

THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION FROM SACRIFICE TO MERCY

SACRIFICE



A community in crisis unites by blaming one person for all its problems.



Killing the victim brings temporary peace to the community. The victim is both cause and cure of the crisis. Such power appears divine.



Over time, spontaneous scapegoating is ritualized into sacrifice. Violence appears to be sacred and good.

MERCY



The Hebrew religion slowly undid the idea that victims were guilty and God was violent.



God is revealed to be on the side of the victim and to be a God of life, not death, of forgiveness not vengeance.



We are called to a new unity formed as we recognize the innocence of our victims, the wickedness of violence, and God's call to mercy.