

## Social Grace and the Mission of the Word

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In the paper that I presented at this colloquium last year<sup>1</sup> I attempted to do three things. First, I presented a way of understanding the universality of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Second, I offered a hypothesis for how we might understand the indwelling not only of the Holy Spirit but also of the Father and the Son.<sup>2</sup> That hypothesis will be reviewed and enlarged in the first part of the present paper. Third, I suggested that the scale of values presented by Bernard Lonergan in *Method in Theology* and developed in my *Theology and the Dialectics of History* into a central category in the theology of history be regarded as a crucial litmus test for the discernment of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the diverse circumstances of human interchange, collaboration, and development among people of various religious faiths and commitments.<sup>3</sup>

With that third point, I was already into the topic of the present paper, for the scale of values is the key to the notion of social grace that I would like to suggest here. Briefly, the gift of God's love, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit (religious values) is the condition of the possibility of sustained personal integrity (personal value); persons of integrity represent the condition of possibility of genuine meanings and values informing ways of living (cultural values); the pursuit of genuine cultural values is a constitutive dimension in the establishment of social structures and intersubjective habits (social values) that would render more probable something approaching an equitable distribution of vital values to the human community (vital values). It is true that the link between cultural and social values as thus expressed concentrates exclusively on meaning as the controlling factor in human affairs, and there is a complex surd that at times escapes personal and communal control that prevents the scale from functioning in a seamless

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<sup>1</sup> Robert M. Doran, 'What Is the Gift of the Holy Spirit?' available on [www.lonerganresource.com](http://www.lonerganresource.com) under "Events/Conferences."

<sup>2</sup> That hypothesis is more fully unfolded in Robert M. Doran, 'Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling: A Key to the *Nexus Mysteriorum Fidei*,' to be published in *Lonergan Workshop 22* (2010).

<sup>3</sup> On the scale of values, see Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 31-32. For its elaboration, see Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapter 4 and *passim*.

manner precisely by preventing integral meaning from becoming operative in the constitution of the good of social order, the social mediation of the good. That complex surd is precisely what is meant by social sin. Lonergan addresses this surd in his treatment of individual, group, and general bias. I have attempted to address it further by speaking of the need for a psychic conversion that would join Lonergan's intellectual, moral, and religious conversions in a united front against the destructive force of bias in human affairs. But for my present purposes, it is enough to state that the integral functioning of the full scale of values is constitutive of what I mean here by the 'social grace' that I would set over against social sin.

My purpose in the present paper is to flesh out the notion of social grace and to relate it, and with it the scale of values that is its principal constituent, to the other divine mission, that of the Incarnate Word. I will emphasize that the invisible mission of the Word has something to do with the connection between cultural values and social values. But it will be my thesis in this paper that the notion of social grace is a contemporary transposition of the biblical category 'the reign of God,' and as such is inextricably linked also to an adequate theology of the visible mission of the divine Word in Jesus of Nazareth.

I have three sections. First, I will state my own preliminary theological doctrines regarding the divine missions, and so regarding what in the scale of values is summed up in the brief expression 'religious values.' In the second part, I will begin to add to these preliminary positions by speaking of an *invisible* mission of the divine Word flowing from the structure expressed in the first part, and I will relate that invisible mission to the scale of values and so to social grace. I will conclude with a third section that articulates some of the parameters of the theology of the *visible* mission of the Word in Jesus of Nazareth, again in relation to the same scale of values constitutive of what I am calling social grace, but now under the rubric of the reign or kingdom of God as announced by Jesus, and with reference to the revelation of God in Jesus that comes to expression precisely in that announcement.

## **1 Preliminary Theological Doctrines regarding the Divine Missions**

**(1) The Holy Spirit is God’s first gift, and so a theology of the divine missions should begin with the mission of the Holy Spirit and continue to the mission of the Incarnate Word.**

I believe this order of things is reflected in the structure of Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*, where grace is treated before the explicit treatment of the Incarnation. At any rate, Thomas argues in question 38 of the first part of the *Summa theologiae* that ‘Gift’ is a personal name for the Holy Spirit (article 1) and a proper and not appropriated name for the Holy Spirit (article 2). If that is the case all supernatural divine gifts, including the mission of the divine Word, are somehow ‘in’ the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is, first and foremost, the gift that the Father and the Son eternally give to each other as together they communicate the divine nature to the relation of love that unites them. But if the divine missions are the divine processions linked to a created, contingent, and consequent term – and that is a theological position held with more or less explicit precision by Thomas Aquinas, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Bernard Lonergan<sup>4</sup> – then the mission of the Holy Spirit historicizes and universalizes the eternal gift mutually uniting the Father and the Son. That eternal gift is present in human history.

**(2) Wherever there has been or is or will be human attentiveness, intelligence, rationality, and moral responsibility pursuing the transcendental objectives of the intelligible, the true and the real, the good, with these pursuits encased in a tidal movement that includes aesthetic and dramatic intentions of the transcendental objective of the beautiful, there has been the offer of the gift of God’s love, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the inchoate supernatural fulfilment of a natural desire for union with God, and as a pledge of the**

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<sup>4</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 43 passim; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theodrama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3: *Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992) 157; Bernard Lonergan, chapter 6 in *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

**beatific knowing and loving that is our supernatural destiny. The gift of the Holy Spirit is thus universal.**

**(3) The mission of the Word is to be conceived as occurring ‘in’ the Holy Spirit and in relation to the Holy Spirit’s universal mission.**

In the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s time, the Father sent the Son, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, driven by the same Spirit into the desert for forty days, led back by the Spirit to preach the coming of God’s reign, and raised to life from death by the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the Holy Spirit, that is, the gift of divine love, is not only intensified but also revealed, made thematic, in the mission of the Son, where it plays a constitutive role. That same Holy Spirit was then sent by the Father and the Son on the apostles and the other women and men gathered in the upper room on Pentecost, in what may be called a visible mission of the Holy Spirit, to fulfill the twofold mission of the Son and the Spirit, and to enable a public acknowledgment that what happened in Jesus was indeed the revelation of the triune God in history. Pentecost began the ongoing fifth act in the drama of the salvation wrought by Jesus as the latter is conceived by Raymond Schwager, an act in which we are all among the principal protagonists, the act in which the mutual interplay of divine and human freedom can now be carried on in explicit recognition of what, prior to the revelation that occurs in the mission of the incarnate Word, necessarily remained *vécu* but not *thématique*, implicit but not recognized, conscious but not known, or to employ a Scholastic designation, present *in actu exercito* but not *in actu signato*.<sup>5</sup> The mission of the Word is among other things the explicit revelation through linguistic and incarnate meaning of what God has always been doing and continues to do in the inner word of the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit, namely, pour out

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<sup>5</sup> See Raymond Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation: Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Redemption*, trans. James G. Williams and Paul Haddon (New York: Crossroad, 1999). The five acts are: (1) Jesus’ preaching of the reign of God, (2) the conflict with the religious authorities because of his preaching of the reign of God, (3) the crucifixion and death of Jesus, (4) the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and (5) the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The latter I am conceiving not as the first and original gift of the Holy Spirit to humankind, which is a universal reality, but as the special confirmation by the Holy Spirit that the mission of the Word was indeed the revelation of what God has been doing and will continue to do, namely pour out divine love on humankind.

divine love upon human beings. That invisible mission becomes visible at Pentecost, in confirmation of the revelation that occurs in the visible mission of the Word

**(4) We Christians share a religious community with all human beings, including the people of the world's other religions, because of this universal gift of what we call the Holy Spirit.**

The community in which we participate is grounded both in the common orientation of human nature as obediential potency through intentional consciousness to the mystery of love and awe that in fact is the transcendent triune God, and in the universal gift of the transcendent God's triune life through what Christians would confess to be the indwelling Holy Spirit.

**(5) To a large extent, however, that community is only potential.**

Community is an achievement of common meaning, and common meaning is a matter not only of common experience, but also of compatible understandings, mutually agreed upon judgments or affirmations of fact and of value, common decisions, and solidarity in action. The work of interreligious dialogue is to promote as much as possible the emergence of a community that is not only potential through shared experience, but also formal through shared meanings, actual through shared affirmations of fact and value, and constitutive of our human world through common decisions and actions. Needless to say, we, the members of the world's religions, have a long, long way to go before we move beyond merely potential community.

**(6) A Christian and Catholic theology of the immanent constitution of life in God will help Christians participate in establishing such a community.**

My theology of the immanent constitution of life in God due to the gift of the Holy Spirit can be put forward in eight points, which form in this paper distinct sub-headings.

**(6.1) First, there is an uncreated gift given to us by the Father, a gift whom Christians name the Holy Spirit. The gift, as uncreated, is constituted by God alone. By the gift the**

**triune God assumes a constitutive role in our living, not as an inherent form or quasi-form, but as the term of a set of created relations.**

The human subject of the first of those relations, the relation to the Holy Spirit, is the person elevated by an entitative habit bestowed at the core of his or her identity, at the level of central form, of the soul: elevated to participation in the inner trinitarian life of God. The term of that created relation of the created central form through the created gift of elevation is the uncreated Holy Spirit. In terms of the scale of values, this begins the theological explication of the relation between religious and personal values.

**(6.2) Second, this divine self-communication, constituted by God alone, allows not only the Holy Spirit but each of the persons of the Trinity to be present to those to whom the created grace of God's favor (*gratia gratum faciens*) has been given.**

The gift of the Holy Spirit as the uncreated term of a created relation also allows the other persons of the Trinity to be present as distinct terms of distinct created relations, for the Holy Spirit is an uncreated relation to the Father and the Son, and so to be related to the Holy Spirit must entail being related to the Father and the Son as terms of distinct relations.

**(6.3) Third, the created gift by which God gives us this participation in divine life is effected, created, by the love that is common to the three divine persons; but it is immanently constituted in terms of created participations in what Aquinas calls the 'notional acts' proper to each of the divine persons.**

The divine gift establishes distinct relations to each of the divine persons. It is not simply by appropriation that the Christian prays, 'Our Father,' 'Lord Jesus Christ,' 'Come, Holy Spirit.' Those three prayers express three distinct relations to three distinct persons. Those relations share in and imitate the trinitarian relations, and so bestow on us a distinct participation in the

divine life of each person, in keeping with the distinct fashion in which each of them exercises the divine creative love. The question for systematics is, How can this be?

**(6.4) Fourth, the created consequent condition by which it is possible to affirm a created relation to the uncreated Holy Spirit, that is, what has been known as sanctifying grace, imitates and participates in the uncreated relation to the Holy Spirit that the Father and the Son together are. That is, it imitates and participates in what the psychological analogy has traditionally called active spiration.**

The created gift called sanctifying grace is the reception of actively spirating love as it elevates central form to a created supernatural relation to the uncreated Holy Spirit. As such, it is a created participation in the Father and the Son as together they actively ‘breathe’ the Holy Spirit. It is experienced, at least as recollected and made thematic in memory, as being on the receiving end of unconditional love and loving. We have been given a share in the relation to the Holy Spirit that in God is the Father and the Son actively loving each other and in that loving ‘breathing,’ ‘spirating,’ the Holy Spirit. In this active loving, the Father communicates divine love to the Son, who responds precisely as *Verbum spirans Amorem*, an eternal Judgment of Value that breathes eternal love, the proceeding love that is the Holy Spirit issuing as the mutual love of the Father and the Son.

**(6.5) Fifth, participation in the *Verbum spirans Amorem* thus takes place through a created supernatural judgment of value or, better, set of judgments of value, from which there proceeds the created love that we call charity. The gift of God’s love thus includes a participation in an invisible mission of the divine Word. The charity that proceeds from the participation in the Word breathing love shares in the Proceeding Love that is the Holy Spirit. Charity relates us back to the Father and the Son in a created participation in the passive spiration of the Holy Spirit, setting up inverse created relations to the uncreated**

**Father and Son, who thus also dwell in us as terms of distinct created relations corresponding to their distinction as divine Persons.**

**(6.6) Sixth, the set of judgments of value that participates in the Word's role in breathing the Holy Spirit, our participation in the invisible mission of the Word, constitutes a universalist 'faith' that is common to all who have assented to the reception of unqualified love. This knowledge called faith grounds the proceeding charity that a Christian theology acknowledges as a created participation in the passive spiration that is the Holy Spirit.**

This universalist faith Lonergan distinguishes in his later work from the beliefs of particular religious traditions. The faith reflected in such judgments of value can be and is found in diverse traditions, and is responsible, it would seem, for Lonergan's hope that the religions of the world will find common ground and common cause in the gift of God's love. Such faith is 'the knowledge born of religious love,'<sup>6</sup> a knowledge contained in judgments of value consequent upon the reception of the gift of unqualified love. Articulating those common judgments of value represents, I believe, the locus of interreligious dialogue today. For Christians that locus will be a share in the invisible mission of the divine Word. The articulation of those common judgments of value will raise our community with the people of the world's religions from the potential community constituted by a shared experience to the formal and actual state generated by shared understanding and affirmation, and because the judgments in question are judgments of value, also to the status of a community that can act in solidarity in the collaborative constitution of the human world.

**(6.7) Seventh, an analogy for understanding the divine processions can be suggested from this structure of the divine gift.**

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<sup>6</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 115. For Lonergan's understanding of this universalist faith and its distinction from the religious beliefs of particular traditions, see *ibid.* 115-19.



The analogy starts with the reception of the gift of God's love, recollected in memory, from which there proceeds a set of judgments of value; from these two there flows the charity that is the love of God in return. The recollection in memory of the divine favor is an analogue for the divine Father, the set of judgments of value that proceeds from this *memoria* is an analogue for the divine Son, and the charity that is the love of God in return is an analogue for the proceeding Love that is the Holy Spirit. Created grace thus has a Trinitarian form. The analogy in the order of grace begins with the gift of God's love, retrospectively interpreted as a gift of being on the receiving end of a love and a loving that are without qualification. The initial step in the analogy is composed of the gift of God's love recollected and acknowledged in memory. This step issues in the inner word of a judgment of value proceeding from memory and acknowledging the goodness of the gift. This judgment of value is the foundation of a universalist faith that is present in all authentic religion. The recollection and judgment of value together constitute a created share in, participation in, imitation of, divine active spiration, the active loving of the Father and the Son for each other from which divine *Amor procedens*, passive spiration, the Holy Spirit, originates. *Memoria* and its *verbum spirans amorem* give rise to the disposition of charity, the antecedent universal willingness that is a created participation in and imitation of the Holy Spirit, a disposition that establishes a reverse relation of love for the Father and the Son. The relation between the love acknowledged in *memoria* and its word, on the one hand, and charity on the other is analogous to the relation between active and passive spiration in the triune God. The three divine persons dwell in us and among us, are present to us, precisely as the uncreated terms of created supernatural relations: supernatural, because their term is God as God is in God's threefold conscious self, which is beyond the proportion of any created nature and so absolutely supernatural.

**(6.8) Eighth, this theology constitutes a twofold transposition – theoretical and methodological – of the movement of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius: from the**

**reception of divine love at the beginning to the ‘Contemplation for Attaining Love of God’ in return at the very end.**

That contemplation contains the basic structure that I am suggesting: memory recollecting and making thematic the gift that one has received, the judgment of value that this is indeed very good, and the awakening of love for the One who has first loved us. Memory and judgment of value together are a created share in active spiration, and the awakening of love in return is a created participation in passive spiration.

## **2 The Invisible Mission of the Word and the Notion of Social Grace**

I have said something about the invisible mission of the divine Word in speaking of the set of judgments of value in which we share in the divine life of the Word. I have also mentioned the visible mission of the divine Word, as it occurs in relation to the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit and even gives rise to a visible mission of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. My point for the remainder of this paper will be twofold: first, to link the universalist faith that articulates a share in the invisible mission of the Word to the social grace that constitutes the integral functioning of the scale of values, and second, to open upon the specifically Christian faith that emerges as we confess the entrance of divine meaning and value, the divine Logos, into human history in the visible mission of the Word.

I will present the notion of social grace in two steps. The first has to do with the peculiarity of history as a field of investigation. The second has to do with the role of articulate cultural values in that peculiar field.

### *2.1 The Peculiarity of History*

Taking my cue from Lonergan, I speak of the peculiarity of history by contrasting history with autobiography and biography. As we move from autobiography to biography, there is a transition

from 'life,' that is, my life, to 'the life and times' of another human being. And as we move from biography to history, the 'times' are no longer a subordinate clarification of an individual 'life.' Rather, attention is centered on the *common* field that only in part is explored in each of the biographies or autobiographies that are or might be written. That common field 'is not just an area in which biographies might overlap. There is social and cultural process. It is not just a sum of individual words and deeds. There exists a developing and/or deteriorating unity constituted by cooperations, by institutions, by personal relations, by a functioning and/or malfunctioning good of order, by a communal realization of originating and terminal values and disvalues,' and, I might add, by the vicissitudes of meaning struggling to become common or falling apart on the shoals of human waywardness and bias. 'Within such processes,' continues Lonergan, 'we live out our lives. About them each of us ordinarily is content to learn enough to attend to his own affairs and perform his public duties. To seek a view of the actual functioning of the whole or of a notable part over a significant period of time is the task of the historian.'<sup>7</sup> My first approximation to the notion of social grace is to indicate that grace as a social reality would be the gift of God's love considered not so much as affecting individual biographies and establishing within them created relations to each of the uncreated divine Persons, but as transforming the 'functioning and/or malfunctioning good of order,' the 'communal realization of originating and terminal values and disvalues,' and the ongoing genesis or deterioration of meaning as affecting that social and historical reality that is more than 'just a sum of individual words and deeds.' We have developed in the past several decades a fairly sophisticated theology of social sin, a theology that explains how sin is not simply a reality that affects, indeed infects, individual biographies but that distorts the entire functioning of the good of order and replaces terminal values with terminal disvalues. I continue to maintain that Lonergan's diagnosis of bias is the single most powerful ingredient in the theology of social sin. The notion of social grace, when developed, would speak of grace not only as it affects individual biographies but as it

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<sup>7</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 184.

makes a difference in the actual development of common meanings, in the functioning of the good of order, and in the delivery of vital goods to the entire community.

## *2.2 Articulate Cultural Values and Social Grace*

Now, in order to develop the notion of social grace in terms of the scale of values, I want to double back to the notion of the judgments of value that proceed from the gift of divine love. I wish to suggest that social grace can be understood as grounded in a participation in the shared or universalist faith that flows from that gift. These judgments of value constitute our graced participation in the procession of the Son from the Father, in the actively spirating Word breathing Love from which or through which ('Filioque' or 'per Filium') the Holy Spirit originates; that participation through judgments of value born of the gift of God's love is the invisible mission of the Son. These judgments of value constitute the universalist faith that is a knowledge born of religious love. The gift of God's love is an inner word that God speaks in our hearts, a word that relates us to the Holy Spirit. The knowledge born of that gift, the invisible mission of the Word, is an ultimately ineffable 'Yes,' a global judgment of value, that sometimes gets articulated in formulated statements of value. And these articulated judgments of value to which the gift gives rise are an outer word that is constitutive of the human world, precisely at the level of cultural values in the scale of values. These cultural values are responsible for making the human world different from what it would be were we not empowered by the invisible missions of the Spirit and the Word to utter them. That outer word not only flows from a participation in the invisible mission of the Word through the ultimately ineffable Yes that flows from the gift of divine love. It also begins a participation in the visible mission of the eternal Word, the eternal Judgment of Value, by calling for and entering into the collaboration that generates publicly shared understandings and publicly shared affirmations. In other words, at the heart of what I am calling the social reality of grace is an articulate set of cultural values that arise from the collective discovery, expression, validation, criticism, correction, development,

improvement of the formulations of the judgments of meaning and value that flow from the gift of God's love that Christians call the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Lonergan would express that universalist faith in something like the following terms (and this is not a direct quotation, but is based on the section 'Faith' in his chapter on religion in *Method in Theology* at 116-18). As I read this set of statements, I invite you to insert these meanings and values into the locus of cultural values in the scale of values, and to sense what a difference they make in the human world mediated and constituted by meaning as they come to be shared by many.

All other values are placed in the light and the shadow of transcendent value, which is supreme and incomparable and which links itself to all other values to transform, magnify, glorify them. Thus the originating value is not human intelligence and responsibility but divine light and love, and the terminal value is not the human good we can bring about but the whole universe. Human development is not limited to skills and virtues but extends to holiness. The power of God's love brings forth a new energy and efficacy in all goodness. The limit of human expectation ceases to be the grave. The world is the fruit of God's self-transcendence, the expression and manifestation of God's benevolence and beneficence, God's glory. God made us in the divine image, and so our authenticity consists in being like God, origins of value in true love. In particular, God calls us to the higher authenticity that overcomes evil with good. We can do this only because faith, the knowledge born of religious love, places human efforts in a friendly universe, revealing an ultimate significance in human achievement and strengthening new undertakings with confidence. That higher authenticity that overcomes evil with good enters with religious faith, unwavering hope, and self-sacrificing charity into a world that inflicts on individuals the social, economic, and psychological pressures that for human frailty amount to determinism; a world that multiplies and heaps up the abuses and absurdities that breed resentment, hatred, anger, violence; a world that houses people in ideological prisons; a world that dooms people to the

vast pressures of social decay. The gift of God's love awakens a knowledge of our sinfulness and of our real guilt, a firm purpose of amendment of our ways, and a confidence that the one who bestowed the gift of love is, despite our sinfulness and unworthiness, everlasting mercy and forgiveness.

That is the closest Lonergan comes to expressing what this universalist faith, this participation in the invisible mission of the Word, might be. It cannot be denied that he is employing terminology that he learned from his Christian heritage, but he is using that terminology to frame a set of affirmations that he hopes could be agreed upon by others who have consciously been on the receiving end of divine love, once they recognize that gift for what it is. And now I must, following Charles Hefling, insist that even these expressions are not that faith itself, but beliefs, articulations that flow from that faith. The faith itself that flows from the gift of God's love is an ineffable knowledge, a global 'Yes' that will never be adequately formulated, a knowledge that can be expressed only by formulating statements that, as statements, would have to be classified as statements, not of faith but of belief.<sup>8</sup> 'The *inexpressibility* of faith is the cognitional counterpart of the *unrestrictedness* of the love from which it is "born."'<sup>9</sup> To articulate one's faith, even if that articulation is intended to express something that could be agreed upon universally, is to effect a transition from ineffable to effable knowledge. That transition is not unimportant. The outer word is not a mere addendum to the inner word of the gift of God's love. It is constitutive of the religious situation, in a manner remotely analogous to the way in which the outer avowal of love between two persons is not a mere addendum to their love but is *constitutive* of their being in love.

I should say something more about the validity of this notion of the scale of values.

In Avery Dulles's notes on Lonergan's 1964 Institute at Georgetown University on the issues of theological method, it is recorded that Lonergan referred to the normative subject

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Hefling, 'Revelation and/as Insight,' in *The Importance of Insight*, ed. John J. Liptay, Jr., and David S. Liptay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 112.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

disclosed in his generalized empirical method as a concrete universal. The subject that is a compound of empirical, intelligent, rational, and moral consciousness is normative because that subject gives the law to himself or herself, a law that Lonergan summarizes in the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible. These imperatives are for Lonergan the basis of natural law. But that this normative subject is a concrete universal means, among other things, that the results in history of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, as well as the results in history of being inattentive, stupid, silly, and irresponsible represent an objectification of the human spirit, somewhat along the lines of the Hegelian objectification of *Geist*, except that Lonergan's conception is not worked out in an idealist vein but in the critical realist conviction that genuine objectivity does indeed issue from authentic or normative subjectivity, and particularly in the *judgments* of fact and value that are not explicitly acknowledged in Hegelian philosophy as constitutive of human knowing. That objectification is the field of historical investigation that is more than an overlapping of individual biographies.

That structure of that historical objectification is captured in Lonergan's scale of values, for this scale represents human attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility writ large in the social and cultural structures of historical living. That is to say, the scale of vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values is isomorphic with the levels of consciousness: vital values with experience, social values with understanding, cultural values with judgment, personal values with decision, and religious values with the gift of God's love. The structure of the gift of the Holy Spirit constitutes a dimension of the fifth level, a dimension which, to borrow and perhaps adapt a term from Karl Rahner, could be called a supernatural existential inchoately fulfilling the natural yearning for union with God that unfolds through human empirical, intelligent, reasonable, and morally responsible operations. The integral functioning of the scale of values thus may be regarded as a social embodiment or objectification of the grace that is the communication of divine life to men and women in the gift of the Holy Spirit, a communication that moves from above downwards not only in human consciousness but also in the social objectification of that consciousness in the scale of values. The articulation of divine love, the

knowledge born of that love becomes articulate in judgments of value that constitute a universalist faith that shares in the invisible mission of the Word, enter into the scale of values primarily at the level of cultural values, transforming as it does so the meanings and values by which entire groups of people are constituted and thus effecting a more integral functioning of the entire scale.

Ultimately, it is the integral functioning of the scale of values that is the expression of the social dimension of grace or of what I am calling, in a kind of shorthand, social grace, a social grace that is established by the knowledge born of religious love that is faith. The articulation of the scale also represents, in my view, a transcendental validation of what has come to be known as the preferential option for the poor, since it is the global maldistribution of vital goods that sets the question regarding the entire scale. At any rate, all of these convictions are belief statements that express what ultimately is an ineffable assent to the communication of divine life in the gift of God's love, an ineffable assent that participates in the invisible mission of the divine Word, but that becomes articulate as one relates the gift of love to the set of meanings and values that constitutes the cultural values of one's milieu. That articulation is constitutive of the functioning of grace precisely as a social reality.

### **3 The Visible Mission of the Word and the Notion of Social Grace**

What happens theologically to the notion of the visible mission of the divine Word, and so to our theology of the Incarnation and our soteriology, in the context that has just been expressed? The implications, I believe, are twofold. The first has to do with the notion of revelation, and the second with the notion of the kingdom or reign of God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us; the very Word in whom all who assent to the gift of God's love participate in that very assent has pitched his tent among us as one of us.

#### *3.1 Revelation and the Visible Mission of the Word*



In spelling out the implications for the notion of revelation, I wish to stress two points. The first is that the visible mission of the Word is to be understood at least in part as a revelation in linguistic and incarnate meaning of the more elemental meanings, often inarticulate and at times ineffable, contained in the universal and invisible missions of the Holy Spirit and of the Word. The revelation is analogous to the avowal of love between two human beings, but it is an avowal in which the first to say ‘I love you’ is God. Like the avowal of love, it is no mere addendum to the inner gift but is constitutive of the religious situation. Christians would go even further and add that the word, like the inner gift, is from God, and indeed in one instance *is* God.

The second point is that the structure of revelation itself must be understood in terms of a theological position on the human consciousness and the human knowledge of the incarnate Word, Jesus of Nazareth, which is the principal site of revelation itself.<sup>10</sup> As such, the revelation that comes with the visible mission of the Word goes far beyond an explicit revelation of what is elementally contained in the invisible missions of the Holy Spirit and of the Word. It conveys a knowledge beyond the universalist faith that is the knowledge born of religious love, a knowledge beyond both the ineffable ‘yes’ that flows from that love and such articulations of that ‘yes’ as the beliefs that are present in what I have already developed from Lonergan, and so a knowledge beyond our participation through a universalist faith in the invisible mission of the Word. The knowledge that revelation conveys has something to do with *other* beliefs, namely, the beliefs that can be discovered by studying the history of Christian doctrine. For the content of at least those doctrines that are of prime importance, doctrines that go beyond the beliefs that flow proximately from a universalist faith, is a content that itself has been divinely revealed.<sup>11</sup> And the primary locus of that revelation is the human knowledge of the incarnate Word of God, Jesus of Nazareth. My effort here is to tease out how that is possible, how that statement can be maintained.

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<sup>10</sup> I rely for much of what I am saying here on Hefling’s paper cited in note 8. Let me note that another superb presentation and interpretation of what Lonergan says about Christ’s human beatific knowing appears in Jeremy Wilkins’s paper ‘The Silence of Eternity, Interpreted by Love: Love and Knowledge of God in Christ.’ This paper will appear soon in *Pro Ecclesia*. I came across it too late for incorporation into this paper.

<sup>11</sup> See Hefling, ‘Revelation and/as Insight’ 99.

To say that the primary locus of such revelation of the divine mysteries is given in the human knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Word of God, is to view revelation as a matter of Jesus moving from *his* ineffable knowledge, which is different from ours, to an expression of that knowledge in human language. His ineffable knowledge is not the same as our ‘faith as the knowledge born of divine love,’ nor is the effable knowledge through which he learned to articulate the mystery of his person and of God the same as the generic beliefs that flow from the universalist faith that is the ‘Yes’ born of religious love. It is the source of those beliefs that express contents of mysteries that, had they not been revealed, we could never know, even from the gift of God’s love in the invisible mission of the Spirit. What makes the difference between the ineffable knowledge of Jesus and the faith that is the ineffable knowledge born of religious love is the beatific knowing that in Jesus takes the place of what in us is the faith that flows from the gift of God’s love.

The ontological constitution of Christ, as Lonergan understands it, may be set forth in four points, which I take from Charles Hefling’s masterful interpretation of Lonergan’s Christology.

First, ‘Whatever Christ may be inasmuch as he is a [human being], it is not what he is inasmuch as he is God. Humanity and divinity remain “unconfused, unmixed,” as Chalcedon insists.’<sup>12</sup> The reason is that God is unrestricted and necessary, and no restricted, finite, and contingent being, no finite creature, including Christ’s human nature, is God; all are related to God in the same way, as one intelligible part of the contingent whole that is the emergently probable universe. And God remains the same whether or not God brings about the existence of anything else, including the humanity of Jesus.

Second, however, Christ’s humanity is not related to God *only* as creature to Creator. *This* humanity is the humanity of the Word who is God. Just as God is intrinsically the same whether or not he brings about the existence of anything else, so also the Word is intrinsically the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 103.

same whether or not be *becomes* anything else. The Word retains his own identity whether or not he has in fact become a human being. But because the Word did become a human being, that human being's humanity is not only created: it is assumed, and consequently that human being has his identity in the Word.<sup>13</sup>

Third, 'the one divine person who subsists in two natures is also one divine subject of two consciousnesses ... as the subject of humanly conscious operations Christ is like us in all things ... [and so] his human consciousness is precisely *not* divine, and the fact that it is a divine subject's human consciousness does not make it so.'<sup>14</sup>

And fourth, 'there exists one human consciousness by which a divine subject is present to himself, namely, the human consciousness that is a constituent of the incarnate Word. Through conscious acts that are altogether human, the eternal Word was made aware of the selfsame eternal Word.'<sup>15</sup> But because consciousness is only self-presence, and not knowing in the fully human sense, and in particular not self-knowing, this does not entail his conscious operations being either an act of understanding what it is to be the incarnate Word, or an act of judging that the one who is performing the operations is the incarnate Word. That knowledge is given to him not by the hypostatic union but by revelation. The Incarnation as such gives Christ no human knowledge of himself, because it gives him no knowledge of anything at all. Consciousness is not knowledge. Consciousness is being at a certain level of perfection. Simply *being* the incarnate Word did not provide Christ with access to knowledge that other men and women cannot achieve. Unless something further can be stated, something that goes beyond the ontological constitution of Christ and its translation into psychological terms and relations, we would be left with the anomaly that 'although Christ's words *were* the words of the Word, he did not *know* they were.'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

But Christ as human did know by immediate vision or beatific knowing both God and the mysteries hidden in God. This doctrine, which Lonergan shares with Aquinas, is ‘the key to understanding the Incarnation as the definitive “site” of revelation.’<sup>17</sup> Jesus of Nazareth, Christ the man, God the Word precisely as subsisting in a human nature, the divine subject of human consciousness precisely as humanly conscious – and those four expressions designate the same reality – enjoyed immediate knowledge of God. This knowledge is not divine knowledge but human knowledge. It is beatific human knowing. It is finite, created, but also disproportionate to the knowing that is the fruit of natural human attentiveness, inquiry, understanding, reflection, and judgment; it was not gained through those operations. It is knowledge, not consciousness. It is a knowledge that is always in act. To know realities by beatific knowledge is to know them, not severally or sequentially, but all at once and all together. The intelligibility that such knowledge grasps is not mediated by anything sensible. Its content is inexpressible or ineffable. ‘As our ordinary acts of understanding grasp intelligibility in some presentation or representation, some ‘phantasm’ so, too, they express themselves in concepts, inner words, objects of thought that retain an imaginative component. Similarly, the outer words that convey what we have understood and conceived require some vehicle such as articulate sound or discrete markings. No such multiplicity, succession, or imaginability can pertain to the expression of an intelligibility that was never so mediated in the first place. Neither concepts nor language, therefore, are capable of expressing what is known by “seeing” God.’<sup>18</sup> The knowledge is literally ineffable.

By this ineffable knowledge, Christ is more than the divine subject of human consciousness, because knowledge is more than consciousness. By it he *understands* what it is to be God – that is what beatific knowledge is, after all – and what it is to be eternally begotten of the Father, and he *judges* that what he *experiences* in a humanly conscious way *is* what he *understands* through beatific knowledge. As Lonergan puts it in a very carefully phrased

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 105.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 107.

sentence, ‘Christ as man, through his human consciousness *and* his beatific knowledge, clearly understands, and with certainty judges, himself to be the natural Son of God and true God.’ Christ did not need beatific knowledge to *be* Word and Son, but without it he could not have known, humanly, the mystery of his own identity.<sup>19</sup>

This knowledge, however, is ineffable, and so the clarity and certainty with which he grasps his own identity cannot be expressed humanly, even to himself. ‘Not only eternal Sonship, but everything else that Christ knows by beatific knowledge, he knows not through the mediation of sensible data, but through the mediation of the divine essence. It seems, then, that the character of the knowledge that is his to share prevents him from sharing it. What he knows, he cannot think about; and what he cannot think about, he cannot deliberately communicate.’<sup>20</sup> To say that his humanly constituted thinking does or did express the inexpressible is to introduce a development on the notion of revelation. The inexpressible intelligibility of divine mystery became expressible in the single human consciousness of Jesus of Nazareth as subject of his earthly life. He learned how to express it. His earthly life *was* the expression of his grasp of the divine mystery. It was that expression not only in intersubjective and symbolic carriers of meaning such as smiles and gestures, but also in linguistic carriers of meaning, in outer words. He knew *both* the transcendent intelligibility that cannot be expressed in language that emerges out of the normal way of human learning *and* the meaningful language in which to express this otherwise inexpressible mystery. He knew the former by beatific knowing and the latter by human insights that are themselves the fruit of revelation. We proceed from the unrestricted *intention* of being to the acquisition of our effable knowledge. Christ the human being proceeded from his ineffable *knowing* of the unrestricted act to the formation of his effable supernatural knowledge. He needed both ineffable and effable knowledge: the former in order to know divine mysteries, and the latter in order to express them. His effable knowledge is the fruit of the ongoing process of insight in his own development, but in his case this is not only the insight that

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<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 108.

proceeds not from sensible data imaginatively construed so as to yield understanding, from below as it were, as with us, but also from the ongoing and self-correcting process of learning that enabled him to form in human language the ineffable knowledge that he had through beatific knowing.

### *3.2 The Reign of God and the Visible Mission of the Word*

The mystery is deepened if we take from Lonergan the affirmation that, as sanctifying grace and charity are, respectively, the created consequent conditions of human participation in and imitation of trinitarian active and passive spiration, trinitarian active loving and proceeding love, so there is a created consequent condition without which the statement ‘The eternal Word of God is incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth’ would not be true. That created consequent condition is not sanctifying grace or charity, though Jesus did enjoy both, but, following Aquinas, what Thomas calls the ‘esse secundarium’ of the Incarnation, the secondary act of existence by which it is true that the assumed humanity of the incarnate Word shares in the eternal relation of the uncreated Word to the Father. Now, in the same sentence in which he conceives sanctifying grace and charity as participations in active and passive spiration, Lonergan calls the ‘esse secundarium’ of the Incarnation, the grace of union, a created imitation of and participation in the divine relation of paternity. ‘Whoever sees me sees the Father.’ For our present purposes, the most significant point to this affirmation is the following: in the eternal Godhead, the Word does not speak; the Word is spoken; the Word’s notional act is not *dicere*, to speak, but *dici*, to be spoken. The Incarnate Word, however, speaks, and he speaks because the grace of union is a participation in the eternal ‘speaking’ that is the divine Father. He speaks, but he speaks only what he has heard from the Father in the Holy Spirit through his beatific knowing and his learning to articulate that knowing in human language, and that ‘hearing from the Father in the Holy Spirit’ is precisely the principal site in human history of the divine revelation that not only allows him ineffably to know who he is but makes it possible for him through created human insights and language to

communicate to us the ineffable knowing that he enjoyed by beatific vision, and to communicate it word by word, step by step, in the definitive entrance of divine meaning and value into human history through not only intersubjective and symbolic carriers of meaning but also in human language. That definitive entrance of divine meaning and value is precisely what is meant by the reign of God. Here, as in so many other ways, Lonergan's thought can join with a theological transformation of Martin Heidegger's: Language is the house of being, and care for language at the level of cultural values is central to the social grace that mediates the divine love expressed in religious values to the social structures that make it possible that human beings live in harmony and peace with one another: a goal that is shared by all who have said 'yes' to the uncreated gift of the Holy Spirit in the invisible mission of the Word, and a goal that is communicated in the visible mission of the Word as Jesus learns the language in which to express what he knows ineffably through his beatific knowledge.

Finally, I close with René Girard's sobering reminder of what a divine Word spoken in and entering into a sinful human world entails, a world in which the scale of values has been distorted, and in fact Girard's reminder of a dimension of the revelation that Jesus enjoyed from his beatific knowing. I note with interest that Girard relies on Heidegger for this reminder, even as he moves decisively beyond him. The Johannine Logos that was in the beginning with God and that was God and that became flesh and that revealed God, the Logos of love, is a Word that puts up no resistance, that always allows itself to be expelled by the logos of violence, but at the same time it is a Logos that reveals its own expulsion and in so doing reveals also the logos of violence for what it is. The logos of violence is a word that can exist only by expelling the true Logos even while feeding upon it in one way or another. '... the Word of truth [is] the true knowledge of the victim, continually eluded and rejected by [humankind].' This ultimate meaning of history in the Law of the Cross is at the heart of the revelation that is gradually communicated by God throughout the history of biblical literature, a revelation that finds its principal site in the beatific knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth.