nico Schreurs (2001:217) shows convincingly how this phenomenon is still present. He explains that in modern secularised contexts ritual slaughtering and burning have been banned, while sacrifice has been made into a spiritual and internalised activity. Because of the absence of the stereotypical images of sacrifice, modern expressions of sacrifice are therefore harder to identify. Rituals of sacrifice are still present, however, as evident from the giving of gifts or fundraising for victims of disasters and other (national) collection campaigns (Schreurs 2001:218). Moreover, other kinds of sacrifices and offerings in modern societies can also be identified, such as sacrificing one's life or the bravest men for one's country; or sacrificing your career for your children; the offering of time and attention; or sacrifices for sport (clubs) that find expression in rituals such as the singing of the song of the club (Schreurs 2001:221–222).

Although sacrifice finds expression in different ways in countries such as South Africa and The Netherlands, it is clearly present in both contexts. The work of authors such as Mbiti, DomNwachukwu, Schreurs and others also shows that, even though it may only be indirectly the case, there is a possible link between the ritual (liturgical) practice of sacrifice and the practice of development. I will try to illustrate this link by firstly presenting three South African case studies of sacrifice and then attempt an interpretation.

3. Three case studies

3.1 Sacrifice in the Hour of the Angel in 1838

In *Die Uur van die Engel (The Hour of the Angel)* by novelist Karel Schoeman (1995) the reader encounters a young Griqua shepherd named Danie Steenkamp, who slaughters sheep on a rock as a sacrifice to God in the year 1838. Danie Steenkamp does this because he longs for the angel of the Lord to appear to him (Schoeman 1995:310, 314). After several failed attempts to invoke the angel, Danie Steenkamp succeeds and the angel appears. After this encounter he finds it difficult, if not impossible, to talk about this appearance to other people. This illiterate boy, however, manages to sing to his older sister about this experience and she records the words of his songs on sheepskins. The rest of the novel is broadly speaking about the *Redaktionsgeschichte* of these verses and the lives of the various editors of the verses.

The context in which Steenkamp slaughtered the sheep in the novel is significant for this research, as it alludes to the systematic displacement of the Griqua people from their grazing land and water holes (Schoeman 2002; see also Wepener 2017:125–173). As the white farmers moved their fences further east and north in the present-day Northern Cape and Southern Free State, the Griqua people were gradually displaced and later moved to Griqualand East in the present-day KwaZulu-Natal. Steenkamp's sacrifice was thus made within the context of the violence of displacement of people from their land.

3.2 Sacrifice in an AIC

Between 2008 and 2011 a research project on AICs and social capital was conducted in South Africa (see Wepener, Swart, Ter Haar, and Barnard

2019). During the fieldwork the researchers learned about an annual animal sacrifice called the *Isitshisa* in the AIC (Corinthian Church of South Africa, CCSA), which some of them also attended and documented. Several studies have been conducted on this sacrifice (see Mbaya 2011; Wepener and Ter Haar 2014; Wepener and Meyer 2012), but none to date explicitly focused on violence and the work of Girard. During the *Isitshisa* a red heifer is killed and burnt on an altar on the last Saturday night of October every year at the headquarters of the CCSA in Mlazi, Durban. After the sacrificial burning the ashes of the heifer are taken by the priests to the different congregations of the CCSA and used for various rituals, but especially for cleansing rituals related to death.

But the *Isitshisa* is not the only sacrifice performed in the CCSA. According to one priest: “There are also times we go to the mountains and there we make a fire and burn a chicken or sheep or small lamb as an offering. It is our culture as Corinthian Church people. If you remember the offering that Abraham and Isaac did on the mountain – we follow that culture. The reason for that is that we sometimes have visions that lead us to go and perform that ritual at the mountain.”⁵ Here we thus have an AIC in present-day South Africa whose members perform an annual slaughtering and burning of a heifer as well as numerous smaller animal sacrifices during the rest of the year. These sacrifices are mainly related to warding off death – as a kind of violence.

3.3 Sacrifice in Clifton in 2018

Just before Christmas 2018 members of the #FeesMustFall⁶ movement slaughtered a sheep on Clifton’s fourth beach in Cape Town. The context in which this sacrifice was performed is briefly as follows. On Sunday 23 December 2018 a group of people, amongst others the provincial secretary of the ANC Faiez Jacobs, was asked by a private security firm called Professional Protection Alternatives to leave Clifton beach. They were told that that beach would be closed after 20h00 in the evening and that they, as security officers, were just enforcing a municipal regulation. The people

5 Quotation from a focus group discussion conducted by the author of this article in December 2008 in Phepheni. See also Wepener (2009b).

6 This is a movement which strove for a policy of free education for all students in South Africa.

on the beach reacted very sharply to this request and those who were asked to leave interpreted the demand as racist. Various groups in South Africa reacted to these removals by performing certain actions on the beach. For example, members of the African National Congress (ANC) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) held protest marches and also a picnic on that beach. The #FeesMustFall members on their part brought a sheep to the beach and slaughtered the animal there in order to, according to them, cleanse the beach of racist spirits. Part of the context in which this sheep was slaughtered is the violence of exclusion and racism.

4. Interpretation

In this section the three case studies are interpreted in the light of the theories of sacrifice presented above. Sacrifice, as already mentioned, can be found both in Africa and Europe, albeit in two completely different forms. Yet both instances are forms of lived religion and what I do in this article, as mentioned in the introduction, is an attempt at formulating a hermeneutic of culture (cf. Gräß 2014; Weyel 2014) and as such as a practical theological exploration.

The sacrifices of Danie Steenkamp, as well as the sacrifice on the beach in Clifton, were done against the backdrop of the violence of spatial exclusion of people. What was done to the Griqua people was nothing less than an act of violence that forms part of the atrocities of colonialism in the history of South Africa. What happened on Clifton beach in December 2018 is comparable to the violence against the Griqua and reminiscent of apartheid times. What happened in the Free State in the summer of 1838 and what happened in Cape Town in the summer of 2018 was not only violence, but violence eliciting the ritual act of sacrifice. In the ritual act of Steenkamp's sacrifice, as well as the #FeesMustFall sacrifice, I see the ritual mechanism of violence as explained by Girard in action as violence countering violence. The violence of the exclusion of people was met with the violence of killing animals (not scapegoats in the form of sheep) and most probably curbing the spread of greater violence. Those sheep, in the Girardian sense, filled the cracks of a dam wall behind which lurks a potential deluge of built-up violence.

During December 2018 and January 2019 there was outrage in South Africa and in the newspapers and social media, we read about the slaughtering of the sheep at Clifton: against the rules, cruel and barbaric (see Nombembe 2019; Van Diemen 2019; Wepener 2019). However, in the light of the theories presented here, it is perhaps necessary to also try and understand these practices in the light of Girard's theory and theories of sacrifice from Africa. I should, however, also include the sacrifices described in the AIC I researched. The sacrifice of *Isitshisa* and the other smaller sacrifices are also performed in the context of violence, namely death seen as a kind of violence in traditional African thought (see Mbiti 2008). Thus, Girard's theory is helpful also in this regard. This AIC is one of the very few not only AICs but churches in Africa where it is strictly prohibited to eat at a funeral. Eating at a funeral is common practice in (South) Africa and an important part of the rituals around death. The members of this AIC explained that as they are healers, any contact with death contaminates them and thus cleansing is needed after any contact with any form of human death. However, it is not any kind of cleansing that is done – for example, the typical water rituals used for cleansing in the ZCC – but specifically cleansing that makes use of either ashes from the *Isitshisa* or the other smaller sacrifices, or cleansing in which the blood and intestines of a chicken are used (see Wepener 2009b:240). Thus, once again, violence, specifically ritual killing, is the cure for violence, specifically death as a form of violence that contaminates a community of healers.

While the theories that emanate from Africa are undoubtedly useful to better understand these sacrifices, a similar argument can be found in the work of Catherine Bell. According to Bell (1997:114), sacrifice “has been a common ritual mechanism for securing the wellbeing of the community and the larger cosmos. Such offerings also redefine the culture's system of cosmological boundaries – the human sphere, the sphere of the gods, the sphere of the ancestral dead, the sphere of malevolent demons, and so on – while simultaneously allowing the crossing or transgression of the very same boundaries.” The above case studies should be situated and appreciated as part of a spiritual ontology, a worldview that includes the world of the Spirit and the spirits, and within that spiritual world the on-going search for equilibrium. Theologians who take this ontology seriously argue for a

renewed appreciation of the ritual of sacrifice; DomNwachukwu's is one such voice.

DomNwachukwu (2018:155) makes an important link between sacrifice in Igbo culture and liturgical rituals of offering stating that "Igbo Christians, within the Indigenous churches as well as the Pentecostal circles, have responded very positively to certain practices of televangelists of the West, such as giving a large sum of money to the church as an act of 'sacrifice' to God in response to favours received or anticipation of favours yet to be received." Based on this identification, DomNwachukwu (2018:155) argues for a reinterpretation and application of sacrifice in contemporary Igbo Christianity as gifts, so that the Igbo can again actively participate in the process of improving a situation and respond to good fortune. This is of course a very controversial standpoint in traditional Christian theology and in the light of the development of the sacrificial cult in the Old and New Testament, from the P-literature of Leviticus that is filled with (animal) sacrifices to the Letter to the Hebrews in which Christ is portrayed as the final sacrifice. There are, however, more theologians who agree with the position of DomNwachukwu, such as Emmanuel Lartey (2013), who argues in favour of a post-colonialising position whereby renewed appreciation is shown for rituals from Africa's pre-colonial era as useful for liturgical practice today (cf. Shaw and Burrows 2018).

Conclusion

In Africa animals are slaughtered and burnt, and in Europe people participate in secular sacrifices. These rituals are geographically worlds apart; however, they are indeed all sacrifices, but sacrifices fitting into different cosmologies. According to Catharine Bell (1997:112), sacrifice can be found in all societies; however, "cultural cosmology" will also determine the format used. In the light of the preceding argument, development work can maybe also be seen as part of a modern Western sacrificial cult. In Africa sacrifice as violent ritual practice is used to curb the spread of violence and to maintain as well as establish equilibrium in communities. It could be that the secular Western sacrificial rituals have similar intentions and that they constitute a ritual version of an original violent killing. This is of course only speculation, but perhaps development

work and charitable operations are conducted in service of warding off violence, the potential violence of the empire that can violently strike back from the old colonies. The original violent act is no longer to be found in the practice (of development); however, the mechanism and language of sacrifice are still evident and the intention most probably comparable and from a similar origin. If this is an at all plausible stance, the question arises whether development work in a globalised world of radical inequality is not possibly a way of not only keeping even more violence at bay, but also attempting to search for a global equilibrium?

In a complex society such as that of South Africa, acts of animal sacrifice is often and easily dismissed as primitive without any use. The exploration of the practice of sacrifice in this article can hopefully assist to develop a hermeneutic of culture in which sacrificial practices are appreciated as potentially important practices in violent contexts and in need of closer scrutiny in disciplines such as Practical Theology. For Liturgical Studies these explorations may have implications for on-going attempts at liturgical inculturation and in Development Studies for the sustainable development goal number sixteen which deals with “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”.

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