

# THE IMPACT OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

*Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives*



VOLUME 2  
SOCIAL AND PASTORAL  
STUDIES

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*Edited by*  
*Peter G. Bolt and James R. Harrison*

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*The Impact of Jesus of Nazareth:  
Historical, Theological, And Pastoral Perspectives*

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## CONTENTS



1. Peter G. Bolt, *The Impact and Implications of such an Historical Figure as Jesus of Nazareth* ..... 1

### **Part A: From Rejection to Affirmation: Changing Attitudes to Jesus of Nazareth**

2. Darrell Bock, *What Got Jesus into Trouble? Understanding the Significance of Jesus' Ministry by Looking at Its Jewish Context. Part Two—Trouble Solidified* ..... 11
3. Jim Harrison, *Reactions of Roman Officialdom to Christ and His Followers in the Early First Century AD: A Case-Study of Pontius Pilate* ..... 27
4. Joseph D. Fantin, *Early Christian Reactions to Jesus: Paul as a Paradoxical Test-Case* ..... 83

### **Part B: Social Legacy of Jesus of Nazareth**

5. David M. Shaw, *Narrating a New Identity: The Role of Isaiah's Suffering Servant in 1 Peter 2:22-23* ..... 125
6. Sally Douglas, *Jesus' Impact on Understandings of Gender: Attending to First-Century Dialogue* ..... 155
7. Peter Laughlin, *From Passover to Covenant: Exploring the Symbolic Meaning of the Last Supper* ..... 179
8. Wagdy Samir, *St Cyril of Alexandria on the Eucharistic Context of Humankind's Union with the Divine in Commentary On John* ..... 199

9. Doru Costache, *The Teacher and His School: Philosophical Representations of Jesus and Christianity*..... 227

### **Part C: The Pastoral and Ecclesial Legacy of Jesus of Nazareth**

10. Norlan Julia, *Becoming a Merciful High Priest: The New Ratio Fundamentalis for Seminary Formation*..... 255
11. Greg Forbes, *Jesus and the Art of Parable: Emulating the Teaching Method of Jesus*..... 283
12. Rocío Figueroa, *Jesus Christ as a Victim: A Christological Light for Contemporary Survivors of Sexual Abuse*..... 301
13. Deborah Guess, *Nowhere to Lay His Head: An Eco-theological Reflection on Homelessness* ..... 317
14. John Francis Collins, *Social Sin and Social Grace: Christ risen, Healing and Creating in History* ..... 339
15. Jacob Kavunkal SVD, *Reformation and Vatican II: Challenge of a Ministry-Centred Understanding of Jesus of Nazareth* ..... 367

## CHAPTER 14



# **Social Sin and Social Grace: Christ Risen, Healing and Creating in History**

**John Francis Collins**

### **Abstract**

This article is an exercise in pastoral or practical theology. It is an interdisciplinary exercise that draws on insights from a range of disciplines to address a concrete practical concern. The intent of the article is to examine the notion of social grace as understood as the cooperative interaction of the Word and Holy Spirit of God with human agents as the necessary antidote to social sin.

The article has five main parts: Part 1 is an outline of the main contours of relevant insights from neuroscience as related to the psychoanalytically informed Objects Relations theory. The purpose of this outline is to support the argument that social sin is the fruit of the condition theologically understood as original sin, and accumulated personal sin. That is Object Relations theory as interpreted through the light of neuroscience operates as an explanatory schema for understanding original sin as the tendency to psychological splitting followed by conceptual justification of the psychological phenomenon leading to action. Part 2 introduces the notion of Social Grace as developed by Robert Doran as an antidote of the theological category of Social Sin. Part 3 provides some background on the relationship

between God and Politics as proposed by the Australian theologian Neil Ormerod. This part investigates the influence of original and personal sin on individuals, the social sphere, and the cultural spheres as manifested under the category of politics. Part 4 draws on both the work of Doran and Ormerod to explore the divinely initiated solution to the problem of evil as systematically developed through an overview of operation of the Scale of Values in history. Part 5 draws on insights from the first four sets of ideas to identify ways to facilitate God's grace to be effective in healing political division and developing creative ways of cooperation.



## Part 1: Insights from Neuroscience

Neuroscience provides new insights for understanding and evaluating psychoanalytic theory. The findings of research into brain functioning confirm some aspects of psychoanalytic theory and challenge others. The limbic system contains the brain structures that control affect expression.<sup>1</sup> This system acts as the 'centre for emotional responsiveness, motivation, memory formation and integration, sense of smell, and the mechanisms to keep ourselves safe'.<sup>2</sup> The limbic system includes several sub-systems including the neuro sub-systems of the amygdala, the hippocampus, the thalamus and the hypothalamus. The amygdala is an assembly of neurons about the size and shape of an almond located in the centre of the brain.<sup>3</sup> The role of the amygdala is to be constantly alert to the needs of basic survival including sex and emotional reactions such as anger and fear. The hippocampus is the part of the brain that 'processes new memories for long-term storage'. The thalamus is located at the top of the brain stem and 'acts as a two-way relay station, sorting, processing, and directing signals from the spinal cord

1 Kernberg, 'Neurobiological Correlates', 39.

2 Dahlitz, 'The Limbic System'.

3 The information in this paragraph is taken from the summary diagram of Bragdon & Gamon, 'Your Brain and What It Does'.

and mid-brain structures up to the cerebrum<sup>4</sup> and, conversely, from the cerebrum down the spinal cord to the nervous system'. The hypothalamus is located at the base of the brain and its role in the limbic system is to maintain the body's status quo in terms of the regulation of temperature, hunger, thirst, fight-flight reactions, and sexual excitement. It is the hypothalamus that is concerned with the activation of both positive and negative affects.

Positive and negative affect-activating brain structures operate separately from each other and at a basic level of affect activation a simultaneous separation, or split, of positive and negative affect has evolved.<sup>5</sup> The integration of split positive and negative affects occurs at a higher level of limbic structures and involves the limbic system interacting with parts of the brain that are engaged in planning and decision-making—particularly the prefrontal and preorbital cortex.<sup>6</sup>

Research in neuroscience indicates that Freud was correct in proposing that the unconscious mind develops before the conscious mind. The research also confirms the psychoanalytic observation 'that the early development of the unconscious is equivalent to the genesis of a self-regulating system that operates beneath conscious, verbal levels for the rest of the life span'.<sup>7</sup> Challenging one of Freud's foundational

4 The cerebrum is the largest brain structure in humans and accounts for about two-thirds of the brain's mass. It is divided into two sides — the left and right hemispheres—that are separated by a deep groove down the centre from the back of the brain to the forehead. These two halves are connected by long neuron branches called the *corpus callosum* which is relatively larger in women's brains than in men's. The cerebrum is positioned over and around most other brain structures, and its four lobes (Frontal, Temporal, Parietal and Occipital) are specialized by function but are richly connected. The outer 3 millimetres of 'grey matter' is the cerebral cortex which consists of closely packed neurons that control most of our body functions, including the mysterious state of consciousness, the senses, the body's motor skills, reasoning and language. The Frontal Lobe is the last to develop in young adulthood. It's dorso-lateral prefrontal circuit (PFC) is the brain's top Executive. It organizes responses to complex problems, plans steps to an Objective, searches memory for relevant experience, adapts strategies to accommodate new data, guides behaviours with verbal skills and houses working memory. Its orbitofrontal circuit manages emotional impulses in socially appropriate ways for productive behaviours including empathy, altruism, and interpretation of facial expressions. The Temporal Lobe controls memory storage area, emotion, hearing, and, on the left side, language. The Parietal Lobe receives and processes sensory information from the body including calculating location and speed of Objects. The Occipital Lobe processes visual data and routes it to other parts of the brain for identification and storage. Bragdon & Gamon, 'Your Brain and What It Does'.

5 Kernberg, 'Neurobiological Correlates', 39.

6 Kernberg, 'Neurobiological Correlates', 39.

7 Quotations in this paragraph from Schore, 'Foreword', xii.

ideas, however, the research has refuted the idea that the unconscious solely represents material that is repressed and banned from consciousness because it is unacceptable. Neuroscience research shows that bodily-based affects are expressed rapidly and spontaneously. The speed at which bodily-based affects are expressed is such that, due to the limited capacity of conscious awareness to process the data, affects are 'recorded' beneath levels of conscious awareness. In short, with regard to origins of the unconscious, neuroscience offers an explanatory framework that differs significantly from Freud's framework. Neuroscience has confirmed, however, that affects can be unconscious, indeed dissociated. That is, an affect can be disconnected from its source or origin.

The psychoanalytic insight that emotions often occur at unconscious levels has, in many ways, been confirmed by neuroscience. The brain research, however, has challenged and extended psychoanalytic understanding as to the reasons why negative and positive emotions often occur at unconscious levels. In classic psychoanalytic theory emotions are repressed because they are unacceptable. In the light of neuroscience research however, the unconscious is no longer viewed to be 'a repository of archaic untamed passions and destructive wishes'. The unconscious is 'now seen as a cohesive, active mental structure that continuously appraises life's experiences and responds according to its scheme of interpretation.'<sup>8</sup>

While research in neuroscience has overturned some of the basic tenets of psychoanalytic theory in relation to an understanding of the unconscious as the fruit of repression of what is unacceptable, it has confirmed the existence of the unconscious *per se*. The research has discovered that much, if not most, of our brain functioning occurs outside of conscious awareness. Brain imaging has also confirmed that, at metaphoric brain 'levels', negative and positive affects are separated at lower levels and are integrated in higher levels of brain function. The fact that positive and negative affects are strictly separated at lower limbic levels and can only be integrated at the higher level confirms the basic principles of psychoanalytic Object Relations theory. Object Relations theory is a field of thought that was developed from Freud's psychodynamic

8 Quotations in this paragraph from Schore, 'Foreword', xiii.



theory in the early-mid 20th century by a range of practitioners-theorists including Otto Rank, Sandor Ferenczi, Ronald Fairbairn and Donald Winnicott. A key contributor to Object Relations theory was the Austrian-British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882–1960). Through critical reflection on her therapeutic practice with children, Klein developed her own contribution to psychoanalytic theory. Klein's theory focuses primarily on development within the first year of life and is grounded in the notion of Unconscious Phantasy.<sup>9</sup> For Klein unconscious phantasies are defined as primitive internalized mental images of instincts and drives. The unique mental and emotional capacities of an individual are the fruit of the interaction of these phantasies with actual experience, and the emotions.

According to Klein, in the first six months of life the infant's ego is still in a primitive state and he or she is unable to maintain a unified mental image of the self or of others. During this stage, relationships are maintained with parts of Objects (e.g. breast rather than mother). In terms of a mental image a newborn's sucking reflex will only become a mental image when the newborn finds the nipple and begins nursing. As the sucking practice is repeated during the activity of feeding the infant forms a mental image accompanied by the soothing emotions — warm milk, full stomach and close sense of nurture with nursing mother's breast. The mental image is that of a good breast. When the infant is hungry, cold, or in discomfort, and experiences the distressing emotions that accompany this phenomenon, the lack of 'good breast' generates the mental image of a 'bad breast'. The infant creates two individual mental images of Objects, existing as unrelated individual entities.

The bad breast exists when the mother is unable to satisfy the infant's needs immediately, causing a desire to destroy this Object. The good breast exists when needs are fulfilled, causing feelings of love towards the Object. Repeated experience of 'lack of good breast' experienced as bad breast, gives rise to a dynamic in which all internal bad feelings, because they cannot be tolerated, are projected outwards. A paranoid fear arises, however, namely that the 'bad' projected out onto another

9 Information on Klein in next paragraphs taken from: Learning Theories, 'Object Relations Theory (Melanie Klein)'.

will return to seek revenge. Klein calls this complex dynamic the paranoid-schizoid position.

In Klein's explanatory framework, after the six month mark the basis for an integrated ego begins to form as the infant starts to develop the capacity to view Objects as including both good and bad. That is, the mother who frustrated the infant by being absent when he or she needed her is the same mother who satisfied the infant by meeting his needs. 'The infant realizes, that the mother whom he phantasized of destroying, is the same mother he or she loves'. Klein calls this the depressive position. Feelings of anxiety which previously overwhelmed the infant in the paranoid-schizoid position are joined by the depressive position. The depressive position is characterized by feelings of guilt, and of mourning lost omnipotence. The fear of being destroyed is exchanged by the fear of destroying another. The infant thus engages in reparation to restore and fix Objects he previously phantasized destroying. The ability to view the self and Objects with complexity and engaging in appeasement efforts is crucial for the development of healthy relationships in adulthood.

In the light of research in neuroscience, one way to understand Klein's theory is to view her observation that there is a split between good and bad in the young child that has manifestations throughout the whole of life is basically correct. The account of its origin, however, is more akin to a story or myth that tells a truth, as opposed to an explanation. As previously noted, from the viewpoint of neuroscientific research the development of the unconscious occurs because bodily-based affects impact on the brain patterns of a person but are expressed at a pace well beyond the limited capacity of conscious awareness to process the data. Brain patterns formed outside the purview of conscious awareness lead to the formation of a fundamental split between conscious patterns and unconscious brain patterns.

The hypothalamus works to maintain the body's status quo by dividing positive and negative affects. Klein names this brain dynamic structure the paranoid-schizoid position. From the point of view of neuroscience, the integration of positive and negative affects can occur when the maturing child has developed a higher level of limbic structures and functions that involve the engagement of the prefrontal cortex.

Klein names this brain structure the depressive position. For Klein the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions are not simply transitory or passing phases or stages, but they set up the basis of the psyche's enduring orientation throughout life. For the neuroscientist, the interaction between the limbic—that is fight, flight, freeze—mechanisms to keep ourselves safe and the cortical or executive parts of the brain occurs across a person's whole life.

Returning to Klein's framework, depending on the level of personal integration and the amount of subjective stress, elements of oscillation between the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position is a phenomenon that can be observed. The potential for oscillation is often actualized when a person is in a state of heightened anxiety and subjective stress. In such a state, primitive emotional experiences are activated. In terms of observable behaviour examples of splitting in adults include the emotional vacillation from love to hate and back to love that can be experienced from time to time in intimate relationships.

Klein observed this dynamic between individuals in the process of therapy and named it, projective identification. The dynamic of projective identification can be understood as when the Object of projection intro-jects, or takes in to him or herself the material projected on to him by the other and experiences this material as if it originated internally. In other words, the receiver of the projection feels what the person projecting feels, and over time, the receiver of the projective process has difficulty discriminating the origin of the feelings. In time the recipient of the projection begins to believe that the feelings that have been projected onto them by another originated within him or herself. The recipient of projections then begins to construct reasons to make sense of the experience searching for the origins of the feelings in his or her own psychic history. The dynamic of bullying leading to the one bullied self-harming is an example of this dynamic in action.

Splitting can also manifest in groups and organisation with factions developing where all that is viewed to be unacceptable in members of one faction is evacuated and projected onto the opposing faction with the dynamic also occurring in reverse. A significant development of Klein's psychoanalytic model was advanced by Wilfred Bion and is expressed in the concept of a 'relational unconscious', 'whereby

one unconscious mind communicates with and interactively regulates another unconscious mind'.<sup>10</sup> Bion went on to develop Klein's notion of projective identification and applied it to the dynamics he observed in the groups and organisations.<sup>11</sup>

Various parts of the brain are richly connected and as such it is difficult to precisely identify specific parts that are responsible for specific functions. That said, broadly speaking, the right side of the cerebrum, that is the right side of the top two hemispheres of the brain that we are most aware of through popular representations, has been identified more strongly with the emotions. Reflecting on the dynamics of the therapeutic alliance that occurs in context of therapeutic encounters, Schore observes that 'rapid communications between the right-lateralized "emotional brain" of each member of the therapeutic alliance allow for moment-to-moment "self-state sharing", a co-created, organized, dynamically changing dialogue of mutual influence'.<sup>12</sup> Generalizing the insights gained from critical reflection on the therapeutic alliance and informed by research in neuroscience, the dynamic of projective identification or unconscious influencing of each other occurs rapidly and outside of conscious awareness, right brain to right brain. In the right brain to right brain 'relational matrix, both partners match the dynamic contours of different emotional-motivational self-states, and simultaneously adjust their social attention, stimulation, and accelerating/decelerating arousal in response to the partner's signals'.<sup>13</sup> In summary, Klein observed projective identification as operating between individuals. Bion observed that the dynamic of unconsciously impacting on each other's unconscious can occur in groups and organisations. Schore notes that unconscious influence occurs directly, that is outside of conscious awareness, right brain to right brain.

The explanatory framework of right brain to right brain confirms the basic tenets of Klein's notion of projective identification and Bion's insights in relation to the dynamics of groups and organisations. In terms of therapeutic and pastoral practice, there is evidence emerging

10 Schore, 'Foreword', xiii.

11 See Bion, *Experiences in Groups*.

12 Schore, 'Foreword', xx.

13 Schore, 'Foreword', xx.

with regard to the clinically observed dynamics of transmission of the family trauma in which the children of parents suffering from PTSD come to experience symptoms of PTSD including suicidal ideation.<sup>14</sup> The notion of intergenerational trauma, where the trauma experienced by parents is, in some measure, transmitted to their children,<sup>15</sup> may also benefit from such an explanatory framework.

This section has explored the main contours of relevant insights from neuroscience as related to the psychoanalytically informed Objects Relations theory. It provides an explanatory framework for theological reflection on original and personal sin as related to the notion of social sin. We now turn to the notion of social grace as the remedy for the accumulated effects of social sin.

## **Part 2: Social Grace as developed by Robert Doran.**

According to Doran ‘the universal gift of grace occurs in invisible missions of both the Word and the Holy Spirit’.<sup>16</sup> The invisible mission of the Word is independent from, and is historically prior to, the visible mission of the Son in Jesus of Nazareth. God as Trinity did not come into existence at the time of visible mission of the Son in Jesus of Nazareth. What changed following the visible mission of the Son in Jesus of Nazareth was our understanding of God as Trinity, not God as Trinity *per se*. Outside of time and space the Father eternally sends the Word invisibly. The invisible Word is received by human beings historically, ‘through divinely originated insights and judgments of fact and value’.<sup>17</sup> The Hebrew Scriptures record the fruit of divinely originated insights and judgments of fact and value as an instance of a special manifestation or record of the invisible mission of the

14 See After the Call, *Mental Health Awareness for First Responders*.

15 See Ginot, *The Neuropsychology of the Unconscious*, 189–210.

16 Doran, ‘Social Grace and the Mission of the Church’, 171.

17 Doran, ‘Social Grace and the Mission of the Church’, 171.

Word.<sup>18</sup> The universal invisible mission of the Holy Spirit is the Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit, in whom human beings participate through acts of charity.<sup>19</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the gift that the Father and the Son eternally give to each other as together they communicate the divine nature in the relation of love that unites them. The mission of the Holy Spirit which proceeds from the relationship of the Father and the Son historicizes and universalizes the eternal gift of the mutually uniting relationship of the Father and the Son.

The mission of the Holy Spirit is the divine eternal gift present in all human history.<sup>20</sup>

What marks Christianity as special within the universal invisible missions of the Word and Holy Spirit, is the recognition and affirmation of six movements of the Holy Spirit in the historical Christ event:

- i) In the fullness of time the Father sends the Son in Jesus to be conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The work of God eternally performed in the invisible missions of the Son and the Spirit is made visible in the incarnate mission of the Son.<sup>21</sup>
- ii) As the incarnate Son, Jesus of Nazareth was drawn by the Holy Spirit into the desert for forty days.
- iii) In time and space, the Holy Spirit invited Jesus to return from the desert to preach the coming of God's reign.
- iv) Prompted and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, Jesus, the incarnate Word, reveals the mysterious Law of the Cross, a Law embodied in the concrete instance of non-violent resistance and the return of good for the evil of the crucifixion.<sup>22</sup>

18 'From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense'. Vatican II, 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religion'.

19 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Church', 171.

20 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Word'.

21 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Church', 171.

22 Doran, 'Moving Vatican II Forward', 9.

- v) In the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is raised to new life from a self-sacrificial death by the Father. In the resurrection of Jesus, the mysterious Law of the Cross, manifested as non-violent resistance and the return of good for evil, is confirmed as the divine solution to the problem of evil.
- vi) In the Pentecost event the Father and the risen Jesus send the Spirit in a visible, palpable form to confirm, celebrate and continue the revelation of the mission of the incarnate Word.<sup>23</sup>

Pentecost marks the beginning of the ongoing act in the drama of the salvation wrought by Jesus. Pentecost begins an act that concludes with the realisation of the 'totality of the divine missions, visible and invisible, in the establishment of the reign of God.'<sup>24</sup> It is the Pentecost event that marks the beginning of the community that knows the divine missions of the Son and the Spirit in human history. It is this knowledge that distinguishes the church from all other communities. 'What was hidden is now revealed. What was conscious but not Objectified or what remained imperfectly articulated is now known and can be clearly spoken, proclaimed, announced.'<sup>25</sup> Pentecost marks the beginning of the church and its mission which is inseparable from its existence, the realisation of totality of the divine missions, visible and invisible in the establishment of the reign of God.

The ongoing Pentecost event in the drama of salvation includes us, here and now, as actors in history. In the drama of salvation the mutual interplay of divine and human freedom can now be carried out in explicit recognition of what, prior to the revelation that occurred in the mission of the incarnate Word, had been implicit, but not recognized, conscious but not known, or understood. Pentecost is a manifestation of the twofold mission of the Son and the Spirit. The universal invisible mission of the Holy Spirit becomes visible in the Pentecost event. This event confirms that the revelation which occurred in the visible mission of the Word in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus, was indeed the revelation of the triune God in history.

23 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Church', 171.

24 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Church', 171.

25 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Church', 174.



As already noted, the gift of the Holy Spirit is a universal offer. Reception of the gift may be implicit or explicit. Explicit reception actualizes and thus strengthens the effect of the gift. Implicit reception of the Word and Holy Spirit can be recognised in manifest goodness, made concrete in the actions of those beyond the Christian community.<sup>26</sup> The naming of 'unjust social structures' as social sin is now broadly accepted.<sup>27</sup> Social sin is the fruit of a collective coalescence of individual refusals or failures to do what is right or to reject what is wrong. When individuals coalesce to produce actions that gain collective attention because they are manifestly good, the observed actions are the social Objectification of grace, or in shorthand, social grace. In biblical terms, this is the in-breaking of the reign of God in human history.<sup>28</sup>

What then is the relationship between the fruit of sinful social structures, or social sin, and social grace? The fruit of individual sin works its way into personal subjective states, inter-personal relationships, society, culture and indeed history. The universal gift of the Holy Spirit is actualized in the reception by individuals and manifested as elevating and healing divine grace. This grace works its way into personal subjective states, inter-personal relationships, society, culture and history.

Doran defines social grace as 'our created relations with the three divine subjects (that) establish the state of grace as an interpersonal situation whose formal effects extend to the establishment of a genuine community of meaning and value among human beings'.<sup>29</sup> Unpacking the notion of social grace, Doran draws on a hierarchy or scale of values as the mechanism for understanding its operation. It was Bernard Lonergan who identified the scale of values.<sup>30</sup> For Lonergan, feelings are

26 An example of manifest good that has an ongoing legacy is the work of Australian ophthalmologist Fred Hollows who worked tirelessly to restore sight to many people suffering from the impact of curable blindness and the organisation that has succeeded him the Fred Hollow's Foundation.

27 In 1984 John Paul II wrote: 'One can speak of a communion of sin, whereby a soul that lowers itself through sin drags down with itself the church and, in some way, the whole world. In other words, there is no sin, not even the most intimate and secret one, the most strictly individual one, that exclusively concerns the person committing it. With greater or lesser violence, with greater or lesser harm, every sin has repercussions on the entire ecclesial body and the whole human family. According to this first meaning of the term, every sin can undoubtedly be considered as social sin'; John Paul II, 'Reconciliation and Penance'.

28 See Doran, 'Social Grace', 134.

29 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Church', 173.

30 Lonergan, *Method*, 32.



intimately connected to values. Specifically, feelings respond to values in accord with a scale of preference, with vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values operating in an ascending order.<sup>31</sup> Vital values refer to things such as health and strength, grace and vigour and in the context of social grace availability of the basic conditions for sustaining life; food, water, shelter and security. Vital values are normally 'preferred to avoiding the work, privations, pains involved in acquiring, maintaining, restoring them.'<sup>32</sup>

Social values create the environment in which the vital values of the whole community might be met and it is for this reason that social values are 'to be preferred to the vital values of individual members of the community'.<sup>33</sup> It is good for an individual to have breakfast this morning. This example is an instance of a vital value in operation. Creating a social system in which everyone in a community has access to sufficient food every day is an example of a social value in action.

Moving up the scale to cultural values, Lonergan asserts that 'over and above mere living and operating, men and women have to find a meaning and value in their living and operating'.<sup>34</sup> 'One does not live by bread alone' (Matt 4:4, NRSV). It is the function of culture to discover, express, validate, criticise, correct, develop and improve community meaning and values. As such cultural values rank higher than social values. The function of culture unfolds on two levels: infrastructure and superstructure. Infrastructure with respect to culture refers to the realm of common sense as society goes about the business of practical affairs concerned with everyday life in terms of existing economic, technological, and political structures.<sup>35</sup> The superstructure is constantly engaged in transforming the infrastructure, for better or for worse. The work of the superstructure involves critical reflection on theory. It is through deep reflection as promoted in institutions such as universities, theological facilities, and think-tanks that intelligent and thoughtful individuals work together to overcome the negative influence of the general bias

31 Lonergan, *Method*, 34.

32 Lonergan, *Method*, 31.

33 Lonergan, *Method*, 31.

34 Lonergan, *Method*, 32.

35 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Church', 175.

of common sense which is often dismissive of theory, is only concerned with immediate issues, and is impatient with ultimate questions.<sup>36</sup> The infrastructure is constantly either aiding or interfering with the superstructure as it attempts to do its authentic work. The ideological system of economic rationalism is an example of superstructure impacting on the way a government attempts to shape a society or the actions and attitudes of citizens. The theoretical framework of economic rationalism has a concrete impact on infrastructure manifested in the level and type of economic support provided for citizens, viewed through the lens of economic rationalism, as seen to be unproductive. The use of the phrase 'lifters and leaners' by political leaders in relation to persons as economic units of production and consumption has concrete effects with regard to the formation of attitudes by fellow members of the shared society, towards those who, for a great variety of reasons, are not benefiting from the working through of an economic system grounded in what is sometimes referred to as market fundamentalism.

Personal value is manifested in the person as an originator of values in him or herself and in his or her milieu, as an inspiration and invitation to others to do likewise.<sup>37</sup> As originators of values, persons in their self-transcendence as loving and being loved 'can be principles of benevolence and beneficence, capable of genuine collaboration and of true love.'<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps a significant number of people have the capacity to be originator of values occasionally, by fits and starts. Rock or sports stars working together to raise funds for a worthy cause and then quickly returning to their primary purpose once the event is over, provide an example of originating value in fits and starts. To think and act as a virtuous person is far rarer. The virtuous person initiates genuine collaboration and true love, regularly, easily, and spontaneously in a manner that manifests benevolence and beneficence. The state of being a virtuous person is only achieved by those for whom such a manner of being in the world is the fruit of hard-won, long-term conscious and thoughtful

36 Doran, 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Church', 176.

37 Lonergan, *Method*, 32.

38 Lonergan, *Method*, 35.

practice.<sup>39</sup> 'It is only by reaching the sustained self-transcendence of the virtuous man or woman that one becomes a good judge, not on this or that human act, but on the whole range of human goodness'.<sup>40</sup>

According to Lonergan, to maintain self-transcendence the virtuous person needs to be sustained by religious values. These are the values that form the ground of the meaning and significance of a person's life and world. Such values also provide an orientation with regard to a person's ultimate horizon. It is for this reason that religious values rank highest in the ascending scale of values. Religious values help overcome bias and a tendency to moral impotence. The gift of God's love, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit, manifests as religious values create the condition of the possibility of sustained personal integrity or personal value. Persons of integrity represent the condition of possibility of genuine meanings and values that in turn, inform ways of living, manifest as cultural values. The pursuit of superstructural cultural values is a constitutive dimension in the establishment of social structures and intersubjective habits or social values. These render more probable something approaching an equitable distribution of the necessities of life, or vital values, to the whole human community. Social values are informed and purified by authentic cultural values, which are nourished and sustained by religious and personal values. The consistent and persistent application of social values serves to gradually realise the reign of God in history.

This section has explored the notion of the scale of values as applied to politics as broadly understood. We now turn to a concise examination of the relationship between God and politics through a historical lens so as to provide background for Part 4 which examines the application of the scale of values in history.

### **Part 3: God and Politics**

This part draws extensively on 'Globalization and the Mission of the Church' written by Ormerod and Clifton and published in 2011. After the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine to Christianity,

39 Lonergan, *Method*, 35.

40 Lonergan, *Method*, 35.

the intertwining of church and state gradually produced Christendom. The intellectual foundations for Christendom were laid by Augustine of Hippo. 'The two categories which dominated Augustine's thought were grace, revealed in Jesus Christ and mediated by the church, and sin, manifest in human corruption and weakness and leading to damnation.' Augustine had an all or nothing approach, either grace or sin, either church or heresy. 'For Augustine, the State was an instrument of the church and enforced religious decrees. One was either in the City of God leading to salvation, or in the City of Man leading to hell'. Augustine's framework provided a simple and direct solution to the problem of the relationship between church and State.<sup>41</sup>

Following the philosophy of Aristotle, in the 13th Century Aquinas introduced a middle term, which he called 'nature'. 'For Aquinas, grace was gracious not simply in relation to sin, but also in relation to human nature. Human nature, for Aquinas, was "good" though not capable of achieving salvation by its own power. For Aquinas, goodness remains, if only in potential or orientation, in all human beings'<sup>42</sup>—pagans as well as Christians. 'The theoretical distinction between grace and nature allowed for the recognition of a realm or order of human activity in which the Church or faith had no direct say'.<sup>43</sup> In this understanding the competence of the Church in matters of faith 'did not necessarily extend to the organization of human affairs, of politics (e.g. forms of government) and the economy (e.g. on interest rates and usury), or of science and technology'.<sup>44</sup>

In the 16th Century, among the many things promoted by Luther was the notion of 'freedom of conscience' and a separation of Church and State. For Luther, the State had no right to violate the freedom of conscience of a religious believer. In another response, John Calvin established a virtual theocracy in Geneva.<sup>45</sup> One of the unintended fruits of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Revival was a splitting of the emerging nation states into Catholic and Protestant camps. The

41 Quotations from Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 107.

42 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 107.

43 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 107.

44 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 108.

45 Trueman, 'John Calvin'.

structure of the new nation states meant that those who lived within the boundaries of the nation adopted the religious affiliation chosen by the prince or ruler of the nation. As the new states went to war with each other over territory, religion was used then, as it is sometimes used now, to mask political expediency.<sup>46</sup> The bitterness and interminable nature of these conflicts, however, contributed to a generalized disillusionment with religion. The experience of a widespread disappointment with the fruits of religion and the rise of new progress-orientated philosophical frameworks gradually led to 'our more modern position of a secular State, where religion is largely privatised and marginalised from the public realm.'<sup>47</sup> Leading up to the Enlightenment, religion in the form of Catholicism in conflict with various strands of Protestantism was viewed by some as a source and contributor to social conflict and upheaval. The response from many was the view that, 'the political order could survive quite well without Christianity. At the same time the State put aside attempts to regulate religion, except in the most minimal ways needed for good social order'.<sup>48</sup>

For the philosophers of the Enlightenment the church represented medieval tradition, superstition and ignorance. The modern state represented reason, intellect and social progress. According to Ormerod and Clifton, 'the Enlightenment marks the beginning of the systematic exclusion of religion from the public realm'.<sup>49</sup> Religion, church and faith were seen by the philosophers of the Enlightenment as part of an intellectual milieu that was dying. The Enlightenment project was marked by a desire to 'introduce scientific reason into human affairs, eliminate religious metaphysics and substitute them with a scientific account of human existence'.<sup>50</sup> Theology, previously viewed as the queen of the arts and sciences, lost its crown to sociology, political science, economics and other human sciences.

46 The imprisonment of Ahok; the popular Christian candidate for Mayor of Jakarta in Indonesia for blasphemy in 2017, I suggest, is a contemporary example of using religion for political expediency. See [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/09/jakarta-governor-ahok-found-guilty-of-blasphemy-jailed-for-two-years](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/09/jakarta-governor-ahok-found-guilty-of-blasphemy-jailed-for-two-years)

47 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 108.

48 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 108.

49 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 108.

50 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, 108.

A recent illustration of a position on the relationship between church and State is contained in the second part of Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical, 'On Christian Love' which deals with the question of the relationship between church and State, in the context of the church's charitable works and agencies. The encyclical clearly rejects the Christendom model of Church-State relationship noting that: 'it is not the Church's responsibility to make [its] teaching prevail in political life ... the Church cannot and must not replace the State'.<sup>51</sup> For Benedict, the Church's task is to 'inform consciences', 'stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice', and foster 'greater readiness to act accordingly'.<sup>52</sup> The Church's social teaching is based on 'reason and natural law', 'rational argument', so that a 'just society must be the achievement of politics, not the Church'.<sup>53</sup> Indeed 'the direct duty to work for a just ordering of society . . . is proper to the lay faithful . . . called to take part in public life as a personal capacity'.<sup>54</sup> It appears that with these statements Benedict was rejecting the idea of the Church as a separate perfect society, a safe haven, if you will, from the secular world. This is consistent with Doran's view that church is not a separate entity set apart from society but indeed part of society, a sector that is charged with a mission to influence the way the society operates in terms of culture, policy, and governance. The Pentecost mission given to the original community of disciples of Jesus Christ is to form and inform the lay faithful as it is their role to take part in public life in a personal capacity, that is, not as representatives of the church. One of the tasks of theology, as an academic discipline, is to work towards influencing culture. Theology is to engage with the cultural superstructure in order to influence policies and plans with regard to the manner in which a society may organize its infrastructure to ensure the just distribution of vital values. One of the tasks of ministry is the formation of the lay faithful in terms of personal and religious values so that they exercise their direct duty to work for a just ordering of society in the myriad of contexts in which they work and recreate. Having briefly outlined the broad sweep

51 Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter, Deus Caritas Est*, 28.

52 Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter, Deus Caritas Est*, 28.

53 Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter, Deus Caritas Est*, 28.

54 Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter, Deus Caritas Est*, 29.

of history in terms of God and Politics we now move to applying the insights gained from an examination of the scale of values as they have operated in history.

#### **Part 4: Scale of Values in History**

This part draws extensively on the work of Neil Ormerod, particularly his book 'Re-visioning the Church: An Experiment in Systematic-historical Ecclesiology'. The human spirit (nature) works creatively from below up. As noted in Part 2 of this article, the supply of vital values is a function of existing economic, technological, and political structures (infrastructure). Practical intelligence creates new situations, new technologies, new political and economic systems which change existing patterns of distribution of vital values, creating new opportunities for human living. New social values, however, must be sustained by developments in cultural values which help us 'make sense' of the new emerging social reality. New cultural values demand new levels of personal integrity if the social and cultural matrix is not to be subverted by old alliances and corruptions. Lonergan refers to this upwards movement as the creative vector in human history.<sup>55</sup>

There is also a movement from above to below.<sup>56</sup> Religious value or grace heals the distortions of consciousness which result from the breakdown in personal values. Remedying distortions in the cultural superstructure assists in the restoration of individual, moral, intellectual, and affective integrity. One appropriate response to such personal transformation is to seek to heal distortions in cultural values which have contributed to the process of personal decline of many members of a society. Healing the distortions of cultural values creates a superstructure which can also challenge and criticise the distortions in social values. The distortions in social values is expressed through biased common sense in our political, economic, and technological institutions. Healing of the distortions of cultural value can correct the short-term

55 See Lonergan, 'Healing and Creating in History', 100–109

56 Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church*, 78.



expediency of common sense and the power politics of group bias.<sup>57</sup> Healing of the social level of values can then lead to the just distribution of vital values to all groups within society. Lonergan refers to this movement as the healing vector in human history. Both healing and creative processes are needed in human history. Human creativity needs healing to liberate it to be itself, that is, freed from the blocks and biases which undermine its energy. The healing vector, though divine in its origin, has its own purpose within the domain of human history.<sup>58</sup>

Political engagement is the proximate outcome of a cultural transformation, and the more remote outcome of psychic, moral and religious conversions. It is only at the end of this multiple mediation through personal and cultural values that we can speak of a 'direct duty to work for a just ordering of society', a task 'proper to the lay faithful'.<sup>59</sup> The temptation, often enough succumbed to, is to move directly from the religious to the political, as if a political program can be read straight out of one's religious beliefs.<sup>60</sup> Examples of this dynamic include statements such as 'The Bible says' or 'Catholic Social Teaching says' with strident calls for society and culture to align itself with these revealed statements. Another approach is co-relating selected biblical or doctrinal statements with selected insights from the human sciences to create a vision for a new order. Such attempts at correlation presume that the scriptural or doctrinal texts were produced in contexts that were not limited by their own biases and distortions. Such attempts also fail to adequately acknowledge that the culture that is to be co-related with revealed insights has in at least some measure been shaped by the same religious tradition. In short, the method of theological correlation reflects the tendency to 'split' the secular and the sacred, as outlined in Part 1 of this article.<sup>61</sup>

It is at this point, Part 5, that we return to Object Relations theory noting an ever-present temptation for the church and religious people generally to tend towards the paranoid-schizoid position as proposed

57 Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church*, 79.

58 Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church*, 79.

59 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*.

60 Ormerod & Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*.

61 See Ormerod, 'Quarrels with the Method of Correlation'.



by Klein. The basic split manifesting in perceived oppositions between the church and the world, between idealised past and demonized present, between Christianity and Islam, men and women, heterosexual and homosexual, clerical and lay states. As noted in the first part of this article, the observed phenomena named by Klein as the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions have been largely affirmed by research in neuroscience. What has also been affirmed is that these 'positions' are not simply transitory or passing phases or stages, but they set up the basis of the psyche's enduring orientation throughout life. Further, it was noted that depending on the level of integration and the amount of subjective stress, elements of oscillation between the two positions is a phenomenon that can be observed. It was also noted that the potential for oscillation is often actualized when there is a state of heightened anxiety and stress. For the Church and religious people generally to be instruments of creative nature and conduits of healing grace to a splintered culture and social realm, there is a need for those who rhetorically proclaim peace and reconciliation in Christ, to mourn their own historic and current failures, lest they fall into the trap of cycles of collective unconscious projection of sin onto the 'other' and collectively, unconsciously, fear that the other will return to seek revenge.

Post the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, in Australia the churches and religious people generally have much to feel guilty about. Many ecclesial communities manifestly and tragically failed to live up to their own self-proclaimed ideals in terms of pastoral care of children. A result of the findings of the Royal Commission is that the churches have certainly lost their previous sense of omnipotence. One response to the finding of the Royal Commission has been the combination of an acknowledgement of guilt, seeking forgiveness, working at reparation, including just monetary compensation, the development of programs designed to ensure structural and cultural change and mourning the loss of an imaged image of the church as totally benign. Such a stance characterises Klein's depressive position. Another response to the Royal Commission and its report is to perceive the whole process as an attack and respond with some of the following strategies. Answering the changed relationship between the church and other elements of society some Catholics desire to 'return to a mythical'

liturgical Latin past in terms of worship. Mythical in the sense that many of those working to restore a 'traditional Latin liturgy' have little or no understanding of the ecclesial situation prior to the liturgical reforms that were the fruit of the Second Vatican Council. The context of the pre-Vatican II Latin liturgy was an ecclesial culture permeated by individualism, fear, sectarianism, and distorted food laws closely tied to religious identity. Another response is that of radical orthodoxy which is characterized in terms of a call for clarity of doctrinal positions with certain derivative moral issues such as contraception and governance issues such as the call for women priests. In this response, these issues act as proxy indicators for dogmatic orthodoxy. Yet another response is Evangelical Catholicism, in which all Catholics are expected to be active evangelisers in their Church community. Such a view confuses discipleship with ministry and forgets that the appropriate role for most Catholic laypeople, indeed their direct duty, is to work for a just ordering of society consistent with the inbreaking of the reign of God in the many contexts in which they work and recreate. Another response to perceived persecution includes calls for 'home schooling' in the context of families and individuals living in monastically inspired, metaphorical 'arks' designed to ride out the floodwaters of postmodernity. Consistent with Augustine's all or nothing approach such responses illustrate a communal manifestation of the paranoid-schizoid position. Schizoid in the sense of a clear split between us and them, right and wrong. Paranoid in the sense of once the 'other' has been socially constructed, all the unacceptable elements of those in the groups and movements are unconsciously projected on to (into) the other and as such are to be feared. Such a dynamic is evident in both ecclesial and civil structures throughout the contemporary world. Perhaps its apotheosis in the political situation is in the USA under the presidency of Donald Trump and ecclesially, manifest in the factions for and against Pope Francis.

For the church to be effective in assisting in the task of healing political division and creating a new social order consistent with the reign of God, it needs the ability to view itself and other institutions as marked by present and historical complexity. Informed by the insights from Klein as confirmed by research in neuroscience on the dynamics of

splitting, Christians who constitute the church need to catch themselves in the act of projecting what they find unacceptable in themselves onto the 'other' or others. As a complex, divinely inspired, human and sinful organization the church has the potential to operate as both a destructive force leading to division, or to be a healing and creative instrument of justice, peace and reconciliation to a culture and social order so much in need of such things. To act in this way however the church as a mature organization, needs to accept: a) That while it is founded by the Spirit to continue the mission of the incarnate Word, as an institution it no longer holds the omnipotent role it did in Christendom; b) As a divinely inspired institution constituted by individuals whose religious, moral, intellectual and psychic conversion is ever precarious, the church has the potential to be an instrument of both division and sin, and/or an instrument of grace and reconciliation to the world — a world, which, while damaged by the effects of sin, remains good, if only in potential, and which is being constantly offered participation in the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit.

The relationship between the church and the world of politics, culture, and society is extraordinarily complex and involves issues and sets of relationships that are influenced by both the historical effects of sin as well as the free gift of God's grace. As a discipline, Theology is one, among other, useful disciplines. Informed and inspired by the mysterious Law of the Cross, manifested as non-violent resistance and the return of good for evil, one of the tasks proper to Theology is to recognize complexity and cooperate with other disciplines in making sense of the impact of sin on the world. Another theological task is to work towards convincing those who hold positions of authority in churches and civil institutions to resist the ever-present tendency to split between good and bad under the influence of institutional stress and avoid the consequent result of proposing simple, common sense solutions to complex historically conditioned situations.

In terms of mission and ministry, in the absence of psychic, moral, and intellectual conversion, religious conversion can lead to magical thinking and a tendency to observe, or indeed create, a split between good-bad, church-world, saved-damned world-views. In the absence of moral conversion, religious conversion can lead to a privatised sense of

personal salvation rather than a call to mission to work with the Holy Spirit to create a social order consistent with the in-breaking reign of God as proclaimed by the incarnate Word. In the absence of psychic conversion or psychic healing of the basic split in the psyche, religious conversion runs the risk of drawing on intellectual faculties to repeat and perhaps amplify psychic splits by simply changing the categories and labels for good and bad to heaven and hell and saved and damned, sacred and secular with little or no personal psychic healing or integration. Without intellectual conversion—in the sense of restricting one's judgement to that which, while mediated by meaning, can be affirmed as real—religious conversion runs the risk of tending towards the formation of a cult or sect, complete with sophisticated literature to justify beliefs, practices and patterns of worship. Passing live venomous snakes from one to another in the context of worship is perhaps not the only example of inauthentic Christian worship.

For those who live at this particular time in history as actors in the ongoing Pentecost event, the task is to promote and nurture integrative religious, psychic, moral, and intellectual conversion in those to whom we are called to minister or teach. The formation of authentic carriers of the meaning and message of Jesus Christ is foundational to the process of facilitating social grace in history. It is authentic carriers of the meaning and message of Jesus Christ who will influence, educate, and govern in a way that facilitates the action of the Holy Spirit through social grace, to co-create a world that aligns more closely to the vision of the reign of God as proclaimed by the Word made flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, during his historical mission on earth.

For those looking for a quick fix to complex problems such a proposition will appear to take too long and there will be calls for direct action echoing the cry of the two-year old 'I don't know what I want but I know I want it NOW!'

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child,  
I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to  
childish ways. (I Cor 13:11 NRSV)

Given the multiple mediations involved and given the time and energy needed to shift cultures towards some normatively perceived political

goal, church and religious people generally, often fall for the temptation of seeking quick and simple solutions to complex problems. The truth however is that the church and religious people in general, need to mourn their own current and historical failures before promoting solutions. The current call is for adult Christians to be members of an adult church. Adults are those who understand that it is only at the end of multiple mediation through personal and cultural values and through individual religious, psychic, moral, and intellectual conversion, that they can take up the task of co-creating with the Holy Spirit a society and culture that makes the basic necessities of life available to all. This task is, in fact, proper to the adult lay faithful. The task of clergy and hierarchy is to serve the lay faithful by constantly resourcing and inviting them into adult relationships with each other, with God, with the Church and the common humanity of which we are all members.

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