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## Christianity: A Kleinian Perspective \*

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Psychoanalytic theory has taken a guarded approach to religion ever since Freud (1907) advanced his view of obsessional neurosis as "a travesty, half comic and half tragic, of a private religion" (p.117) and his related, some would say reductive (Carveth 1998; Rempel, 1997, 1998), view of religion as a "universal obsessional neurosis" (p. 126). But if, on the whole, "psychoanalysts continue to favor secular alternatives to traditional religious beliefs and practices" (Wallwork and Wallwork, 1990, p.160), post-Freudian theory has offered more positive ways of conceptualizing religious experience. Ego psychology as developed by Hartmann (1939, 1964), Winnicott's (1965, 1971) object relations theory, and Loewald's (1980) reconceptualization of the id, all enable us to recognize creative and adaptive as well as maladaptive and regressive aspects of religion. In addition, the theory of Melanie Klein (1975) suggests ways in which religion may, at least in some forms, promote rather than inhibit psychic growth.

At first glance, Klein's psychoanalytic system may not seem like the most fruitful approach to religion. Klein herself did not address the question of the psychological underpinnings of religious experience. Nor does her theory appear to offer concepts immediately relevant to a psychoanalytic understanding of religion. Referencing a personal communication with Elliot Jacques, the Symingtons (1996) claim that "Melanie Klein was indifferent to religion and philosophy, though not opposed to them" (p. 10). On the other hand, Grosskurth (1986) speculates that "It is conceivable that while living in Budapest, Klein was strongly tempted--particularly through her association with the Vago family--to become a Roman Catholic" (p. 84). Crediting Dr. Hans Thorner for pointing out the analogy to her, Grosskurth states that "Her later theories on constitutional envy, the primary importance of the mother, and reparation bear close parallels to the doctrines of original sin, the Immaculate Conception, and Christian atonement" (p. 84). Leaving such speculations and analogies aside, we believe Kleinian theory can usefully illuminate certain psychological functions of Christianity. Looking at religion through a Kleinian lens is not merely a matter of extending Freud's analysis back in

developmental time from oedipal to preoedipal dynamics, from a phallo- and patricentric to a mammo- and matricentric focus. For one thing, in Kleinian theory the Oedipus is already "preoedipal" in that it is situated, albeit very differently, in both the paranoid-schizoid (PS) and depressive (D) positions. Our central argument is that Klein's revisions to Freud's psychoanalytic system, like those of Hartmann, Winnicott and Loewald, permit an understanding of certain forms or types of Christian belief and practice in therapeutic, as distinct from primarily regressive or defensive, terms.

### *Freud's View of Religion*

Given Freud's extensive writings in this field, any attempt to summarize his essential view of religion is open to charges of oversimplification and of neglecting the significance of occasional statements that appear to run contrary to what is presented as his fundamental or overall attitude. Nevertheless, we feel justified in saying that throughout his writings Freud emphasized the defensive rather than the adaptive aspects of religion. Although acknowledging its contribution to civilization in promoting and justifying instinctual renunciation and, to some extent, compensating for it through the promise of a heavenly reward, his appreciation of the creative and sublimatory functions of religion was minimal, especially as compared to his view of art.

Extending his earlier (1907) view of religion as a collective obsessional neurosis, in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), he argues that totemic religion and exogamy, the incest taboo, originated in response to oedipal guilt. The son's desire to kill the father was enacted, Freud theorized, by the primitive horde of sons who collectively murdered their primal father in order to gain possession of the women he had monopolized. The primitive prohibitions against sexual relations with women of the same clan and against the killing of the totem animal (the representative of the father) derived from the sons' remorse at the murder of a loved object. The ritual sacrifice of the totem animal once a year, however, "not only comprised expressions of remorse and an attempt at atonement, it also served as a remembrance of the triumph over the father" (p.145). Thus religion comprised a defence which simultaneously permitted the easing of guilt and the disguised expression of the repressed wishes. Freud saw Christianity, with its prohibition against murder and incest and its sacrifice of the divine son, as an updated version of the primitive totemic defence against oedipal ambivalence.

Freud broadened his critique of religion in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927). Beginning with the premise that "every civilization must be built up on coercion and renunciation of instinct" (p.7) if it is to fulfil the necessity of taming nature and acquiring wealth, he situates religion "among the forces which are successful in combating the hostility to culture among the cultural unit" (p.13). Freud argues that religious ideas "are illusions, fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes" (p.30). Not only do these illusions "compensate [men] for the sufferings and privations which a civilized life in common has imposed on them" (p.18), but

the benevolent rule of a divine Providence allays our fear of the dangers of life; the establishment of a moral world-order ensures the fulfilment of the demands of justice, which have so often remained unfulfilled in human civilization; and the prolongation of earthly existence in a future life provides the local and temporal framework in which these wish-fulfilments shall take place (p.30).

Freud asserts that this understanding of religion in no way negates the notion that religion derives from oedipal conflict. It is the infant's helplessness, his longing for a powerful father, that leads him to project the wishful image of a paternalistic protective god onto the universe at large (pp.23-24).

Freud appreciated the social usefulness of religion. In *Totem and Taboo*, totemic religion counteracts the anarchy-making act of murder. In *The Future of an Illusion*, he notes more generally that "Religion has clearly performed great services for human civilization. It has contributed much towards the taming of the asocial instincts" (p.37) promoting, in turn, adherence to a range of societal regulations, laws, and ordinances. Religion, then, operates as defence serving the social need for inhibition of the drives. In *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (1918), Freud offers an individual example of religion's social function. Speaking of his patient's religious piety, which turned into an obsessional neurosis, he summarizes,

Apart from these pathological phenomena, it may be said that in the present case religion achieved all the aims for the sake of which it is included in the education of the individual. It put a restraint on his sexual impulses by affording them a sublimation and a safe mooring; it lowered the importance of his family

relationships, and thus protected him from the threat of isolation by giving him access to the great community of mankind. The untamed and fear-ridden child became social, well-behaved, and amenable to education (pp.114-15).

But despite clear recognition of its social functions and rare references to its sublimatory potential, Freud's predominant view of religion was as a species of infantilism reflecting not the sublimation of instinctual drives but their disguised, illusory gratification. In his view, its acceptance of wishful illusions impedes reality-testing, retards the advance toward psychosexual maturity and threatens the stability of civilization, especially in a scientific age. He suggests two reasons that "civilization runs a greater risk if we maintain our present attitude to religion than if we give it up" (p.35). First, in grounding prohibitions in the authority of God, "we are investing the cultural prohibition with a quite special solemnity, but at the same time we risk making its observance dependent on belief in God" (p.41). In the modern, scientifically-inclined world, diminishing belief in God reduces the power of religion to promote social integration. Furthermore, the general "character of sanctity and inviolability" with which religion invested cultural regulations is plainly contradicted, for "not only do [these regulations] invalidate one another by giving contrary decisions at different times and places, but apart from this they show every sign of human inadequacy" (p.41). Eventually, "the criticism which we cannot fail to level at them also diminishes to an unwelcome extent our respect for other, more justifiable cultural demands" (p.41). And so religion, far from preserving the cultural edifice, is liable in contemporary society to initiate its collapse. In lieu of espousing religious ideas to maintain social order, Freud proposes exposing the "purely rational reasons" underlying the precepts of civilization. Not only would this validate those precepts' inevitable inconsistency, it would also preclude the potential nonadherence of nonbelievers.

With the maturation of both the culture and the individual, Freud argues, religion would be outgrown (p.43). Relinquishing religious illusions, men will have to face the reality of their helplessness and insignificance in the universe, as well as undertaking instinctual renunciation with no hope of heavenly compensation. But this is necessary, for "infantilism is destined to be surmounted. Men cannot remain children for ever; they must in the end go out into 'hostile' life. We may call this '*education to reality*'" (p.49). Thus, religious illusions must finally submit to a more rational and thus

more realistic outlook.

Could Freud really have reached any other conclusion? Jones (1991) argues that the nature of Freud's theory, in which the fundamental forces motivating human behaviour are bodily-based instinctual drives of sex and aggression, made it difficult for him to conceive of religion in other than defensive terms. Religion is transference, and transference, as the reenactment of instinctually based drives and wishes, is always regressive, always opposed to reality. Thus Jones believes that Freud's drive theory made his infantilization, if not pathologization, of religion inevitable (pp.9-13, 32-3).

But Jones's argument falters if we remember that Freud *did* manage to maintain a positive view of artistic creation, which he also defined as illusion. In *The Future of an Illusion*, for instance, he notes that "art offers substitutive satisfactions for the oldest and still most deeply felt cultural renunciations, and for that reason it serves as nothing else does to reconcile a man to the sacrifices he has made on behalf of civilization" (p.14). In *Civilization and its Discontents*, he says, speaking of the artist, that

Another technique for fending off suffering is the employment of the displacements of libido which our mental apparatus permits of and through which its function gains so much in flexibility. The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world. In this, sublimation of the instincts lends its assistance. One gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychical and intellectual work. When that is so, fate can do little against one (p.79).

How does Freud resolve the contradiction that art, unlike religion, need not be discarded by the mature individual or culture? In order to explain the psychological dynamics behind art and literature without entirely reducing them to asocial drives, Freud employed the concept of sublimation. The idea that the drives can be somewhat redirected allowed Freud to praise artistic endeavour, apparently because as illusion somewhat divorced from its conflictual origins, art "allows men to step aside from the pressures of reality and to gain satisfaction from it" (Meissner, 1990, p.97) as a "substitutive satisfaction" as distinct from the disguised satisfaction of infantile wishes provided by religion.

Why did Freud not see religion as performing the same function as art? Why is it not also a product of sublimation? Meissner addresses the contradiction that Freud praised the illusory qualities of art while criticizing those of religion and suggests that Freud was opposed to illusion "only where it interferes with the human capacity to deal with the struggles of life" (1990, p.97). Art, according to Freud, aids this capacity; religion inhibits it. Thus art represents an adaptive or creative response to "the struggles of life," while religion represents a defensive manoeuvre.

Freud's distinction between art and religion does have a degree of validity, but only in so far as it applies to religion in its literalistic forms, as what we now call fundamentalism. By way of contrast, in his praise of art Freud made no provision for forms of that activity (both creation and appreciation) which were also "fundamentalist." Freud's comment that "the mild narcosis induced in us by art can do no more than bring about a transient withdrawal from the pressure of vital needs, and it is not strong enough to make us forget real misery" (1930, p.81) betrays his presumption that despite the artist's or art-appreciator's "withdrawal" into illusion, she never forgets that art is not reality. However, the history of censorship of art and literature attests to the failure of many to grasp the illusory nature of art in just the same way that many have so failed in regard to religion.

In *The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in an Age of Fundamentalism*, after reviewing recent examples of the artistic literalism Freud ignored, Steiner (1995) argues against such literalism for the perspective Freud intuitively adopted. She notes that:

Because art acts as both a sign of reality and as a self-contained entity, it creates a confusion between meaning and being and has a necessarily ambiguous relation to the extra-artistic world. It appears to provide a particularly intense experience of reality while not belonging to that reality in a straightforward manner. This virtuality in art is essential, no matter how much a given work may tend to diminish one side of the paradox or the other. It accounts for the "power" of good art to make us think and feel intensely, and perhaps to reconsider our understanding of the world in the process.... But whatever effect art has, it never has literal control. However much we may give ourselves up to art or be moved by it, we can always withdraw ourselves from it, too, because it is only a virtual experience of power (pp.76-77).

Although recognizing this quality in art, Freud failed to appreciate virtuality in religion and to understand that religion too can be held as paradox and not merely as a literalistic representation of and/or prescription for reality. He did not distinguish between infantile and mature forms of either religion or art, erring in favour of art and against religion, and this failure coloured his subsequent investigations.

Some have suggested that these judgements reflect a subjective bias on Freud's part. Meissner (1984) suggests that Freud had an unconscious stake in the denigration of religion. Recently, Halpern (1998) has attempted to trace Freud's conflicting attitudes toward Jewish culture and religion to the positive and negative aspects respectively of his split attitude toward his father. So it seems plausible that the more positive view of religion implied in Freud's own concept of sublimation (and, conversely, the more negative view of art implied in his view of religion as illusory wish-fulfilment) may have remained undeveloped due to subjective factors.

### *Contributions of Heinz Hartmann*

Heinz Hartmann, an ego psychologist who remained within the Freudian drive/structure tradition, took the step that Freud resisted. Mitchell and Black (1995) argue that Hartmann was, like Freud, concerned with reconciling the apparently non-conflictual activities of the ego (which he saw as ranging from perception and thinking to artistic and religious expression) with the notion that motivation is fundamentally sexual and aggressive. Hartmann's idea that the ego has "conflict-free capacities" in addition to defensive functions addressed the same issue as Freud's concept of sublimation (pp.37-8). Hartmann's view that the energy of the ego's conflict-free functions is provided by "neutralized" drives extends Freud's idea that sublimation constitutes a modification of drive.

Hartmann gives to religion the same therapeutic status that Freud granted to art and literature. In so far as religious belief and practice contribute to adaptation and mastery, they play a legitimate role in psychic health (Meissner, 1984, p.131). While Hartmann makes the distinction between adaptive capacities that are primarily autonomous and those born in conflict that become secondarily autonomous, their genesis ultimately becomes irrelevant. For Hartmann "an adaptive apparatus of primary autonomy (speech, for example) could become secondarily entangled in conflict (stuttering). And defences originally born in conflict could eventually become autonomous by evolving an adaptive capacity" (Mitchell and

Black, 1995, p.37). Thus it is immaterial whether or not religion originates as an infantile defence. If it performs an adaptive function in psychic regulation, it becomes an aid to coping with reality, rather than an escape from it. Meissner (1984) notes that "the institutionalization of the divine figure as proposer and guarantor of the moral order can be seen as a creative effort to reinforce and sustain the more highly organized and integrated adaptational concerns" (pp.130-31), rather than as a mere wishful illusion or a defensive expression of superego sadism as it tended to be in Freud's view. Thus Hartmann's ego psychology allows one to alter the valence of Freud's conception of religion without sacrificing his insight into its infantile features.

It is important to note here that neither Meissner nor Hartmann deny that religion can embody infantile and neurotic elements. Even thinkers diverging from the classical drive model (e.g., Winnicott), who play down religion's connection to exclusively infantile needs, recognize its potential to function in defensive, regressive and pathological forms. Meissner (1990) expresses what seems to be a common view in his discussion of the fetishization of the religious object:

The religious object can become the vehicle for projective or transference processes that involve the object in a defensive or need-satisfying system.... In this sense religious objects can be reduced to talismans, religious rites can become obsessional rituals, and religious faith can be corrupted into ideology. The more these "fetishistic" or otherwise defensive components pervade the individual believer's beliefs and the belief systems of the religious community, the more they might be presumed to veer toward Freud's vision of religious systems as delusional (p.108).

Of course, the same can be said of the psychoanalytic object. Psychoanalytic theories can be fetishized and can become the vehicle for projective or transference processes that involve it in a defensive or need-satisfying system. Psychoanalytic objects can be reduced to talismans. The psychoanalytic process can become an obsessional ritual. Psychoanalysis can be corrupted into ideology (Hanly, 1993). The point is that post-Freudian theorists do not reject out of hand Freud's understanding of religion. Rather, they see its potential to function as *more* than a defence,

just as psychoanalysis itself can be held in mature and rational as well as in immature, defensive and ideological forms.

*Contributions of D.W. Winnicott and Hans Loewald*

Winnicott's object relations theory offers a more radical way of reconceptualizing religion than does ego psychology. Hartmann followed Freud in emphasizing the determining role of somatically-based drives in the psychic development of the infant; Winnicott displaces this emphasis in favour of the infant's object relations. In Winnicott's work, psychopathology is increasingly seen as deriving from environmental failure, rather than from maladaptive defences against drives. The mother's capacity to provide a "holding environment" for the baby is of utmost importance. Winnicott sees the infant moving from a state of "subjective omnipotence" to the experience of objective reality by means of the mother's gradual withdrawal as the facilitator of the infant's experience of "magical control" over the actual (Winnicott, 1971, p.47). By this process, the infant comes to have a realistic sense of her own helplessness and dependence.

Interposed between the realms of subjective and objective experience is the transitional realm, "an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated" (p.2). Winnicott believes religion and art are products of this ambiguous area of experience, where neither subjectivity nor objectivity reign supreme. He claims that

This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work (p.14).

Meissner (1984) applies Winnicott's concept of transitional experience to four aspects of religion: faith; God representations; symbols; and prayer. All of them, he says, constitute a blend of subjective and objective elements, and so fit into the category of transitional phenomena. Thus

Meissner concludes that religion is an experience that, in Winnicott's view, returns us to our own spontaneous creativity.

Although the transitional realm is a developmental stage, it is also, like the subjective and objective realms, a *position* of mental experience. Our return to it does not represent a regression, for "Winnicott did not regard development as a linear sequence in which each stage replaces the preceding one" (Mitchell and Black, 1995, p.127). In fact, eschewing the transitional experience of religion and art in favour of complete objectivity is, for Winnicott, neither healthy nor feasible. Winnicott writes:

It is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience (cf. Riviere, 1936) which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.). This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is 'lost' in play (p.13).

Winnicott grants to religion the same status that Freud granted to art, as a potentially creative and not necessarily regressive adaptation to outer reality.

We emphasize here that Winnicott does not deny that religion is an illusion. On the contrary, he refers to it as "illusory experience". His view of illusion as a positive dimension of human experience initially seems diametrically opposed to Freud's. Meissner notes that

Freud's emphasis on the distortion or contradiction of reality in the service of wish-fulfilment is basic to his view of illusion. But what Freud sees as distortion and contradiction of reality Winnicott sees as part of man's creative experience. What Freud sees as wish-fulfilment in accordance with the pleasure principle and in resistance to the reality principle Winnicott views as human creativity (1984, p.176).

In fact, Freud's view of illusion is not so clear-cut. Discussing religion in *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud says that "we call a belief an illusion when

a wish-fulfilment is a prominent factor in its motivation" (p.31). But when he turns, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, to art as a method of averting the suffering of the civilized, Freud changes his tune. He comments that "The substitutive satisfactions, as offered by art, are illusions in contrast with reality, but they are none the less psychically effective, thanks to the role which phantasy has assumed in mental life" (p.75). Again, in the artist or appreciator of art,

satisfaction is obtained from illusions, which are recognized as such without the discrepancy between them and reality being allowed to interfere with enjoyment. The region from which these illusions arise is the life of the imagination; at the time when the development of the sense of reality took place, this region was expressly exempted from the demands of reality-testing and was set apart for the purpose of fulfilling wishes which were difficult to carry out. At the head of these satisfactions through phantasy stands the enjoyment of works of art (p.80).

The artist and art appreciator remain aware of the gap between illusion and reality. Artistic illusion constitutes *phantasy*, as opposed to the *delusion* (p.81) which is religious illusion. The possibility of religious phantasy, where a gap between illusion and reality is maintained (and equally of artistic delusion, where that gap is collapsed) is not addressed. With this in mind, we realize that Freud's view of illusion in his discussion of art actually approaches Winnicott's. His conviction that religion is by definition fundamentalist keeps him from extending that view to it.

Jones connects the more positive view of religion implied in Winnicott's work to that implied in Hans Loewald's, stating that "both Winnicott and Loewald reframe realities that Freud was suspicious of -- Winnicott with illusion and Loewald with primary process -- in the service of an appreciation of a variety of states of consciousness beyond the sensory-empirical mode that dominated Freud and positivistic science" (Jones, 1991, p.62). Freud (1933) had argued that

[psychoanalysis's] intention is, indeed, to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego, to widen its field of perception and enlarge its organization so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id was, there shall ego be. It is a

work of culture -- not unlike the draining of the Zuider Zee (p.80).

Loewald's (1980) approach to the id is less combative. At a minimum, he argues for its psychic inevitability, saying that "the instincts as the original motive forces never become extinct, nor do the structures corresponding more closely to these primitive forces. Thus the id is never superseded by the ego's increasing dominance, whereas the ego may 'regress', decrease in organization to a state closer to that level of psychic energy organization that we call id" (p.112). At most, Loewald approaches the view that the drives, which he sees as "strictly psychological", not physiological, forces (p.119), and the primary process mentation connected to them, are a neutral mode of experiencing and processing reality:

Primary and secondary process are ideal constructs. Or they may be described as the poles between which human mentation moves. I mean this not only in the longitudinal sense of progression from primitive and infantile to civilized and adult mental life and regressions in the opposite direction. Mental activity appears to be characterized by a to and fro between, an interweaving of, these modes of mental processes, granted that often one or the other is dominant and more manifestly guiding mentation and that the secondary process assumes an increasingly important role on more advanced levels of mentation (p.179)

According to Loewald, Freud's predominant view of psychic life is as a clash between a limit-setting reality and the asocial id drives, with the ego as a defensive mediator. But, he argues, there is another concept of reality implied in Freud's work, for "we know from considering the development of the ego as a development away from primary narcissism, that to start with, reality is not outside, but is contained in the pre-ego of primary narcissism, and becomes, as Freud says, detached from the ego. So that reality, understood genetically, is not primarily outside and hostile, alien to the ego, but intimately connected with and originally not even distinguished from it" (p.8). In this view, the ego's synthetic function overshadows its defensive one, and its stance towards both external reality and the inner world of the id becomes one of integration rather than defense.

Loewald points out that the first view of reality predominates particularly in Freud's discussion of religion, where religious feelings are seen as "an

attempt to cope with the threatening reality" (p.8) embodied in the father. For Freud,

The creation of father-gods is an expression of the need for help and protection from the father, in order to avoid the castrating reality that the father represents. The longing for the father, seeking his help and protection, is a defensive compromise in order to come to terms with his superior, hostile power. The idea that religious feelings may contain elements having to do with the primary narcissistic position in which reality is comprised in the primary ego, and therefore with the mother--this idea is, if not rejected, declared to be obscure, at best of secondary importance, and objectionable (p.9).

Loewald does not follow up on his suggestion, but the implication is that religion can play an integrative, in addition to a defensive, role. Sokolowski (1990) claims that Loewald sees religion as encouraging the dialectical interaction of primary and secondary process, as expressing "a wholesome recognition of archaic mentation" ( p.9). For instance, the religious concept of eternity expresses, Loewald suggests, the timelessness of the unconscious or primary process in terms of the secondary process category of temporality (pp.9-10). The entry into religious or artistic experience thus allows us to "keep access to the wellsprings of the primary process open even during the mature activation of secondary processes" (p.9). Loewald's rereading of Freud, then, permits one to give religion a status rivalling that given it by Winnicott.

### *Melanie Klein's Revisions to Freudian Theory*

In the context of this survey of post-Freudian thinkers, Melanie Klein's theory seems to offer no substantial place for a positive conception of religion. Since Klein appears to be a drive theorist, we would expect a Kleinian explanation of cultural phenomena to reduce them, as did Freud's, to defences against infantile sexual and aggressive drives. Klein, however, makes major modifications to Freud's system. Three aspects of her theory -- its emphasis on object relations, her view of phantasy, and her theory of developmental *positions* rather than stages -- lay the groundwork for an alternative understanding of religious experience.

First, Klein is an object relations theorist. Although she theorizes in terms

of drives, her drives are, unlike Freud's, "oriented toward others, toward reality, and contain information concerning the objects from whom they seek gratification" (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983, p.137). In fact, Greenberg and Mitchell claim, Klein uses the terms libido and aggression to refer to the emotions of love and hate, and so "the drives are essentially psychological forces, which utilize the body as a means of expression" (p.138). Thus Klein radically alters Freud's paradigm of somatically-based drives seeking satisfaction through the use of objects. For her, objects are primary, and drives represent emotions bound up with them.

Klein also broadens Freud's concept of fantasy, which he understood as a defensive process by which illusory gratification is obtained. For Freud, "If real gratification is available, no fantasy takes place" (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983, p.143). For Klein, on the other hand, "Phantasy is not merely an escape from reality, but a constant and unavoidable accompaniment of real experiences, constantly interacting with them" (Segal, 1973, p.14), and so "Unconscious phantasies are ubiquitous and always active in every individual" (p.12). Klein believes that every infant builds up, by the processes of projection and introjection, a world of internal objects that interact with his ego and his other objects. These objects are not fixed images, but susceptible to change, both by the subject's own efforts and as a result of changes in the behaviour of their external correlates. An individual's health, by and large, hinges on the state of his phantasied object world.

Finally, Klein, like Winnicott, understands psychic development as a non-linear process. Whereas Freud viewed normal development as the child passing through a series of stages to finally achieve, short of regression, a relatively static state of mental equilibrium, Klein and Winnicott posit a movement back and forth between differing ways of organizing experience. Both agree with Freud that the child moves developmentally from a state of subjectivity to objectivity. Although Freud saw the child as never entirely abandoning infantile modes of experience, he did not grant to the archaic residues of earlier libidinal phases the status of fundamental structures of the mind in the same way that Klein granted that status to the paranoid-schizoid (PS) and depressive (D) positions. Klein stresses the fact that although the child works through PS and D, she never entirely overcomes them, for they represent not stages but structures or organizations of the mind itself. The major task of the depressive position, that of establishing good uninjured internal objects, is never complete. And we all slip back

into paranoid-schizoid constellations over and over again. In Winnicott's model, mental health does not require the renunciation of illusory experience; in Kleinian theory it is similarly not contingent on exorcising paranoid-schizoid or depressive phantasies and anxieties.

Klein agrees with Freud that development (and psychoanalysis, for that matter) aims at maximal reality-testing. But she sees this coming about through a modification of phantasy, not an extirpation of it. Maturity is not gained through recognition and renunciation of sexual and aggressive drives, but through the internalization of a secure good whole object, which initiates a decrease in anxiety, which in turn allows for a decrease in defensive distortion of the real objects.

All of these revisions to Freud add up to make Kleinian theory fairly friendly to religious experience. Klein's understanding of phantasy and her emphasis on object relations permit an understanding of God as an internal object, or as the God-representation studied in its various manifestations by Rizzuto (1979). Whether this psychic reality corresponds to any external metaphysical reality (however literally or metaphorically conceived) is, of course, the question on which believers and non-believers are divided. For our purposes, it is sufficient to point out that since Klein sees our relation to reality as mediated by our internal objects, as such (i.e., as an object-representation), God has the potential to be a helpful phantasy, a presence that complements the rest of our array of internal objects. Moreover, because Klein's is a theory of positions rather than stages of mental functioning, the fact that religion addresses infantile issues does not mean it is necessarily infantile -- we continue to work through paranoid-schizoid and depressive issues throughout our lives.

In addition, the distinction between PS and D psychological functioning denotes precisely the distinction between infantile and mature forms of religiosity that Freud failed to make. PS functioning, as we shall see, is characterized by a tendency to literalize, by the inability to distinguish between inner phantasy and outer reality, and religion on this level takes the form of the fundamentalism that Freud targeted. Depressive position functioning, in contrast, involves introducing a gap between image and object. Klein (1959) herself cues the conception of D-level religion as paradox (to use Steiner's term) in one of her rare references to religion. Discussing the infant's struggle with envy, she writes:

the capacity to enjoy fully what has been received, and the

experience of gratitude towards the person who gives it, influence strongly both the character and the relations with other people. It is not for nothing that in saying grace before meals, Christians use the words, 'For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful.' The words imply that one asks for the one quality--gratitude--which will make one free from resentment and envy (p.254).

Klein here points to a sophisticated therapeutic function of religion far beyond Freud's recognition of its usefulness in resigning us to instinctual renunciation. She sees that in promoting gratitude ("Thanks be to God"), religious practice operates as a therapy for envy, an insight that adds new psychological depth to the old saying that "the trouble with atheism is there's no one to thank." Its potential to function as a therapy for envy would appear to operate in both literalistic (PS) and metaphoric or dymythologized (D) versions of the faith. However, in offering us concepts whereby we can make this distinction between two fundamentally different varieties of religious experience (PS and D), Klein helps us to understand that, beyond its fundamentalist and supernaturalistic forms (on the level of Segal's [1957] "symbolic equation"), religion can operate as a *virtual* experience (on the level of Segal's "symbolic representation"), that participation in a religious system can be a more or less conscious choice to subscribe to an "illusion" and thereby be enriched. In Freud's analysis only atheism represents true maturity. Although we need to distinguish PS and D varieties of both belief and *unbelief*, the position of the atheist may in some instances be akin to that of the materialist who dismisses art as imaginary and thus irrelevant to reality. Although this kind of "scientific atheism" ostensibly rejects religious literalism, it actually equates PS religion with religion as such (while, of course, being blind to the degree to which it may itself reflect the literalism and dogmatism characteristic of PS). As one of us (Carveth, 1998) has recently argued:

... there is another type of overgeneralization inherent in Freud's theory of religion (beyond its inapplicability to non-theistic religions such as Buddhism) arising from Freud's failure to utilize his own psychoanalytic concepts of *over-determination* and *epigenesis* (Erikson, 1959) and such related methodological principles as those of *multiple function* (Waelder, 1930) and *secondary autonomy* (Hartmann, 1939) in this field. The result is a

failure to distinguish different manifestations of religious faith and practice on distinctly different levels of drive (libidinal and aggressive), structural (ego and superego) and internal object-relational (psychotic, borderline, neurotic/normal) organization in different individuals, and the multiple functions served by religion on different psychic levels in any one person. Just as psychoanalysts (as distinct from psychiatrists) do not diagnose from the external symptom picture but from the level of personality organization within which the same overt symptoms take on very different meanings and perform very different functions, so in their approach to religion psychoanalysts are obliged to recognize that apparently similar religious beliefs and practices mean very different things and perform very different functions on different psychic levels in any one individual and for individuals who differ in their predominant level of personality organization.

Since Freud's original introduction of the libido theory and the oral, anal, phallic-oedipal, latency and genital stages--and Erikson's extension of these to later stages of the life cycle and Anna Freud's (1963) addition, beyond the psychosexual, of a wide range of other "development lines" (such as the stages of ego, superego and object-relational development, among others), psychoanalysis has been committed to distinguishing different manifestations of the same psychic phenomena associated with different stages of development and reflecting different levels of "fixation" and "regression." Even from a strictly classical as distinct from a modern psychoanalytic standpoint, Freud's theory of religion as illusory gratification of unconscious infantile wishes for a father's (why not a mother's?) protection and/or to archaic longings to reestablish the (alleged) oceanic bliss of primary narcissism is deficient and reductive due to its failure to distinguish oral religion from anal, phallic, oedipal, latency and genital religion (pp.141-2).

A Kleinian framework allows scope for the understanding of both PS and D religion.

### *A Kleinian Assessment of Christianity*

Freud (1911) concludes in *Totem and Taboo* that Christianity constitutes an

obsessional neurosis fuelled primarily by oedipal dynamics. For Freud, religion originates in response to the boy's guilt at oedipal wishes. The Christian doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ, enacted in the Eucharistic ritual, is a particularly effective defence against oedipal conflict because it allows the simultaneous expression of the son's sense of guilt *and* of his rebelliousness. Klein situates the genesis of the guilt that Freud places at the centre of psychic development and from which he derives Christianity differently. She points out that although certain passages in Freud's work indicate that he saw conflict and guilt arising in the pre-oedipal period, "it is clear that he maintained his hypothesis that guilt sets in as a sequel to the Oedipus complex" (Klein, 1948, pp. 26-7). Klein, however, sees guilt arising in the depressive position. Her proposition is similar to Freud's in so far as both see the guilt resulting from the subject's aggressive impulses toward the object, that is, from ambivalence towards it. In Klein, however, the loved and hated object is initially the whole internalized mother. Guilt, then, arises originally in relation to the mother.

Klein's understanding of guilt suggests viewing the individual's relation to God as a repetition not primarily of the father/son relationship, but of the mother/child relationship. This hypothesis gains plausibility when we consider that the relationship of God to man is that of creator to creature, which corresponds to the biological relationship of the mother to the child. The fact of patriarchy means that the attribution of the male gender to God may have more of a social than a psychological basis. Furthermore, Klein believes that depressive issues are worked out, to varying degrees, around *all* of our objects, male and female. Her theory thus universalizes the ambivalence and guilt that Freud confined to the father/son relationship.

Applying this revision to the analysis of Christianity means broadening our psychological assessment of the God figure to understand that it can sometimes be a projection of the whole loved object of the depressive position, and not merely of all-good or idealized images (such as that of the idealized father), or of all-bad or demonized object-images. In this light, it becomes possible to see that, for some subjects at least, Christian faith and practice may represent the same developmental process as Kleinian theory describes: the movement from aggression and egotism, to guilt, to reconciliation with the object. In fact, mature forms of Christianity can be fruitfully understood as promoting and repeating the successful advance toward and working-through of depressive issues, just as pathological forms of faith and practice represent varying degrees of failure, fixation and regression to paranoid-schizoid dynamics. We suggested above that

psychoanalysis parallels religion in this respect: among psychoanalysts we distinguish those who appear caught in PS idealizations and who inhabit the theory as an ideology--and for whom, for example, every Freud critic is a "Freud-basher"--from those who relate to it in the critical, scientific spirit of attained ambivalence characteristic of D.

Both the Kleinian and Christian paradigms understand the individual as originally estranged from her primary object. Through a process of reparation or repentance, initiated by a feeling of guilt, she is gradually reconciled to her object. Yet reconciliation is never permanent; it requires a continual renewal of the reparative cycle that brings the subject ever closer to her object.

Klein (1937) sees the infant falling immediately and inevitably into a relation of disjunction to his object:

In the very beginning [the baby] loves his mother at the time that she is satisfying his needs for nourishment, alleviating his feelings of hunger, and giving him the sensual pleasure which he experiences when his mouth is stimulated by sucking at her breast....But when the baby is hungry and his desires are not gratified, or when he is feeling bodily pain or discomfort, then the whole situation suddenly alters. Hatred and aggressive feelings are aroused and he becomes dominated by the impulses to destroy the very person who is the object of all his desires and who in his mind is linked up with everything he experiences--good and bad alike (pp.306-7).

Overwhelmed by these aggressive impulses, which Klein sometimes derives from the baby's experience of frustration, as in this passage, and sometimes from an innate death instinct, the baby projects his aggression onto a "bad" breast which he then feels to be attacking him from the outside and, once introjected, from the inside as well. This sense of attack is manifested as persecutory anxiety that the bad object will annihilate his ego. This organization of experience into good and bad part-objects and a split ego, characterized by persecutory anxiety, Klein names the paranoid-schizoid position. Klein therefore sees the baby as estranged from his primary object, which he has distorted as a defence against his own aggressive impulses.

The sinner, in the Christian anthropology, is similarly estranged from his God. Pungur (1987) explains that "Sin as a theological concept means that a radical, profound and tragic deterioration had happened in the relationship between God the Creator and man the creature" (p.172). Furthermore, the sinner experiences, due to that separation, the same kind of anxiety as the person functioning on the PS level. He seems trapped in a hellish cycle of danger:

Man, being in sin, enters into a *circulus vitiosus*--an evil circle in which he gets more and more involved in sin.... The result of sin upon man is that man becomes a split person. Man becomes estranged from God, alienated from his fellow men, disappointed with himself and with the world. The consequence of this is that man is overwhelmed by restlessness, fear, despair and anxiety. Man feels himself abandoned, solitary, alone and alien in the world which should have been his real home but where now a thousand dangers are hidden and seek opportunities to destroy him (p.194).

It is significant that sin is not construed merely as disobedience to God's commands. Christianity understands it as rebellion, even attack: "The need for divine forgiveness presupposes that the sin of a man not only injures himself and not only injures other persons, but injures God" (Vilder, 1950, p.94). As the PS subject injures, in phantasy, his objects, so the unrepentant sinner injures his God.

The sinful man is inevitably self-centred. Vilder summarizes the Christian view that egotism, the concern with making oneself rather than God the centre, forms the very basis of sin. He notes that:

We must not confuse sins with sin; at least we must see how the former spring from the latter. Sins are separate acts, or words, or thoughts, each of which is a rejection of God's will and so a rebellion against him. But these separate acts spring from one root and are symptoms of the same disease, which I have called egocentricity or egotism (p.90).

The notion of sinfulness as egotism could reflect the fact that the paranoid-

schizoid position is literally *ego*-centric, for the PS subject's sole concern is his ego, which he perceives as under attack by bad objects. Klein (1948) notes that "persecutory anxiety relates predominantly to the annihilation of the ego; depressive anxiety is predominantly related to the harm done to internal and external loved objects by the subject's destructive impulses" (p.34). The persecution from bad objects against which the ego is concerned with defending itself stems ultimately from the infant's own aggressive impulses. The subject's attacks upon the bad object now appear justified by the aggression that the subject disowns and projects into it.

In Kleinian theory the disowned aggressive impulses are reclaimed in the depressive position, where concern shifts from the ego to the object. Klein argues that the depressive position is initiated by the infant's realization that his object is whole, not split, an entirely separate person whom he both loves and hates. Guilt and remorse arise with the realization that the phantasied attacks may have caused injury to the loved object. Klein (1948) writes, "The feeling that harm done to the loved object is caused by the subject's aggressive impulses I take to be the essence of guilt" (p.36). The subject of the depressive position is no longer egocentric. He sees that his own aggression, not that of his object, is the source of his pain. The onset of depressive anxiety thus entails psychic separation from and initiates rapprochement with the (now more clearly separate) object.

Klein holds that as the infant becomes aware of the wholeness of his object, he realizes his radical dependence on that object, who is entirely separate and not controlled by him. Overwhelmed by a sense of his own powerlessness, he may respond with the manic defence of omnipotence. In the Christian tradition, the sinner's egotism constitutes a refusal to accept the reality of his dependence on God. Vilder stresses that "Egotism is a canker in the human soul. It is the root of man's rebellion against God and his refusal to live in dependence on God and real community with other persons" (p.90). The Christian denunciation of pride, which is understood to represent a denial of the need for God, could thus be read as a warning against manic defences.

We have seen that Christian doctrine translates the inevitable estrangement and egotism of the paranoid-schizoid position into the terms of sin, fallenness, and separation from God. The Christian feeling of guilt repeats the depressive subject's guilt upon recognizing his own agency in the disruption of his object relation. As he becomes aware of the wholeness and goodness of his object, he realizes his essential fallenness. This in turn

leads him to attempt reconciliation with God.

Here Christian doctrine can easily diverge from Klein's vision. While in both cases the recognition of the object's wholeness is the key to guilt and reparation, the idea of the wholeness of God can easily come to entail the idea of a *holiness* that, far from representing an advance to whole object relating, may represent a regression to PS idealization. In other words, God may be manically idealized. It is possible to argue, however, that this danger is mitigated by the very humility and brokenness of Jesus who, in orthodox Christian theology, is both fully human and fully divine, who is born in a manger and suffers the most shameful of deaths by crucifixion. The sinner's realization of his own shortcomings, as a result of his realization of God's wholeness (barring idealization), parallels the depressive infant's growing awareness of his failure in regard to his object.

In Klein, guilt stimulates attempts at reconciliation with the object: "The urge to undo or repair this harm results from the feeling that the subject has caused it, *i.e.*, from guilt. The reparative tendency can, therefore, be considered as a consequence of guilt" (1948, p.36). The infant's act of making amends in phantasy to his injured object is matched by consistently positive experience with the real external mother. This convinces him that his attempts have been successful. As he continues to make reparation and sees that his object seems to have responded, his anxiety decreases and he is able to securely establish a good uninjured internal object. Because he has a sense of his own healing powers, his ego identifies with that object and in turn experiences itself as fairly good and loving, as opposed to overwhelmingly destructive. Klein argues that the person who can successfully achieve this identification actually experiences a mitigation of aggressive impulses by loving ones, which substantially improves his reality-testing (1935, p.284-89; 1937, p.338-43; 1940, p.268-69; also Segal, pp.73-81).

Just as in the Christian scheme the act of reparation involves the action of both God and man so, for Klein, it involves the action of both mother and infant. Klein argues that the object's actions *do* have an impact on whether or not the subject experiences his reparations as successful:

All the enjoyments which the baby lives through in relation to his mother are so many proofs to him that the loved object *inside as well as outside* is not injured, is not turned into a vengeful person. The increase of love and trust, and the diminishing of fears

through happy experiences, help the baby step by step to overcome his depression and feeling of loss (mourning) (1940, pp.346-7).

The agency attributed in Christianity to God could, therefore, represent the psychological facts that (1) the infant experiences his object as collaborating in the reparative process, and (2) that the object's behaviour can indeed determine the infant's sense of himself.

Klein's theory has been widely criticized (e.g., Guntrip, 1971) for minimizing environmental factors in development almost to the point of presenting a kind of endopsychic solipsism. But this interpretation flies in the face of Klein's clear emphasis upon the role of the real mother in counteracting the infant's persecutory phantasies and in responding to and thereby confirming the infant's reparative powers. On the other hand, certain trends within post-Kleinian British object relations theory (e.g., Guntrip and, at times, Winnicott himself), together with related trends within psychoanalytic self psychology (Bacal & Newman, 1990), may have swung to the other extreme, viewing the subject as virtually constituted by or as a more or less determined function of the early object or selfobject milieu. In this debate, Klein's own position may be seen to mediate, like Christian doctrine, between the two extremes, recognizing the role of both the subject and the object in redemption. The subject, the fallen sinner or the destructive and envious child, must desire and seek to make reparation. But it is incapable of autonomously achieving salvation because the breach in the relationship, man's estrangement from God or the infant's sense of having destroyed or alienated the object, can only be repaired by a redemptive action initiated by the injured party. In the Christian doctrine of Grace, such reparative action is God's free gift to those who have injured Him. This is the gift of the Incarnation in which God enters history as Jesus who undergoes betrayal and crucifixion but who (and this is the "Good News" or Gospel), having died, rises again and lives. All this is echoed in Klein and Winnicott for whom the object plays a central role in the infant's salvation from a paranoid-schizoid sense of the self as all-bad and destructive. The object achieves such liberation of the subject through its (the object's) survival of the subject's destruction of it (see Carveth, 1994). As Winnicott (1969) explains:

A new feature thus arrives in the theory of object-relating. The

subject says to the object: "I destroyed you", and the object is there to receive the communication. From now on the subject says: "Hullo object!" "I destroyed you." "I love you." "You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you." "While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) *fantasy*" (p.90; Winnicott's emphasis).

It is true, of course, that God's saving power, and the entire theological doctrine of grace, could be understood in Freudian terms as wish-fulfilment, an illusion created as a response to a sense of depressive helplessness in the face of our guilt. In particular, God's gift of Christ as the ransom for sin could be seen as embodying the wish for a guarantee that we will be able to establish a good internal object. Christ, as part of the Trinity, while remaining fully human is at the same time fully divine and His resurrection achieves for us the basis by which we can be returned to a state of harmony with Him. In Christianity, therefore, reparation is a given, not a likely possibility. If we accept Christ, we are put right with God.

But this does not mean that the relationship is healed without any effort on our part. The paradox of Christianity is that we remain sinners, always trapped in a relationship of disjunction to God *at the same time* as we are always already saved through Christ. This doctrine parallels the Kleinian psychological paradox that while we are never completely at one with our external objects (because we can never completely escape our aggressive impulses which ultimately distort our object relations), yet the establishment of a good uninjured internal object represents a reconciliation with those same external objects.

Klein believes that identification with the repaired internal object leads to a decrease in anxiety that in turn allows a decrease in introjective and projective mechanisms, resulting in a better sense of reality. Segal (1973) explains that "Reality testing is increased when reparative drives are in the ascendant: the infant watches with concern and anxiety the effect of his phantasies on external objects: and an important part of his reparation is learning to give up omnipotent control of his object and accept it as it really is" (p.93). It is significant that the sacrifice of Christ is called the Atonement, which literally means *at-onement*: "to make two parties at one" (Pungur, 1987, p.62). Christ, then, mediates between man and God in the same way that the internal object mediates between the ego and the external object.

In the Orthodox and Catholic (Roman and Anglo) churches, two rituals enact the reconciliation between man and God. The sacrament of Penance externalizes reparatory action; the sacrament of the Eucharist represents the internalization of the good object. Penance involves both an internal and external admission of guilt, and a corresponding willingness to do whatever is necessary for forgiveness. Molland (1950) explains that "Contrition of heart (*contritio coris*) is necessary for the remission of sins... Contrition of heart is deep repentance occasioned by the love of God and sorrow over the breach of his commandments" (p.72). This is accompanied by an oral confession to a priest who, depending on the nature of the sin, either absolves the sinner or gives him "remedies such as prayer, fasting and good works" (p.73).

The sacrament of the Eucharist represents, in terms of our argument, the internalization of the good object, Christ. (In keeping with the principles of multiple function and overdetermination, this in no way denies its other possible meanings on different psychic levels.) Although Freud saw it as representing the overcoming of the object, it can also be seen, on the level of the depressive position, as repeating the experience of repairing, of safeguarding the good object. This reading is more in line with explicit Christian doctrine in which the receiving of the Eucharist represents an act of faith, and thus of love rather than hate.

The doctrinal centrality of Christ's sacrifice and thus of the Eucharist emphasizes that in Christianity, the key to reparation is not so much the action of confessing sins and asking forgiveness, as it is the faith that underlies these acts. And faith can be understood as identification with Christ:

In justification, a mutual identification takes place between man and Christ. Christ identifies himself as the sinful man and the sinful man identifies himself with Christ on the cross... But Christ's identification with the sinful man is only half the story of justification, the second half of the story has yet to happen. It is also necessary that the sinful man should identify himself with Christ on the cross (Pungur, 1993, p.102).

This identification could represent a translation of the subject's identification with his internal good object. Just as the object is an image of the real external object, so Christ is seen as an aspect of God. Thus faith is,

in Kleinian terms, the belief in the goodness of the internal objects. The Christian insistence on faith, then, repeats Klein's emphasis on the ego's identification with its good objects.

Klein understands the successful internalization of and identification with the whole good object as resulting in a more loving orientation to external objects. The Christian conviction that living "in Christ" permits a more Christ-like character parallels Klein's notion that loving impulses mitigate aggressive ones. Pungur (1987) notes that "the man who receives his justification by faith in Christ is gradually transformed into the likeness of Christ and enabled to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit -- 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control'" (p.100).

In Klein's theory we come over and over again upon the moment of mystery, an apocalyptic moment, whereby the fundamental aggressive impulse is overcome by loving impulses. This triumph is depicted in Klein (1948) as a triumph of the forces of life over those of death:

Throughout this paper I have made clear my contention that the death instinct (destructive impulses) is the primary factor in the causation of anxiety. It was, however, also implied, in my exposition of the processes leading to anxiety and guilt, that the primary object against which the destructive impulses are directed is the object of the libido, and that it is therefore the *interaction* between aggression and libido--ultimately the fusion as well as the polarity of the two instincts--which causes anxiety and guilt. Another aspect of this interaction is the mitigation of destructive impulses by libido. An optimum in the interaction between libido and aggression implies that the anxiety arising from the perpetual activity of the death instinct, though never eliminated, is counteracted and kept at bay by the power of the life instinct (pp.41-2).

The Christian myth repeats this struggle between life and death and in it, as in Klein's theory, the life force, represented by the God who is "love", triumphs. The mystery at the heart of Christianity, the combination of grace and faith that constitutes salvation from the tyranny of sin, thus enacts the Kleinian mystery of the combination of circumstances (child's constitution, external object relations, phantasied object relations) which allows the child to escape the tyranny of his aggressive impulses. Christianity thus promotes

the working-through of the depressive position, the self's shift from egotism to reconciliation with her object.

The resurrection of Christ signifies, in Kleinian terms, not only the object's survival of PS attacks, which maintains the hope of successful reparation; it also asserts the essential subjectivity of the object, God. One might argue that, lacking the resurrection, the incarnate Christ could reflect a static PS idealization. But to argue in this way would be to ignore the fact that the signifier "resurrection" exists as one pole of the binarism crucifixion/resurrection and that crucifixion is a signifier of humiliation, frailty, helplessness, brokenness and dereliction ("Father, father, why hast thou forsaken me?"). Thus the Christian doctrines of incarnation (God as a baby in a manger), crucifixion (God as undergoing human betrayal, humiliation, helplessness and abandonment), and resurrection (God as surviving human destructiveness) together describe Christ as the whole good internalized object of the depressive position as distinct from a merely idealized (all-good) object on the level of PS.

From a Kleinian perspective, then, Christianity remains an enactment of infantile dynamics. But because Klein understands development differently from Freud, in terms of positions rather than stages, it is not necessarily regressive for someone in the depressive position to work through, at a ritual level, those issues of guilt, reparation and separation. In a Kleinian framework, the Christian's belief and practice does not have to represent an infantile defence against his own drives, a denial of reality. On the contrary, the ritualized working-through of the depressive position ultimately permits increased reality-testing. As the Christian establishes and re-establishes the good object Christ inside him, he is freed over and over from his aggressive impulses and thus from serious rifts in his internal and external object relations. If PS religion (or PS psychoanalysis) is pathology, then D religion (like D psychoanalysis) is therapy.

To argue for this approach to Christianity is not to discount Freud's approach, which analyzes PS religious experience. The practice of the Eucharist certainly has the potential to become an obsessional neurosis addressed to oedipal ambivalence. In a Kleinian perspective, the ritual could be experienced on the paranoid-schizoid level as the envious spoiling of the good object, rather than its protective internalization. God could represent not the good whole object, but the idealized all-good aspect of the part-object, projected outside the believer in an effort to protect it from persecution by his bad objects and ego. We recognize that the

psychological meaning of the experience depends to a large degree on the psychic organization of the believer. What our argument suggests is that Klein's theory offers a way to see Christian belief and practice as having adaptive, as well as defensive, psychological functions.

Finally, we have argued that Christian belief and practice may represent an enactment of psychological dynamics as understood by Melanie Klein in which love, or life, overcomes the forces of hatred and death. While Freud too saw Eros as capable of fusing with and thereby mitigating the destructive effects of Thanatos, he was largely unable to appreciate Christianity's attempt to mobilize libido (or love) against destructiveness. Without in any way denying the regressive, magical and pathological manifestations of PS-level religion, our argument suggests that the person concretely engaged in non-fundamentalist or D-level Christian belief and practice may find in it great assistance in the struggle to maintain both psychic equilibrium and healthy object relations.

### **Summary**

Psychoanalytic theory has taken a guarded approach to religion ever since Freud advanced his view of religion as a collective obsessional neurosis and an illusory fulfilment of infantile wishes. But post-Freudian theory has offered more positive ways of conceptualizing religious experience. Hartmann, Winnicott and Loewald, among others, enable us to recognize creative and adaptive as well as maladaptive and regressive aspects of religion. In addition, the theory of Melanie Klein suggests ways in which religion promotes, rather than inhibits, psychic growth. Although Klein herself did not address the question of the psychological underpinnings of religious experience, and although her theory does not appear to offer concepts immediately relevant to its psychoanalytic understanding, a closer look shows that Kleinian theory can usefully illuminate certain psychological functions of Christianity. In addition to extending Freud's patricentric analysis of religion back in developmental time to include the subject's earliest relations with the maternal (part-)object, Klein's revisions permit an understanding of Christian doctrine and ritual in therapeutic and creative, as distinct from primarily regressive and defensive, terms.

### **Notes**

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