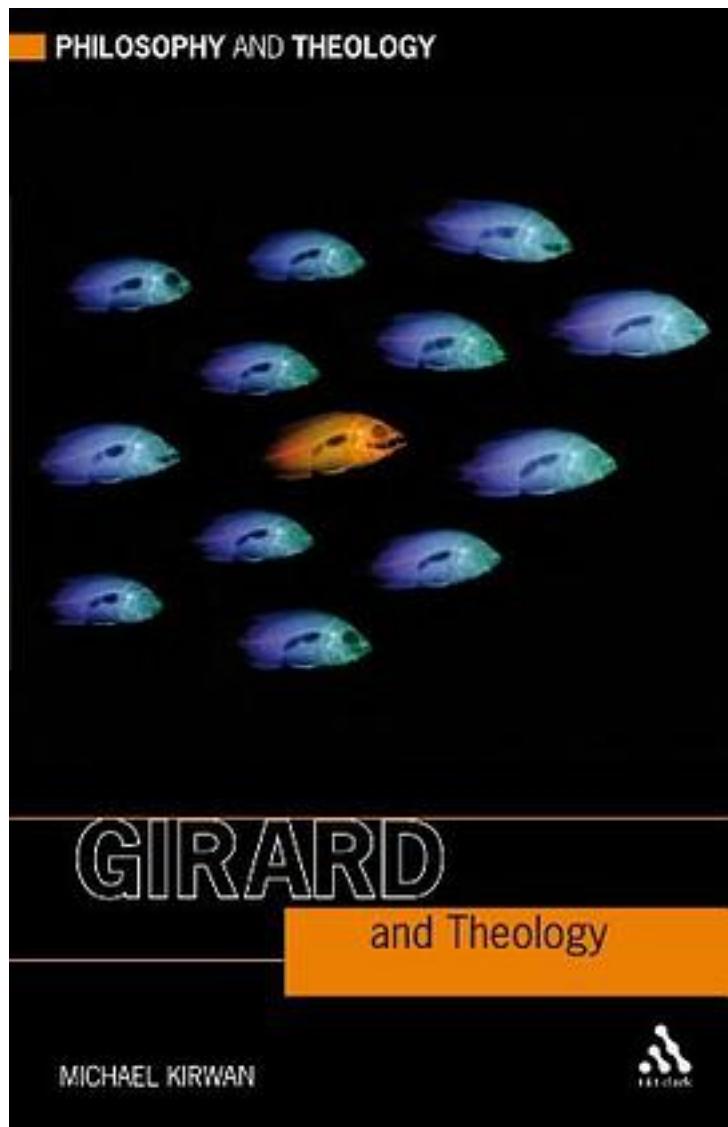


Girard and Theology



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This book presents a profound introduction to how the work of Rene Girard has had implications for new theological concepts on atonement and sacrifice. The work of the French American theorist Rene Girard (b.1923) has been highly influential in a wide variety of intellectual disciplines. One enthusiastic reviewer in *Le Monde* suggested that the year 1972 (when "La Violence et le Sacre" was published) should be marked with an asterisk in the annals of the humanities, including literature, theology and religious studies. There is a paradox here insofar as Girard is, strictly speaking, neither a philosopher nor a theologian. He was trained as a historian, but spent most of his academic career as a teacher of French literature. It is out of his study of great European literature (notably Proust, Dostoyevsky and Shakespeare) that what he calls 'mimetic theory' evolved. Mimetic theory is an account of how religion, culture and violence are interrelated. Its three principal parts consist of: an assertion of the 'mimetic' (i.e. imitated or derivative nature of desire); the function of 'scapegoating' as a means of achieving and maintaining social cohesion; the gospel revelation as the means by which these truths of the human condition are made known to us. A general introduction to his work will comprise an exposition of these three parts or phases in Girard's thinking. In "Girard and Theology", Michael Kirwan looks at these ideas and their relevance to theology as well as their reception in the development of 'dramatic theology' and new theological concepts of atonement and sacrifice. "The Philosophy and Theology" series looks at major philosophers and explores their relevance to theological thought as well as the response of theology.

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