Virtus Unitatis et Caritatis:
The Epicletic Form of
Henri de Lubac’s Sacramental Ecclesiology

by

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Abstract
This thesis argues for an interpretation of Henri de Lubac’s ecclesiology in terms of the epiclesis in the Eucharist. The visible Church submits to Christ in a posture of humble petition. Christ responds to this petition by consecrating the visible Church as His Mystical Body on earth. The concrete acts taken by contextually-specific Christian communities can be evaluated according to their conformance to petition and consecration. The primary embodiment of the “epicletic tension” is the concrete act of the Eucharistic liturgy, through which the particular community is joined to the whole Communion of Saints. De Lubac’s ecclesiology can therefore respond to contradicting contemporary challenges in articulating the Church’s mission in the world, such as John Milbank’s emphasis on the Church’s particularity and Nicholas Healy’s emphasis on the ambiguities of concrete history. De Lubac’s ecclesiology critiques an approach that attends to either consecration or petition at the expense of both.
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Introduction

English-speaking theologians of the past few decades have made two contrary diagnoses of the ailments in modern ecclesiology. One approach is exemplified by Anglican theologian John Milbank, who introduces *Theology and Social Theory* by arguing that

the pathos of modern theology is its false humility. For theology, this must be a fatal disease, because once theology surrenders its claim to be a metadiscourse, it cannot any longer articulate the word of the creator God, but is bound to turn into the oracular voice of some finite idol, such as historical scholarship, humanist psychology, or transcendental philosophy. If theology no longer seeks to position, qualify or criticize other discourses, then it is inevitable that these discourses will position theology: for the necessity of an organizing logic . . . cannot be wished away.1

The contrary approach is exemplified by Roman Catholic theologian Nicholas M. Healy in his *Church, World and the Christian Life*. He is concerned that

in general ecclesiology in our period has become highly systematic and theoretical, focused more upon discerning the right things to think about the church rather than orientated to the living, rather messy, confused and confusing body that the church actually is. It displays a preference for describing the church’s theoretical and essential identity rather than its concrete and historical identity.2

To reiterate, Healy is a Roman Catholic who claims that contemporary reflection is excessively “from above,” and Milbank is an Anglican who claims that it is excessively

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2 Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3. The work of Ephraim Radner provides another example of Healy’s “practical-prophetic” approach, albeit one that addresses a specifically Anglican context. They both represent a turn to taking seriously the ambiguities of the Church’s concrete history and are cruciform in discerning what a faithful Christian collective life entails. Two prominent examples of Radner’s work in this respect are *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998) and *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).
“from below.” Does this represent an ecumenical convergence that moderates the opposing tendencies of the Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions, or a new divergence between Milbank’s approach “from above” and Healy’s approach “from below”? I acknowledge that Healy’s critique is more explicitly about the Church than Milbank’s, and that Milbank’s approach need not engender an ecclesiological move contrary to Healy’s. Healy favourably cites Milbank as a way of describing the implications of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s dramatic horizon: the metadiscourse of theology claims that “if God is active everywhere, then all human activity bears some relation to God. . . .” However, false humility is a phenomenon about the Church for at least two reasons. First, Milbank himself makes a plerotic ecclesiological move that is contrary to Healy’s kenotic approach. Milbank’s response to false humility partly includes an examination of the sacramental ecclesiology of French theologian Henri de Lubac, which Milbank describes as an approach that “supernaturalizes the natural” over against Rahner’s German–Latin American “rapprochement with the Enlightenment” that “naturalizes the supernatural.” Healy merely mentions de Lubac in passing, where he is critical of de Lubac’s “maximal inclusivism” regarding the possibility of universal

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3 This is not surprising, as they are responding to debates internal to their respective Churches. Healy’s priority on the “rather messy, confused and confusing body” nevertheless runs counter to the persistence of Tridentine triumphalism lingering in Roman Catholicism, and Milbank’s plerotic approach runs counter to the Luther-inspired anti-clericalism and iconoclasm that partly characterized the English Reformation.

4 Healy, 67.

5 Milbank, 207. Daniel Izuzquiza has questioned whether Milbank overstates the distinction between de Lubac and Rahner. If de Lubac and Rahner are closer than Milbank suspects, does this somehow inform Milbank’s dismissal of de Lubac? If (as I would argue) de Lubac and Blondel are closer than Milbank suspects, does this somehow inform my critique of Milbank? Daniel Izuzquiza, “Can a Gift be Wrapped? John Milbank and Supernatural Sociology” Heythrop Journal 47, no. 3 (2006): 395.
salvation. Moreover, Milbank concludes that the adequate response to his diagnosis of false humility is to conceive of the Church as an *altera civitas* that “is already, necessarily, by virtue of its institution, a ‘reading’ of other human societies.” In other words, if theology is the metadiscourse that judges all other social theories, then the Church must embody the metadiscourse of theology in its organization and concerns. To position the Church in a place of judgement, “reading,” or even stark separation from other societies runs counter to Healy’s attention to concrete ecclesial sinfulness and the presence of the Church within history.

Secondly, false humility has recently been expressed in concrete ecclesial examples. One example from within Anglicanism is the almost exclusive preoccupation of the Episcopal Church’s General Convention with resolutions calling on the U.S. Congress to address social policy rather than addressing questions of mission and doctrine. Another Anglican example is the way the recent election of the archbishop of Sydney, Australia strikingly resembled its counterpart in the secular world. A third example is seen in the fact that at time of writing, the Episcopal bishop of South Carolina will be determined by a U.S. District Court rather than any ecclesial body. These all raise alarming questions regarding the degree to which the sublimation of the church to the state and society has already occurred. Finally, an admittedly easy but commonly

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7 Milbank, 382, emphasis original.

8 Healy, 7-14 and throughout.


understood example is the equation on the part of many free-church evangelicals between Christian identity and American social conservatism. As a major political force in the U.S. over the last few decades, this phenomenon has been documented ad nauseam.

Again, Healy critiques contemporary ecclesiology as being excessively “from above,” and Milbank critiques contemporary theology as being excessively “from below.” Does this represent an ecumenical convergence or a new divergence? De Lubac considered the “above—below” problem in Christological terms, pointing out that the dignity and humility of the Church is rooted in its relationship to Christ as the source of the Church’s being (see Acts 17:28). On the one hand, de Lubac stated that “we reject Monophysitism in ecclesiology just as we do in Christology.” On the other hand, he holds that “none the less strongly do we believe that dissociation of the divine and the human is in either case fatal.”

In an ecumenical convergence between Milbank and Healy, is it possible that both are correct?

In considering how to properly relate the Church to Christ, de Lubac’s main insight was to recapture the patristic basis for understanding the Church and the Eucharist as co-constitutive of the corpus Christi verum in the present world. Taking spiritual exegesis, patristic symbolist metaphysics, and early-medieval formulations as his guide, he claimed that the Eucharist as the Body of Christ is the literal referent that allegorically signifies the charitable unity of the Church as the Body of Christ. He thus claimed a

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12 Catholicism, 75.
14 Wood, esp. 25-51; Corpus Mysticum, 187-247; Catholicism, 96–100.
“sensible bond”¹⁶ between the concrete liturgical act of celebrating and receiving the Eucharist and the other various concrete acts of charitable self-giving on the part of Christians that bind them together as the Body of Christ.¹⁷ The bishops at Vatican II were similarly able to articulate the Eucharist as the “fount and apex of the whole Christian life.”¹⁸ This recovery of the bond between the Church and the Eucharist can point to a way forward in addressing the problems of both false humility and triumphalism in ecclesiology. To claim that the Eucharist and the Church are together the true Body of Christ is to claim that they together constitute the sacramental presence or “real presence” on earth of the true Body enthroned at the right hand of the Father.¹⁹

To speak of the Church as the real presence of Christ may itself sound triumphalist, but it need not be so. Such triumphalism is mitigated if the Church as the real presence of Christ is considered in terms of the epicletic nature of all sacramental consecration. In this thesis, I will argue that it is de Lubac’s attention to the epicletic form of the Church as rooted in the Eucharist can provide the way forward in addressing the problems of both false humility and triumphalism in ecclesiology. Regarding the real presence in the Eucharist, Walter Kasper notes that an early point of agreement in ecumenical discussions was the recovered emphasis on the epiclesis as characteristic of


¹⁷ Catholicism, 102-106, 351-369.


¹⁹ One way to understand this “sacramental presence” is in terms of the medieval corpus triforme. Catholicism, 98–100; see also ibid., 76, and Boersma, 263.
Eucharistic doctrine and liturgy. In speaking of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission states that “through this prayer of thanksgiving, a word of faith addressed to the Father, the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit.”

The epicletic character of the real presence in the Eucharist thus contains two aspects in dramatic tension. First, the Eucharistic Prayer is a “prayer of thanksgiving, a word of faith addressed to the Father.” It is “a petition that God the Father send down the Holy Spirit, a petition that the Holy Spirit transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, [and] a similar petition that the Holy Spirit apply to the faithful the sanctifying fruits of the Eucharist.” Second, alongside this petitionary aspect is a consecratory aspect, in which “the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit.” In other words, the consecratory aspect is God’s gracious answer to the epicletic petition.

De Lubac claimed an integral relation of the concrete act of celebrating and receiving the Eucharist to the other various concrete acts of charitable self-giving on the part of Christians that bind them together as the Body of Christ. As both de Lubac and Lumen Gentium described, reception of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the “fount and apex” of the Body of Christ on earth: it is where the Body of Christ is most

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20 Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London: Continuum, 2009), nos. 87, 94, 105. In no. 80 he briefly mentions the disagreements between “objective” and “subjective” real presence, but in no. 81 he implies that agreement regarding the Church–Eucharist bond as a matter of collective salvation relegates the importance of Reformation-era distinctions.


22 Ibid.


visible, and where it derives its identity as the Body of Christ. I can therefore argue that as part of this primary ecclesial visibility in the liturgy of the Eucharist, the petitionary aspect of the *epiclesis* is where the petitionary aspect of the Church in general is most visible, and where the Church derives its posture of petition before God in the rest of its practical life. Again, the *epiclesis* of the Mass includes “a . . . petition that the Holy Spirit apply to the faithful the sanctifying fruits of the Eucharist.” To borrow a term from Trinitarian theology, the link between the Eucharist and the Church as co-constitutive of the real presence of Christ is merely *attributed* to the consecratory aspect. The consecration of the Church as the Sacrament of Christ by definition also contains the posture of petitionary humility.

It is the drama of petition and consecration that empowers the Church’s mission in the world. The coherent link in the drama of petition and consecration is de Lubac’s location of the common destiny of humanity in Christ, who is God’s transcendent gift to his creatures of fellowship with his creatures. Moreover, de Lubac primarily locates the authentic pursuit of eternal fellowship with God in the visible Church as the *congregatio*, the “converg[ence]” on Christ at its centre. Fellowship with God is transcendent for two reasons. First, it continues into the eternity of heaven rather than being confined to finite and contingent history. Fellowship with God therefore cannot be fully grasped by any one era or cultural context within human history, but “always . . . evades the temporal

26 *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Epiclesis.”
27 Furthermore, while Western liturgies emphasize the Words of Institution as a (debated) moment of consecration, these words are still spoken by a human mediator and therefore remain in the form of an epicletic petition. Following Deuteronomy 30:12-14, a priest is not a magician, and the Eucharist is not magic.
29 *Catholicism*, 64-70, 354.
society.” Secondly, fellowship with God is transcendent because it is fellowship with the Creator who is wholly Other.

Both of these attributes of transcendent fellowship with God pertain to both the petitionary and consecratory aspects of the Church. The petitionary aspect acknowledges the insufficiency of finite history to provide an eternal destiny for humanity, be it the history of the visible Church or of the world. Rather, the petitionary church humbly offers “a word of faith addressed to the Father” who is wholly other. In the consecratory aspect, the triune Creator offers himself as Redeemer and Sanctifier, drawing humanity together into the eternity of heaven. He does so primarily through those concrete acts of the visible Church that are discerned according to his unifying virtue of charity. It follows from this that the petitionary aspect incorporates an act of repentance for the concrete acts of the visible Church that have sought an eternal destiny for humanity within the Church’s own finite history, acts that in turn contradict God’s unifying virtue of charity. Ultimately, petition and consecration are not so easily distinguished from each other. Prayer and repentance are themselves concrete acts that encounter God’s healing and unifying grace, and those concrete acts that are consecrated in God’s will are by definition done in the charity of cruciform self-giving.

If (a) the Church’s mission in the world is an expression of its epicletic form, and (b) the Church derives this epicletic form from the epicletic nature of the Eucharist, then (c) the Church’s mission in the world is rooted in the epicletic nature of the Eucharist. Taking both Milbank’s and Healy’s diagnoses into account, my own diagnosis of the

30 Ibid., 358.
31 Ibid., 354.
33 Catholicism, 78.
34 Ibid., 335, 359–361, 367.
confusion regarding the Church’s mission in the world—exemplified by the accounts of false humility described above—is that contemporary ecclesiology insufficiently accounts for the epicletic tension between the Church’s petitionary and consecratory aspects of the Church as signified in the Eucharist. Greater attention to this epicletic form would serve to better articulate the Church’s present-day pursuit of eternal fellowship with God. This is a rather broad claim, but emerges from taking both Milbank’s radical orthodoxy project and Healy’s “practical-prophetic” approach seriously as important contributions to the same discourse.35

Finally, my own diagnosis can be articulated by stating Milbank’s and Healy’s diagnoses in my own terms. Ecclesial false humility exaggerates the petitionary aspect and its humble attention to concrete realities. Healy himself describes how this risks losing the consecratory aspect’s strength in discerning how the particularity of the Church’s witness to the truth of Christ can engender concrete acts of unity in charity.36 Conversely, an idealized or essentialized ecclesiology exaggerates the consecratory aspect by overstating the visible Church’s ability to discern and carry out concrete acts of unity in charity. It therefore insufficiently attends to the presence of ecclesial failure in its own history and the corresponding need for authentic humility before God and the world.

Ultimately it is the epicletic form of petition and consecration present in de Lubac’s own ecclesiology that is at issue, and the concerns of Milbank and Healy point out the need to reexamine the presence of the epicletic form in de Lubac’s ecclesiology. De Lubac was himself responding to both preconciliar and postconciliar trends in Roman

35 Again, Healy also shows an important degree of nuance in favourably citing Milbank’s diagnosis while incorporating into the broader claim that false humility itself lends to idealized pluralist ecclesiologies. Healy, 67.
36 Ibid., 93–94.
Catholicism—responses that directly inform the epicletic nature of his ecclesiology. At
the risk of overgeneralizing, it is possible to argue that the major intra-ecclesial
interlocutors during his Lyon period were those who favoured a juridico-institutional
model of the Church that emphasized the prescriptive and disciplinary powers of Papal
and episcopal office. In Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man, de Lubac
critiques this juridico-institutional model for the way it engenders an idealized and
exaggerated notion of the consecrated power of magisterial pronouncements. He is
chiefly concerned that the juridico-institutional model “works only from without by way
of authority, instead of effective union.” After Vatican II, de Lubac then confronted a
form of false humility that had emerged through misinterpretations of the Council’s
ecclesiology. For example, he devoted an extended series of appendices to A Brief
Catechesis on Nature and Grace to this theme. Of particular note in this series is his
explicit critique of Edward Schillebeeckx’ notion of the Church as the sacramentum
mundi. De Lubac’s response to Schillebeeckx emphasised the particular witness of the
Church as the sacramentum Christi. The circumstances of de Lubac’s career therefore
required him to attend to both the petitionary and consecratory aspects, and to articulate a
coherent basis for both aspects.

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37 For a brief account of de Lubac’s conflict with ecclesiastical authorities during this period, see
Gabriel Flynn, “A Renaissance in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology.” Irish Theological Quarterly 76
(2011), 327–32. See also Joseph Komonchak, “Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: the Example of
38 Catholicism, 76.
examines the extent to which de Lubac accurately described Schillebeeckx’ position and comments on the
real comparisons and contrasts between de Lubac and Schillebeeckx.
Procedure

This thesis will contain two broad chapters, followed by a conclusion. Chapter 1 roughly corresponds to the petitionary aspect of the Church. It will directly address Milbank’s criticism of de Lubac in *Theology and Social Theory*,\(^{40}\) and defend de Lubac against that criticism by clarifying the relationship between transcendence, human unity, and ecclesial flexibility. It will conclude by raising questions of Milbank as an example of inadequate attention to the petitionary aspect of the Church. In this way, the chapter will address the need for authentic humility before Christ as a concrete response of credible presence in the world. Chapter 2 will more directly articulate de Lubac’s understanding of the visible Church as the Body of Christ, bound to Christ and in communion by the Eucharist. Chapter 2 will thus engage de Lubac’s sacramental ecclesiology as expressive of the consecratory aspect, albeit in a way that sees the whole epicletic form of the Church as rooted in the *epiclesis* of the Eucharist. The conclusion will examine some concrete implications of the epicletic form of the Church as it relates to the world, especially the flexibility required to uphold both the humility of petition to God and the clarity of consecration in the world. The conclusion will illustrate this with the example of episcopal ministry in the world.

Methodological Questions

The present thesis will largely employ a close reading of primary sources, supplemented by secondary-source commentary. As an appreciative examination of de Lubac, this undertaking is largely a foray into the ecclesiology of *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, which presents de Lubac’s entire project “in seminal

\(^{40}\) Milbank, 209, 220, 228.
Catholicism is central to this thesis because it not only amasses a vast array of patristic and medieval evidence, but it also explicitly engages with twentieth-century theological and social concerns. I will proceed on the assumption that it can profoundly address twenty-first-century concerns as well, though some differences in context will be noted. Other key texts include Corpus Mysticum, which is largely a historical work on the development of sacramental doctrine but also contains his pertinent discussion on the shift from symbolist to dialectic metaphysics; Motherhood of the Church, which describes the concrete ecclesiological implications of transcendence and unity; and the self-explanatory A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace.

More broadly, in de Lubac I have turned to an influential twentieth-century Roman Catholic thinker in order to address tensions present within the Anglican Communion. This thesis is therefore an example of the “receptive ecumenism” introduced by Paul Murray and notably taken up in the third phase (begun in 2011) of ARCIC’s ongoing work. In a more limited and direct sense, the dialogue in this thesis is between Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism. This project is in agreement with de Lubac on various issues, including the organic unity of humanity, the sacramental unity of the communion of saints as present in the visible Church, the centrality of the objective real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as the embodiment of human and ecclesial unity (and division), the role of liturgy in the Eucharistic embodiment of unity, and the implications of sacramental unity for repudiating the dominance of national self-

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41 Wood, 2.
42 Catholicism, Part Three.
43 For example, the fall of communism and the rise of globalization.
interest in global governance and for repudiating other political sources of fragmentation. While these are neither exhaustive nor non-controversial markers of Anglo-Catholicism vis-à-vis the global Anglican Communion, it is not controversial to state that such themes bring Anglo-Catholics closer to Roman Catholics than to many within our own Communion.

In a broader sense however, the epicletic form of de Lubac’s ecclesiology addresses many of the questions that have been raised in dialogue between Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants. Can the “sensible bond” that de Lubac finds between the Eucharist and the Church address the tension between a Reformed emphasis on ecclesial faith and Trent’s direct affirmation of transubstantiation? Can his preconciliar emphasis on the Church as Communion (rather than simply a juridical institution) address the early Reformers’ protest against the late medieval monarchical papacy? And can de Lubac’s understanding of the Church’s concrete acts as expressive of human unity in its eternal destiny help articulate the Church’s role in pursuing peace, justice, and human development in the world today? While I will only briefly engage formal ecumenical discussions in this thesis, de Lubac’s treatment of the themes mentioned in this paragraph and as addressed in this thesis bear direct implications for ecumenical discussions.

Lastly, the critical approach to Milbank in chapter 1 is intended to incorporate the abovementioned concerns of Healy and others by affirming de Lubac’s understanding of the transcendence of Christ above the Church and the submission of the Church to

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45 Catholicism, 351.
46 Boersma, 272–73.
47 This is directly addressed in Catholicism, 361-366, including the limitations of this role of pursuing peace, justice and human development.
The critical approach to Milbank is thus a way into speaking of the petitionary aspect. On one hand I do not discount Healy’s concern to evaluate concrete acts through contingent results, nor do I discount the involvement of models of “Church” other than that of sacramental communion. On the other hand this thesis argues for the involvement of de Lubac’s particular theological account of “Church” in the broader task of evaluating the Church’s concrete acts. Milbank clearly shares this concern, and so my goal is not to dismiss his project but strengthen it with a clearer appreciation of de Lubac. I have therefore limited my focus to the epicletic form of de Lubac’s ecclesiology, with a partial investigation into the way Milbank’s critique of de Lubac displays an inadequate account of the petitionary aspect. This thesis is ultimately written with an eye towards a direct engagement with Healy, William Cavanaugh, and others in the course of future study.

**Implications**

The implications of this thesis are that de Lubac’s sacramental ecclesiology remains relevant, credible, and challenging in the contemporary academic context. De Lubac’s organic and dynamic understanding of ecclesial humility, unity, and dignity is relevant to an ecclesiological discourse grappling with a divided Church and a globalized yet divided humanity. In this discourse, de Lubac’s articulation of Christ’s

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48 Healy, 3.
49 Ibid. Healy appreciates those who emphasize the opposing concern to involve theological accounts of Church throughout, and explicitly agrees with Milbank’s concern to maintain theology as the “metadiscourse.” Ibid., 67, citing Milbank, 1. A question to be asked of Healy is how he sees a distinction between von Balthasar’s “dramatic” ecclesiology and de Lubac’s “maximally inclusivist” mystical ecclesiology. Consequently, on what basis is he able to uphold von Balthasar and critique de Lubac? On Healy’s preference for von Balthasar, see ibid., 52-76. On his critique of de Lubac, see ibid., 130–31.
50 Milbank, 1-6, 207.
51 The contributions of both Cavanaugh (most evocatively in *Torture and Eucharist*) and Radner cited above provide demonstrative examples. A more recent example is Radner’s *A Brutal Unity*. 
transcendence and the Church’s cruciform humility lends his ecclesiology both credibility and sensitivity toward conflict in the Church and in humanity.

Lastly, de Lubac’s sacramental ecclesiology challenges both systematic and moral theologians to clearly and intentionally articulate their own ecclesiological presuppositions along with their Christological presuppositions, especially when evaluating concrete acts. Specifically, de Lubac’s ecclesiology continues to challenge the field of moral theology to evaluate concrete acts according to the fundamentally collective and ecclesial nature of the transcendent reality of eternal fellowship with God. His ecclesiology therefore questions an exaggerated focus on immanent political or theological goals or accountability to contingent results and offers a bulwark against normalizing the trends toward further individualism and schism. It asks the divided Church and divided humanity whether they are in a state of sinful division because they have neglected to conform concrete acts to the transcendent reality of eternal fellowship with God and are instead too focused on immanent political projects. Questioning an over-exaggerated focus on immanent political projects does not deny the necessity of political goals and evaluation according to contingent results. Such questioning nevertheless makes room to explore the ecclesiogical and moral implications of the claim that Christ “is the Eternal found at the heart of all temporal development which gives it life and direction.”

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52 Catholicism, 362.
Receiving Grace

John Milbank’s engagement with Roman Catholic approaches to Marxism forms a key part of his wider survey of theological engagement with modern sociology. In chapter 8 of *Theology and Social Theory*, he upholds Maurice Blondel’s integralist Christian philosophy as a sustainable critique of secular reason and as a constructive “‘discourse about difference.’” Consequently, he critiques Henri de Lubac’s political ecclesiology while maintaining a common set of concerns. After an extensive discursus outlining Blondel’s project, Milbank examines the extent to which de Lubac faithfully explored the soteriological and ecclesiological implications of his philosophical predecessor. Throughout the chapter, Milbank explicitly wishes to follow the French school of Blondel, de Lubac, Congar and von Balthasar in upholding an approach that “supernaturalizes the natural,” rather than Rahner’s German–Latin American “rapprochement with the Enlightenment” that “naturalizes the supernatural.”

As stated in my introduction, Milbank’s espousal of the French school speaks to the inherently ecclesiological nature of theological false humility and the appropriate ecclesial response. Milbank affirms that in *Catholicism*, “de Lubac . . . offers a fine account of how salvation is *inherently* social,” how it is inherently communal, relational, and historically grounded and thereby “open to recognizing structural elements of emplotment.” After treating similar themes in Congar’s thought, Milbank turns to his critique of liberation theology for the rest of the chapter.

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53 Milbank, 209.
54 Ibid., 207. See n5 above regarding the relationship between de Lubac, Rahner, and Blondel. Izuzquiza, 395.
55 Milbank, 228, emphasis original.
56 Ibid., 230–56. An examination of this critique of liberation theology would provide for much fruitful discussion elsewhere. The focus here will be contained to Milbank’s engagement with de Lubac.
However, Milbank’s appreciation of de Lubac contains an important reservation. Firstly, he claims that “de Lubac and von Balthasar do not fully follow through the implications of their integralism, precisely to the degree that they fail to develop a social or a political theology.” He argues that this is due to “an unwillingness to confront the severe problem of possible Christian aversion to the existing secular order” and “a refusal to face up fully to the humanly constructed character of cultural reality.” Later, Milbank states that de Lubac “fail[s] to grapple with the stoic and pragmatist elements in Blondel’s philosophy,” and that de Lubac “over-simplistically” distinguishes “Blondel’s emphasis on a discontinuity between human action and supernatural grace” from “a Patristic and scholastic stress on continuity.” Milbank accuses de Lubac and Congar of “a marked tendency to prescind from the political, and to insulate the Church from wider social processes” and “ecclesial history from secular and political history in general.” Ultimately, this leads Milbank to conclude that de Lubac “imperils his conclusions” regarding the inherently social and historically-grounded nature of the Christian life, precisely because de Lubac emphasizes the vocation of human nature to pursue that which transcends the immanent.

It bears repeating that Milbank shares de Lubac’s concerns to “supernaturalize the natural” and to repudiate “‘the sociological illusion’ of making society and the individual spatially external to each other.” However, why does he claim that de Lubac only considers the Church ad intra but “fails” to apply these concerns to politics ad extra?

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57 Ibid., 209.
58 Ibid., 220. While this thesis will not directly engage this point about stoicism or pragmatism, it is included here as part of a cascade of examples depicting Milbank’s critique of de Lubac. This chapter will, however briefly, explore the contrast between Blondel’s concerns and those of the patristics and medievals.
59 Ibid., 228.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
This chapter will examine Milbank’s charge in light of de Lubac’s ecclesiological call to supernatural transcendence in *Catholicism*. In this way, I will primarily describe the petitionary aspect of the Church’s epicletic form, but also point to the consecratory aspect. I will argue that it is transcendent grace that entails rather than prescinds the Church’s engagement with the world, precisely by healing humanity’s sin of immanentism and division through a convergence on the divine Other. De Lubac confronts the “possible Christian aversion to the existing secular order” by upholding both the Gospel’s claim to transcendent truth and the Gospel’s own requirement for the Church to charitably engage its contemporary environment. This is done precisely by attending to “the humanly constructed character of cultural reality,” while expressing the natural openness of such cultural realities to their ultimate fulfillment in the Incarnate Word. Far from a failure “to develop a social or a political theology,” de Lubac simply requires that questions of social ordering are first considered within the realm of ecclesiology-proper that is eschatologically defined.

To summarize this chapter, de Lubac’s priority on the transcendence of God over humanity and over the Church in particular speaks to the petitionary aspect. This is seen concretely in the way the kenotic humility of the petitionary aspect engages the tension between the two differing responses of proclamation and dialogue. In its repentant humility before God, the Church turns from its complicity in the violence of the world. In turning from this complicity the Church repents for an exaggerated self-importance *vis-à-vis* the rest of humanity, a repentance that engenders a constructive engagement with the world rather than an exaggeration of the Church’s self-importance. The kenotic petition

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62 Again, the two aspects are not so distinguishable after all.
63 *Catholicism*, 354.
64 Milbank, 209.
opens the Church to plerotic consecration. Upon repenting from complicity in the world’s violence, the Church is then positioned to offer a credible prophetic critique of the world’s violence. Upon turning from an exaggerated self-importance to a constructive dialogue with the world, the Church is then positioned to credibly speak of its particular witness to Christ as the sole end of humanity.

In this chapter I will proceed chiastically. I will begin by addressing Milbank’s charge that de Lubac presents a “doctrine of evasion” in attending to the transcendent nature of the epicletic form. In response, the central focus of this chapter will examine how de Lubac understands the work of divine grace present in the Church to heal and unify humanity. I will conclude by examining the abovementioned concerns with Milbank’s own project, and argue for the need for cruciform humility as the mark of the petitionary aspect of the Church.

“The Upper Air”: Addressing Milbank’s Charge

In his critique of de Lubac summarized above, Milbank partially cites Catholicism’s response to the Marxist dialectic. Because Milbank omits some of de Lubac’s key phrases, I will quote the passage in question at length:

There is in man an eternal element, a “germ of eternity,” which already breathes the upper air, which always, hic et nunc (here and now) evades the temporal society. The truth of his being transcends his being itself. For he is made in the image of God, and in the mirror of his being the Trinity is ever reflected. But it is only a mirror, an image. . . . Only by acknowledging himself to be a reflection could he obtain completeness, and only in his act of adoration could he find his own inviolable depths.65

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65 Catholicism, 358–59.
Much of this chapter will examine the way this call to transcendence is what is meant by “supernaturalizing the natural” for de Lubac. The definition of nature or “the natural” is revealed primarily by its supernatural perfection rather than primarily by philosophical reflection on nature in itself, since “the truth of [a person’s] being transcends his being itself.” Milbank sounds his agreement here by citing Blondel’s articulation of epistemic humility in philosophy, and is most affirmative of de Lubac insofar as he reads de Lubac as agreeing with Blondel regarding the integral relation between nature and the supernatural.66

While de Lubac owes much to Blondel’s insights, de Lubac draws his own vision of transcendence that “evades the temporal society” directly from Augustine: the paragraph quoted above cites a meditation found near the end of the Confessions.67 In remembering the fleeting transience of the temporal present, Augustine asks rhetorically, “who will catch hold of [the present], and make it fast, so that it stands firm for a little while, and for a little while seize the splendor of that ever stable eternity?”68 Moreover, ultimately at issue are the implications of the core Augustinian claim that God has “made us for [Himself], and our heart is restless until it rests in [Him].”69 The present life of human society cannot be caught hold of or have rest in itself because it is destined to rest in the eternity of God. Thus for both Blondel and de Lubac, nature is revealed in form and content to be incomplete on its own. The most important expression of this is how the unity of humanity is supernaturally perfected in the unity of the communion of saints. The in via pursuit of this perfect unity is the epicletic consecration of the Church.

66 Milbank, 216–17.
67 Catholicism, 359n9.
69 Ibid., 1.1.
Milbank shares de Lubac’s concern to articulate a public, communal, and ecclesial salvation in a united humanity, rather than focusing primarily on the individual or familial “level of an I–Thou encounter. He is not rendering a ‘private’ sphere immune from wider social processes.” however as stated above, Milbank argues that de Lubac “imperils his conclusions” on this score. Milbank sees de Lubac as implying in the above passage “that there is a realm which is merely ‘social’ and which the individual [pursuing transcendence] might stand outside,” with the corollary that “the contrast of Church/secular society” can be expressed “in terms of the contrast individual/social.”

To claim that de Lubac ultimately equates transcendence in the Church with the individual and equates secular society with the social is to simplistically narrow down a more complex theological vision. In de Lubac’s engagement with Marxism, he makes no mention of an exclusively interiorist and individualist exclusivity. Rather, de Lubac’s protest here is against the imposition of monolithic unity by a secular system of thought and practice. Such a protest is made specifically on the grounds that this imposition of monolithic unity by an immanentist ideology itself creates further violence and division. He counters one aspect of a political system by articulating one aspect of Christian doctrine, rather than describing his whole theology in one individualist turn. Taking the coherent whole of Catholicism as the presentation of one multifaceted argument, it is far more likely that de Lubac addresses the passage quoted above to all of humanity—and only then to the individual persons within it. This is made explicit in a methodological passage on unity and distinction, which ultimately grounds the

70 Milbank, 228.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid, emphasis original.
73 Catholicism, 358–60. See also A Brief Catechesis, 140.
relationship between the “one” and the “many” in the difference-respecting unity of the Triune God.\footnote{Catholicism, 326–33, especially “Unify to Distinguish,” 329–33.} Moreover, de Lubac sees the person, the species, and the local community that intermediates person and humanity in states of integral relation rather than opposition.\footnote{Ibid., as well as “The City of Living Stones,” 334–37.} If he is subsequently speaking of the person, it is precisely in terms of the person's relation to the whole, to the kath 'alou or catholica. Catholicism itself begins with the double assertion that

The supernatural dignity of one who has been baptized rests . . . on the natural dignity of man, though it surpasses it in an infinite manner: agnosce, christiane, dignitatem tuam—Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti (recognize, O Christian, your dignity—God, who in a wonderful manner created and ennobled human nature). Thus the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, a supernatural unity, supposes a previous natural unity, the unity of the human race.\footnote{Ibid., 25.}

The threefold relationship between person, community and humanity will be explored in the concrete ecclesiology of chapter 2 and the conclusion to this thesis, particularly in light of de Lubac’s claim that “it is the Church’s mission to reveal to men that pristine unity that they have lost, to restore and complete it.”\footnote{Ibid., 53.} In the power of transcendent grace, the Church reveals and pursues the dignity of humanity and of the human person.

Finally, the asocial individualism countered by Milbank was also the first of four errors explicitly denounced by de Lubac when assessing “The Present Situation.”\footnote{Milbank, 228; Catholicism, 305.} Far from allowing his talk of transcendence to constitute yet another “doctrine of evasion” from history,\footnote{These are ruled out in Catholicism, 137–40. It is significant that in the original French this passage on pagan mythologies uses the cognate noun evasion (original French, 107), while in the passage above contra Marxism, “evades the temporal society” is a translation of “échappe à société temporelle” (original French, 314).} de Lubac asserts that “the social role of the Church” is primarily to “bring
us back to that communion which all her dogma teaches us and all her activity makes ready for us.” Echoing Augustine’s meditation quoted above, the Church fulfills its social role precisely

by speaking to [humanity] always of the hereafter. For in truth the hereafter is far nearer than the future, far nearer than what we call the present. It is the Eternal found at the heart of all temporal development which gives it life and direction. It is the authentic Present without which the present itself is like the dust which slips through our hands.81

De Lubac’s outspoken opposition to Nazism and his engagement with French social and intellectual movements outside of the theological establishment provide brief but cogent examples of his own presence in the public sphere.82

Milbank is explicitly interested in considering Blondel’s insights for political theology.83 However, de Lubac the theologian is more beneficial for a constructive political ecclesiology of human unity than Blondel the philosopher. Central to Blondel’s project is the apophatic circumscription of philosophy in the face of revealed theology and faith, a claim that Milbank and de Lubac both appreciate.84 De Lubac takes Blondel’s theologically-motivated philosophy to its doctrinal and ecclesiological conclusions, affirming theology as the “metadiscourse” that articulates a human race united in the communion of saints.85 If the positive argument in Catholicism involves a corollary repudiation of interiorist individualism, the issue for de Lubac is not that Marxism goes too far but rather that it is incapable of realizing its own noble aims. Marx would be

80 Confessions 11.11.
81 Catholicism, 362.
83 Milbank, 209.
84 Ibid., 216; Motherhood, 193.
85 Milbank, 1. Milbank also notes that “Blondel retains many positivist themes, while transcending them and returning them to Augustinian roots” (ibid., 215–16) and is effusive in claiming that “reunderstood as theology, Blondel’s philosophy can mostly stand” (ibid., 219). Again, I do not dispute this attribution of Blondel’s importance.
correct in locating the identity of the person as an inherently social reality: that much is also de Lubac's thesis. Where Marxism fails as a hubristically-reductive ideology is in “dissolv[ing] the religious being into the social being,” by locating the identity of the human person in a “‘whole body of social relationships’” that are entirely immanent to this world.\textsuperscript{86} De Lubac, in asserting that the true human person is one open to supernatural grace, requires that this “‘whole body of social relationships,” at least in its final and therefore truest form, is nothing less than the “hereafter” body of the communion of saints.\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{Supernaturalizing the Natural}

\textit{Nature}

If de Lubac seeks to somehow relate the “supernatural unity” of the “Mystical Body of Christ” to the “previous natural unity . . . of the human race,”\textsuperscript{88} the first question to address is what de Lubac means by “human nature.” I have discussed above how his anthropology is naturally of an Augustinian bent, but for all that de Lubac did not seek to escape long-established Thomistic themes of potency, natural inclinations, and cardinal and theological virtues. Rather, he sought to expand and clarify these themes in light of the above-mentioned Augustinian concerns regarding the transience of the present and the destiny of humanity to fellowship with God.\textsuperscript{89} De Lubac was nevertheless responding

\textsuperscript{86} Catholicism, 358, quoting Karl Marx, \textit{Thèses sur Feuerbach}, Thèse 6, 73.  
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 80.  
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 25.  
\textsuperscript{89} Ormund Rush warns against making too much of the difference between Augustinians and Thomists at Vatican II, a proscription that can be similarly applied to Augustinian and Thomistic themes within de Lubac’s own thought. Ormund Rush, \textit{Still Interpreting Vatican II} (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2004), 64–65. In a passing comment early in \textit{The Mystery of the Supernatural} de Lubac confines efforts at
to his neoscholastic milieu, especially against the implications of the “pure nature” hypothesis that emerged from the sharp distinction between nature and grace.\textsuperscript{90}

De Lubac’s use of the term “nature” is both limited and positive. Contrary to the pure nature hypothesis, an understanding of nature is \textit{limited} without an account of the action of the supernatural within and upon it.\textsuperscript{91} I will return to this in a discussion on sin below; for now it is critical to remember that de Lubac’s aim was to problematize the neat distinction between nature and the supernatural, especially in light of the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is also important to note that repudiating the pure nature hypothesis does not obliterate the possibility of natural law reasoning: a theological account of “nature” contains \textit{positive} content when natural law is situated within the metadiscourse of theology.\textsuperscript{92} Finally, recall that the dynamic of nature and grace is discussed in this thesis for its ecclesiological import. The perfection of nature—especially of \textit{human} nature—is a communal dynamic pursued in the visible Church.

The first point raised by de Lubac in \textit{A Brief Catechesis} is that humanity is created to bear God’s image within Creation. Human nature is not simply a “thin psychocultural streamer, floating like a flying carpet over the natural universe,”\textsuperscript{93} but we “remain nonetheless a ‘microcosm,’” that is, a “micro cosmos,” by virtue of being the \textit{imago dei}.\textsuperscript{94} Indeed, humans are not simply animals for which nature can be reduced to

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\textsuperscript{90} A Brief Catechesis, 33-36. See also Joseph Komomchak, “Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: the Example of Henri de Lubac” \textit{Theological Studies} 51 (1990): 579-81.
\textsuperscript{91} A Brief Catechesis, 13.
\textsuperscript{92} Aidan Nichols, “‘Non tali auxilio:’ John Milbank’s Suasion to Orthodoxy” \textit{New Blackfriars} 73, no. 861 (June 1992): 328.
\textsuperscript{94} A Brief Catechesis, 11.
“instinct,” but rather rightly considered as “person, or as liberty, or as spirit, or as history, or even as existence.” All of these categories fall under de Lubac’s notion of created human nature, which is described in Catholicism as possessing a “natural dignity” as God’s image within creation.

Most importantly here, such dignity is expressed in the natural inclination to life in society, expressed both in the formation of local culture and in the pursuit of authentic global unity. Indeed, “culture is . . . something proper to human nature which, whatever the circumstances, is specifically ‘human,’ radically different from all other natures, living or inanimate, found in the cosmos.” This is related to unity via local human sociality, seen in the natural formation of communal life along cultural, linguistic and other demographic lines. It therefore also speaks of the fecundity of creative diversity. However, it is natural human unity itself that provides the basis for all other human nature, which is subsequently embodied in local identities. Without this natural unity there would be no “single human nature” to speak of. We are all united as the descendants of Adam, and therefore “the divine image does not differ from one individual to another: it is the same image” (29). Finally, in looking to Adam as our ancestor we look to the Triune God as the Creator and Redeemer of us all (25–33). This vision of unity in both the first and second Adam preoccupied the Fathers of the Church, and it is the way de Lubac begins Catholicism (25).

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95 Ibid., 14.
96 Catholicism, 29.
97 A Brief Catechesis, 14.
98 Catholicism, 351. Subsequent references will be in parenthetical citations.
Sin as Fragmentary Immanentism

The second question to address is the way de Lubac understands the sinful perversion of human nature. Various political and intellectual currents during the interwar period provided de Lubac with opportunities to reflect on the social inclinations of unity and cultural expression mentioned above. These currents included increasing integration in economic exchange, rapid scientific advances and the achievement in global governance attempted by the League of Nations experiment. In these developments, de Lubac could detect the expression of a longing to embody such natural unity (351). As positive as these desires may have been, he also warned that they “are powerless, when they are not also mischievous, in the secularist and entirely materialist shape which they are wont to assume” (ibid.). On the eve of the Second World War and the violent developments that followed, this remark constituted more than a foreboding insight.

De Lubac’s critique of the “secularist and entirely materialist shape” taken by mid-century global politics is rooted in his conception of sin as a divisive immanentism (ibid). That immanentism is deeply problematic in modernism is not controversial or particularly unique within the discourse: it is the concern partly addressed with the diagnosis of false humility. De Lubac’s unique insights are in (a) diagnosing the way in which such “quasi-religious ideologies” (358) are inherently divisive and, conversely, (b) the way transcendent grace in the communion of the Church infuses nature with the pursuit of authentic unity. A corollary that will be addressed later in this chapter is how de Lubac’s insights may illumine immanentist ecclesiologies.

99 Milbank, 1
With regards to secularism, Boersma sees de Lubac in deep accord with Blondel in both intent and content.\(^\text{100}\) The thesis of secularism—which Blondel called “historicism”—is that “history [is] regarded as autonomous, independent, and self-sufficient.”\(^\text{101}\) While the Christian tradition grants a degree of legitimate autonomy to the scientific account of nature,\(^\text{102}\) it is the claim to self-sufficiency that turns the scientific quest for autonomy into a quest for the ultimate authority to arbitrate meaning. Boersma quotes Blondel directly: “Historicism, therefore, was only interested in ‘determinist explanations,’ forgetting that ‘while the historian has, as it were, a word to say in everything concerning man, there is nothing on which he has the last word.’”\(^\text{103}\) Taking the example of biblical interpretation, Boersma then notes that historicism “[takes] account only of the realm of nature, by reading scripture within the contours of the testimony of history.”\(^\text{104}\)

Both the purpose and result of these “determinist explanations” is the “powerless” or “mischievous” attempt to control nature and history ourselves, in a quest for convenient, procedural solutions.\(^\text{105}\) This is demonstrated by its “fruits” (Matt 7:16). Assigning absolute meaning to scientifically-determined procedural solutions tragically results in the contradiction that humanity surrenders itself to the mercy of these processes.

\(^{100}\) Boersma, 246.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., 248.

\(^{102}\) This was reaffirmed in Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), December 7, 1965, no. 36 (hereafter cited as GS).

\(^{103}\) Boersma, 248, quoting *History and Dogma*, 236–37.

\(^{104}\) Ibid., 247–48.

in the name of control and security.\textsuperscript{106} The contradiction of surrendering to the control of systems that are intended to enhance our control is itself undergirded by the contradiction of hubristic reductionism, in which the exaggeration of human capability results in the denial of human dignity. \textit{A Brief Catechesis} summarizes this contradiction by highlighting its inherent violence:

The basic sin, of which the thoughtful man seeks in this way to justify himself in atheism, is “believing himself innocent.” What he proclaims is not just his individual innocence, but the innocence of man, that great being who, in his successive representatives down the ages, ‘creates history’ and divinizes himself as he divinizes history. Compared with this grandiose undertaking, who cares about the inevitable waste products?\textsuperscript{107}

Similarly, \textit{Catholicism} cites Marxism’s grave error that “dissolved the human being into the social being . . . . In a non-transcendent society, the reduction of man to his ‘social relationships’ will work inevitably to the prejudice of his personal interiority, and will beget a tyranny of some kind, however novel.”\textsuperscript{108} The result, in sum, is that human self-divinization creates human “waste products.” This is not merely the sin of twentieth-century Marxism but the sin of Adam: in taking the forbidden fruit, the first humans deny that we are merely “dust” and at the same time deny that we bear the image of our Creator (Gen 1:27; 3:19).

The point for de Lubac is that secular systems of thought and practice serve to divide the human city against itself (Matt 12:25), since they press towards absolute meaning in the success of their own political agendas.\textsuperscript{109} Recall that for de Lubac, humanity possesses a natural, social unity (25–33). Hubristic reductionism is therefore

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\textsuperscript{106} \textit{A Brief Catechesis}, 16.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 140. By “waste products,” de Lubac refers explicitly to the trampled victims of imperial conquest. See also 1 John 1:8.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Catholicism}, 358–60. Subsequent references will be in parenthetical citations.

\textsuperscript{109} This is exemplified by the rampant partisanship that infects both Canadian and American legislative processes. Recall examples from my introduction that exemplify the way such partisanship has infected mainline churches in North America as a symptom of false humility.
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inherently violent, since its divisiveness is a default on humanity’s true self. Secular systems are particularly violent when diversity and unity are somehow pitted in conflict with each other (335). Secular myths of technical progress are blinded by “the vision of an entirely monotonous world” (361), one that ironically creates an immensely violent fragmentation by seeking to oppose or conquer all those who disagree with “my vision” or (more realistically) “my interests,” (33, 360) as if “my vision” is above reproach. Thus our conflicts and divisions are inflicted by a reduction to competing economic and political interests that serve to obscure the divine image that is fundamental to our unified human nature (33–34). The result is that both exploiter and exploited are “estranged . . . dispersed” and “separated” from their true selves (359). Again, “compared with this grandiose undertaking, who cares about the inevitable waste products?”

One can clearly see de Lubac’s self-situating within the tradition of Catholic social teaching and its overarching response to both capitalism and communism. From its beginnings with Rerum Novarum in 1891, this tradition has repudiated exaggerated societal preoccupations with either capital gain or centralized market control. This is because Catholic social teaching is concerned that these are technical, atheistic ideologies of progress that make grandiose claims about human capabilities but effectively result in the mass objectification of the species. In this vein, the rise of fascism and its violent effects, the subsequent horrors of World War II, the growing strength of communism, and the emergence of Cold War tensions all provided de Lubac ample resources for an evocation of sin as false unity and conflictual division. If we look back on the twentieth

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110 A Brief Cathechesis, 140.
112 Recall de Lubac’s firsthand encounter with the Vichy regime as accounted in Flynn, 355–58.
century and the first decade of the twenty-first, it is not difficult to demonstrate the accuracy of his diagnosis. ¹¹³

Fundamentally however, this discussion of sin as hubristic reductionism points not to an evil presence but to the lack of a transcendent “Other.” De Lubac here speaks in the classic sense of sin as privation, as the lack of “a center to which [humanity] can converge, an Eternal to make it complete, an Absolute which, in the strongest sense of the word, will make it exist . . . . Another to whom it can give itself” (354). In the quote above regarding Marxist “dissolution,” the point was not simply that we have gone from one material reality to another, but that Marx’s dissolution was itself the continuation of a prior dissolution “of the religious being into the human being.” Ultimately, “what was to exult man ended in his ruin” (358).

In the key passage engaged by Milbank, de Lubac counters such dissolution with the claim that human nature is inclined to transcend such dissolution. In this light, the concerns behind de Lubac’s engagement with Marxism in Catholicism are more clearly understood. I will again quote the key passage at length:

There is in man an eternal element, a ‘germ of eternity,’ which already breathes the upper air,’ which always, hic et nunc (here and now) evades the temporal society. The truth of his being transcends his being itself. For he is made in the image of God, and in the mirror of his being the Trinity is ever reflected. But it is only a mirror, an image. . . . Only by acknowledging himself to be a reflection could he obtain completeness,

and only in his act of adoration could he find his own inviolable depths (359, emphasis added).

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the specific circumstances of the Cold War are largely behind us. De Lubac’s reflection nevertheless remains relevant in aptly describing our violent, market-driven world. Consequently, while the Cold-War context provided de Lubac with the most pertinent foil for his reflections on both such immanentism and the Christian response, his constructive ecclesiological response to these problems nevertheless remains fruitful in contemporary contexts.

Grace

Before I continue to comment more positively on the above passage, a certain clarification of terms is in order. First, it may be helpful to recall the two aspects of the term “transcendence” described in the introduction above. Fellowship with God is transcendent because (a) it continues into the eternity of heaven rather than being confined to finite and contingent history—fellowship with God therefore cannot be fully grasped by any one era or cultural context but “always . . . evades the temporal society”115—and (b) it is fellowship with the Creator who is wholly Other.116 Second, it is important to keep in mind that “eternal fellowship with God” denotes both the teleological vocation that God has implanted within human nature and the means to pursue that vocation in the supernatural perfection of nature. Humanity is called to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1). This calling is pursued and fulfilled in the gracious reality that God has indeed “seated” the

114 See Reno, and chap. 3 in Being Consumed, 59-88.
115 Catholicism, 358.
116 Ibid., 354.
Christian and the Church “with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). As will be demonstrated in chapter 2, these correspond to the Church’s sacramental nature as a *convocatio* and a *congregatio*, and to the relationship between present concrete realities and their eschatological fulfillment. Furthermore, the call to “seek the things that are above” includes the petitionary aspect: we are called to humbly request entrance into God’s holiness in Christ.

With regard to the doctrine of grace and the relationship between transcendence and immancence, a further clarification is needed. Boersma argues that in this later work, de Lubac “distinguishes sharply” between the terms “grace” on the one hand and “the supernatural” on the other. However, Christ’s life given to us in the Holy Spirit is the common origin of both grace and the supernatural. This leads one to suspect that perhaps Boersma overstates the case here, especially if grace entails the salvific efficacy of the Church’s epicletic life in both petition and consecration. The commonality between grace and the supernatural is at least implied in the commonality between the prelapsarian Adam and the rest of humanity described by de Lubac in chapter 4 of *Augustinianism and Modern Theology*: is the *adjutorium quo* so “sharply” distinguishable from the *adjutorium sine quo non*?

I have raised this point solely because grace and the supernatural are two sides of the same coin that is the unifying sweep of God’s gracious fellowship with humanity. As this unifying sweep of eternal fellowship with God pursued in the visible Church is my primary concern here, commonalities within this sweep take priority over distinctions.

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117 Ibid., 64–70.
118 Boersma, 269.
Nevertheless, there is a distinction to be made, albeit one that is not so sharp: it is, rather, the distinction between healing grace and sanctifying grace. De Lubac therefore prefers to describe sanctifying grace with the adjective “supernatural,” as I have also done here. This also supports the above distinction between nature and sin: nature is elevated by the supernatural, while the sting of sin is healed by grace. Finally, the healing–sanctifying distinction can only roughly correspond to the petition–consecration distinction. To take a sacramental example, a penitent is certainly petitioning God for healing through the absolution of sins, but the healing work of grace that restores the penitent to communion comes through the consecrated power of priestly absolution. Moreover, the very act of contrite petition is itself an act of grace. To describe this dynamic more deeply, I will proceed chiastically beginning with the sin–grace dynamic before turning to the nature–supernatural dynamic.

In his discussion on the relationship between sin and grace in *A Brief Catechesis*, de Lubac is at his most polemical: he is reacting directly to a postconciliar Roman Catholic form of ecclesial false humility. He emphasizes the unequivocal opposition between grace and sin: “Between sinful human nature and divine grace we have not only a dissimilarity, a heterogeneity between two orders of being, an infinite distance that man alone cannot bridge. There is an antagonism, violent conflict. Between grace and sin the struggle is irreconcilable.” The holiness of God is truly Other to the sinfulness of humanity. The only possibility left to sin when confronted by grace is the lifelong

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120 *A Brief Catechesis*, 33.
121 I am again referring to the dispute with Schillebeeckx in Appendix B in *A Brief Catechesis*, 191-234; see also Boersma, 269.
122 *A Brief Catechesis*, 119. Subsequent references will be in parenthetical citations.
struggle toward obliteration, since the confrontation of grace to the sinner is “a summons to a ‘total upheaval,’ to a ‘conversion,’” to repentance.\textsuperscript{123}

This repentance is holistic, but only in a certain way. It is holistic insofar as the dual movement of hubris and degradation described above marks human nature (120). Furthermore, such hubris forms in us an “allergy to sin,” or rather the “idea of sin,” that prevents us from seeing the need for grace (128–29). Repentance therefore partly entails the development of “realism,” a clearer acceptance of our sinful nature and need for grace (153). Furthermore, it reverses the two-step dissolution described above: grace summons us to repent not simply for our offences against our neighbour (be they on an interpersonal or international scale), but to understand that even offences against our neighbour more fundamentally entail a rupture with God.\textsuperscript{124} If the sin of immanence is the denial of need for a transcendent Other, then grace is the unilateral call of this absolute, eternal Other that converts our lives away from ourselves and back towards Him.

In this way we heed the call of the prophet to “bear fruit worthy of repentance” (Matt 3:8). Indeed, grace is not simply “violence upon sin” but rather entails “forgiveness . . . mercy and pardon.”\textsuperscript{125} The fecund work of salvific grace “is essentially a divine undertaking which comes about in the depths of hearts and is inscribed in eternity. . . .”\textsuperscript{126} The sinner is “liberated from himself” as one is freed from slavery (160, emphasis original), and subsequently perfecting grace is “‘the bringing about of God’s Kingdom in

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., quoting Maurice Clavel, \textit{Ce que je crois} (Grasset, 1975), 290.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 164, quoting Yves de Montcheuil, \textit{Le Royaume et ses exigences} (Editions de l’Epi, 1957), 47–49.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 118, citing Jonah 4:2.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 159–60, quoting Edmond Barbotin, \textit{Foi et langage} (1979), 34.
a free being.” It requires the sinner to be joined to the self-denial of Christ on the Cross, but if it is the work of the crucified Lord then it is also the work of the risen Lord (135). If it is the work of the risen Lord, it is itself a work not bound by sin and death but rather breaks the chains restraining those created to be free, empowering them to pursue their eternal vocation. Thus while grace destroys sin, it does not destroy the created goodness that is human nature, because Christ is Himself the resurrected and liberated human nature precisely as the risen and incarnate Word. As the “first fruits of those who have died” (1 Cor 15:20), Christ reveals the fundamental destiny of human nature towards resurrection and eternal fellowship with the Father. God’s response to repentance is holistic regeneration, but the resurrection of Christ reveals that cruciform repentance on its own cannot be holistic because sin is privation and not the primary mark of human nature.

The Supernatural

As I turn to the discussion on the supernatural perfection of nature, some historical contextualization is in order. It is helpful to note that Lubac’s theology of the supernatural was a major point of controversy until his vindication at Vatican II. Contrary to the pure nature hypothesis espoused by the neoscholastic establishment, de Lubac asserted that the sole destiny of human nature was eternal fellowship with God. In upholding the possibility of a separate, “natural” destiny of humanity immanent to itself, the Magisterium was concerned to preserve the distinctions between faith and reason.

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127 Ibid.
128 “Mysterium Crucis,” epilogue in Catholicism, 367-69.
129 A Brief Catechesis, 122; Catholicism, 37–40.
130 Komonchak, 579–81.
between natural law and evangelical law, and more importantly to preserve the “otherness” of divine grace. Ultimately their concerns were theological: “from their perspective, de Lubac’s conception of human nature limited the freedom of God and thus made grace a demand of human nature, not a gratuitous, free gift.”

At issue then were concerns about the identity of God more than the identity of humanity. Regarding the identity of God, von Balthasar points out that de Lubac’s starting point in Catholicism is the simple dogmatic assertion that “the God of creation and the God of redemption are one and the same.” The loud implication is that the coeternal creative logos of John 1:1-5 and the despised and rejected ecce homo of John 19:5 is the Word made flesh of John 1:14. Thus de Lubac’s soteriological and anthropological argument is founded upon the claim that the gratuitous gift of supernatural life was given not only in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son but also in the Incarnation. In the Incarnation, Christ is not only the full revelation of God, but the full revelation of humanity as well, since He is the preexistent logos “through whom all things were made.”

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134 The Reformed origins of the Prayer Book tradition also require a discussion of the salvific import of the incarnation. Thus the Proper Preface for Christmas recalls that the Father gave the Son “who, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, was made very man of the substance of the Virgin Mary his mother; and that without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin.” Similarly, the Proper Preface for Epiphany invokes “Jesus Christ our Lord, who, in substance of our mortal flesh, manifested forth his glory, that he might bring us out of darkness into his own marvelous light.” Finally—and this relates more directly to de Lubac’s coordination between nature, liberation and destiny—the Prayer of Consecration begins its invocation: “Blessing and glory and thanksgiving be unto thee Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to take our nature upon him, and to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption” (emphasis added). While in the Paschal mystery the focus is most
at the creation of nature, which is perhaps the most challenging resourcing of patristic thought.

In the discussion of nature above, this thesis raised the preemptive caveat that our understanding and articulation of nature is limited without an account of the action of the supernatural within and upon it. To employ de Lubac’s terms, “in its theological sense,” nature “is then a purely correlative term which consequently can be properly understood only in its relationship with the other term ‘supernatural.’” This was the anthropological dimension of his dispute with the neoscholastics, who upheld the pure nature hypothesis that (to restate in different terms) preserved a purely natural end of humanity distinct from the supernatural end given by grace. They sought to achieve this by conceiving of the natural inclinations undergirding Thomas’s moral theology as distinct from “beatitude [as] the end of elevated nature.”

From a certain perspective, one can appreciate a degree of legitimacy to their concerns, especially in the need to preserve a clear account of divine freedom and otherness. The pure nature hypothesis can also seek to articulate the dignity of human reason and human freedom. However, one can detect in their claims an attempt to ward off a perceived threat to assenting to the salvific efficacy of the institutional hierarchy as clearly on the Crucifixion, the Incarnation is also manifestly present in the Eucharist. See Book of Common Prayer (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1959), 79, 82.

Moreover, the Prayer Book’s General Thanksgiving and even the penitential Collect for Ash Wednesday acknowledge that the creation of life can itself be understood as a gratuitous gift. The General Thanksgiving captures both the connection and distinction between the gifts of creation and redemption: “We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; But above all for thine inestimable love In the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; For the means of grace, And for the hope of glory” (Ibid., 14). Lastly, a parish using the Prayer Book begins the entire Lenten season by praying, “Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ibid., 138–39).

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135 A Brief Catechesis, 13, emphasis original.
136 Gallagher, 148.
the dispenser of the sacraments. Similarly, it can be described as an underwriting of the closed-off “siege mentality” maintained by the Vatican (and most vividly embodied by the pontificate of Pius IX) in the face of a modern world that was unable to follow even its own ends. The reality is likely a mix of both legitimate theological concerns and legitimating claims to centralized ecclesial authority, and was questioned in favour of the more open engagement with the contemporary world espoused at the Second Vatican Council.  

An important doctrinal criticism of such heavy institutionalism was leveled by Blondel, who employed the term “extrinsicism” as the reverse side of historicism’s obverse. To describe this extrinsicism, de Lubac cites Rahner’s description of the neoscholastic formulation of nature and grace by way of an architectural metaphor. Rahner imagines a “two-storey building,” in which nature is built as a bottom floor and grace—or “supernature”—is subsequently built on top of it. De Lubac’s problem with this formulation (but not with Rahner’s description of it) is, first, with the conception of a pure nature and, second, with the very possibility of articulating “created human nature as having any ultimate finality other than beatitude.” Third, de Lubac takes issue with the possibility that within this scheme, God’s action is circumscribed to the “supernature floor,” leaving the rest of creation indifferent to God’s designs.

Although de Lubac does not make this explicit in A Brief Catechesis, the result of this bifurcation is eerily similar to the modern forms of dissolution discussed above. Milbank cites de Lubac’s ascription of allowing an autonomous “nature floor” as “a kind

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138 Boersma, 247.
139 A Brief Catechesis, 35, n46.
140 Gallagher, 148.
141 A Brief Catechesis, 36. Subsequent references will be in parenthetical citations. See also Healy, 67.
of ‘naturalized supernatural’” that allows for a non-supernaturalized nature within which humanity “could discover in his own physical and rational make-up the ‘natural law’ for social and political life.”¹⁴² On the one hand, the possibility of remaining in “supernature” at the expense of nature is the extrinsicism that sees supernature as “suppressing or suffocating or mutilating” nature, both created and sinful (35). Conversely, the possibility of remaining on the “nature floor” while the elevator remains open and the “supernature floor” remains accessible above is to fall into the historicist “temptation of ‘naturalizing the mystery, . . . of undervaluing the divine Love which freely evoked another love.”¹⁴³ In this way, extrinsicism and historicism become unlikely allies.

De Lubac’s main concern therefore is that the “two-storey model” presents a false choice or even an impasse between good, created human nature and unilateral salvific grace. Such a false choice impairs the ability of the Church to have a constructive engagement in the world,¹⁴⁴ since it would indeed represent a “doctrine of evasion.”¹⁴⁵ De Lubac’s positive argument is expressed by pointing out his aforementioned use of the adjective “supernatural.” Following both the neoscholastics and de Lubac’s criticism, I have described the dichotomy above as the contrast between two nouns, “nature” and “supernature.” With Congar, Blondel, and others, de Lubac maintains the noun “nature” but pairs it with “supernatural.” This is de Lubac’s conclusion on the matter: as an adjective, “supernatural” describes a dynamic rather than static reality: nature is not

¹⁴² Milbank. 222, citing Mystery of the Supernatural, 53. Milbank sees himself in agreement with Blondel and de Lubac on this point, and detects some subtle but critical distinctions between the French school and Rahner’s position.
¹⁴⁴ Komonchak, 580.
¹⁴⁵ Catholicism, 137–40.
simply transcended but fulfilled and perfected (perfect past-tense verbs) by (the active noun) grace (33–41).

This supernatural process of fulfillment and perfection was known in the tradition as the *admirabile commercium*, or “wondrous exchange.” This is not simply an abstract interaction between nature and grace, but between creature and Creator as lived primarily in the Church. Thus what was intended at Creation is “established once for all by the Incarnation of the Word of God” (44). Christ Himself is therefore the *admirabile commercium*, and through our participation in His life “man becomes in truth a sharer in the divine nature” (42). Critical to this, and to continue the contrast with the “two-storey model,”

We do not need to conceive of humanity as a sort of entity separated from its Source . . . which man would appropriate to himself. On the contrary, we wish to affirm by these words that the influx of God’s Spirit does not remain external to man; that without any commingling of natures it really leaves its mark on our nature and becomes in us a principle of life. (Ibid., emphasis original)

In other words, the reception of grace is integral to the identity of the human person, an identity given and perfected in gratuitous fellowship with God.

The difficulty here for the neoscholastic is that it raises the notion of “created grace,” that an inclination to and the reception of grace could somehow be inherent or even proper to the human creature. I will shortly address how this does not open de Lubac or my reading of him here to a Pelagian denial of sinful nature. Rather, created grace is precisely what Thomas Aquinas meant in importing the Aristotelian concepts of accidental form and habitus—the natural inclinations mentioned above—as both the
preparation for and fruit of the *admirabile commercium*. De Lubac, Thomas, and the Great Tradition were simply referring to the great Augustinian paradox: our “true selves,” who we are intended to be, comes about only through our encounter or *commercium* with the Creator who is truly Other. Only in this exchange is our good, created nature fulfilled, perfected and truly authentic.

*A Christian Prometheism?*

As referenced above, Augustine speaks of a human person that is both infinitesimally small yet fully known by God and called to rest in His eternal greatness. To pray, “you have made us for yourself” is to claim that human dignity is so unspeakably *high* as to be impossible to realize except through grace. This too speaks of the epiclectic tension. The source of human dignity is located solely in God and therefore the creature can only petition for grace to be given. However, the human vocation is indeed given by God in the old Adam and realized in the New Adam, who consecrates His Church to pursue this vocation as authentic humanity. Indeed, “the word . . . is in [our] mouth and in [our] heart for [us] to observe” (Deut 30:14).

The vocation to pursue relationship with God itself constitutes an ontological dignity that sin can only block rather than eradicate. Therefore in both active rebellion and passive retreat, sin is

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146 *A Brief Catechesis*, 41. De Lubac here refers to *ST* I-II, 110, 2. In chapter 2 I will locate the authentic pursuit of our natural inclination to life in society in the catholicity of the Church. The dignified unity and flourishing diversity of humanity is authentically pursued in the catholic unity and catholic diversity of the Church, consecrated by the Holy Spirit.


148 *Confessions* 1.1

149 This is open to a Eucharistic interpretation.
merely the surd of being less than the true self, the default on that to which we are truly called.150 Both de Lubac’s own treatment of the human vocation in *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* and Francesca Murphy’s commentary serve to clarify this. In his striking account of human dignity, de Lubac goes as far as positing that “there could thus be—let us dare this paradox—a Christian Prometheus.”151

Surely this must be subject to some qualifications, which Murphy provides. First, Christian Prometheism must avoid an easy confusion with Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. As much as de Lubac would emphasize human dignity and authentic unity, his Augustinianism would also insist on the sheer necessity of transcendent grace present in the Church to “restore and complete” such dignity in unity.152 De Lubac’s Augustinian hamartiology would also highlight the tenacity of historicism to prevent such dignity in unity.153 Recall that de Lubac was keenly aware of the way pride can form an “allergy to . . . the idea of sin,”154 dulling our senses to the violence inherent in the eschewal of humanity’s utter need for divine grace.155

Second and more importantly, such a perfect restoration and completion of human dignity in unity is surely an eschatological and anagogical reality in the way described in Susan Wood’s survey.156 It is true that human nature has been restored and perfected in the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the first coming of Christ, the dignity of Israel’s messianic mission was allegorically defined and completed. However, only in the second coming of Christ and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will

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151 *Drama*, 420.
152 *Catholicism*, 53.
153 Ibid., 360–61.
155 Ibid., 140.
156 Wood, 44–46, 59, 61, 62. This will be examined in more detail in chapter 2.
this be realized on a universally human scale. Both of these qualifications speak to the need to attend carefully to both the petitionary and consecratory sides of the epicletic tension, if we are to affirm a Christian humanism. In the quote above from Drama, de Lubac is lucid that it is a paradox that he is daring: it is the same paradox of human nature called beyond itself, a calling only fulfilled in Christ but nonetheless actually achieved and fulfilled.

**Milbank and the Petitionary Aspect**

Murphy notes that for de Lubac, the ecclesiological implications of forgetting one or the other side of the Christian Promethean paradox is to in turn forget the paradox between personal and social salvation. The *ubermensch* does not ascend above the herd, nor can the proletarian herd take control of history or collapse the person into itself. Thus Murphy defends de Lubac against Milbank’s critiques that began this chapter by noting that de Lubac was careful to preserve “the personal or individual character of salvation” within his “his emphasis on social solidarity within the Church” by ensuring that “his response to Marxist collectivism” did not “lead to ecclesiological collectivism instead.”

Before I address the way Milbank risks sliding into an “ecclesiological collectivism,” an appreciative comment is in order. Milbank’s achievement in *Theology and Social Theory* is a penetration into the underlying philosophical claims of modern systems of thought and practice, to the end of restoring theology as the “metadiscourse”

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157 Murphy, 419–21.
158 Ibid., 422.
159 Ibid.
that defines the whole of the Christian and human life.\textsuperscript{160} It bears repeating that part of
my own diagnosis of modern theology involves Milbank’s diagnosis of false humility.\textsuperscript{161}
Furthermore, both Healy and I agree that restoring the place of theology as the
metadiscourse is an important task of the Church today.\textsuperscript{162} It also bears repeating that
false humility is not confined to abstractions but can be seen in the ecclesial examples
mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. These examples point to the way false
humility inadequately accounts for the consecratory aspect of the Church’s particular
witness to Christ, opting instead for a Church that is subsumed by temporal society.

With Milbank, part of my own response to ecclesial false humility was to
examine de Lubac’s understanding of grace that “supernaturalizes the natural.”\textsuperscript{163} In
introducing this discussion of grace that “supernaturalizes the natural,” I commented that
de Lubac requires us to consider the “whole body of social relationships,\textsuperscript{164} at least in its
final and therefore true form, to be nothing less than the communion of saints. I
developed this theme by examining de Lubac’s exploration of the common destiny of
humanity to eternal fellowship with God in beatitude. Here too do we see the epicletic
tension at work. On the one hand, the visible Church on earth is consecrated by its
incorporation through the Holy Spirit into the communion of saints. This consecration
empowers the visible Church to pursue the authentic unity perfected in the saints in
heaven, and to be “bearers of a message of salvation for all humanity.” (GS 1) On the
other hand, the visible Church is still a body of human creatures. As such it too must be

\begin{footnotes}
\item[160] Milbank, 1-6.
\item[161] Ibid, 1. Again, this is clearly exemplified in de Lubac’s disputation with Schillebeeckx in
Appendix B in \textit{A Brief Catechesis}, 191-234.
\item[162] Healy, 67.
\item[163] Milbank, 207.
\item[164] \textit{Catholicism}, 358, quoting Karl Marx, \textit{Thèses sur Feuerbach}, Thèse 6, 73.
\end{footnotes}
aware that it is on a “pilgrimage towards the Father’s Kingdom,” (Ibid.) that as a body of human creatures its destiny is beyond itself and its own scope of vision, and therefore it must petition the Holy Spirit to lead it on this pilgrimage by unifying it in Christ. (Ibid.)

Milbank diligently accounts for the consecratory side of the epicletic tension, but inadequately considers the petitionary aspect. He thus takes the consecratory aspect too far, in that his account of consecration obscures the petitionary aspect rather than grounds it in the broader salvific efficacy of the Church. As I have discussed above, he betrays this inadequacy by misconstruing de Lubac’s call to transcendence raised in Catholicism’s engagement with Marxism. Milbank would thus prescind the Church from an authentic humility that both petitions the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit and repents for a pride that “grieve[s] the Holy Spirit.”165 Such pride is seen in the common stock of history, which is replete with examples of Church institutions—as Church institutions—pursuing immanent ends through violent means.166 De Lubac’s vision of the “upper air,” the “germ of eternity, which always . . . evades the temporal society” is precisely exhorted to remind us that humanity—including humans in the Church—is “only a mirror, an image,” and that “only by acknowledging himself to be a reflection could he obtain completeness.”167

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165 Ephesians 4:30.
166 Healy, 70, 87. For broader surveys on this theme, see Ephraim Radner, The End of the Church and A Brutal Unity. This being said, John Paul II’s own critical engagement with liberation theology led him to prioritize the personal nature of sin rather than assigning moral responsibility to institutions. This suggests that the question of Church institutions as being ontologically sinful is an open debate. See Derek Jeffreys, Defending Human Dignity: John Paul II and Political Realism (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004), 76–80.
167 Catholicism, 359.
Critical Reaction

This thesis will now turn directly to discussing Milbank’s own project. Very shortly after the publication of the first edition of Theology and Social Theory, New Blackfriars published a symposium highlighting the importance of Milbank’s monograph but raised “critical worries” that “focus on ecclesial matters which unexpectedly haunt” it.168 This again points to the ecclesiological locus of the discourse: false humility, overstated triumphalism and everything in between have their concrete iteration in the acts and understandings that constitute the meanings of the term “Church.” Two prominent contributions from the New Blackfriars volume are considered here for their illustrative weight and relevance (as well as their distinct contributions): Aidan Nichols’s inquiry into Milbank’s ecclesio-political implications and Rowan Williams’s critique of Milbank’s reifying evasion of contingent history. Nichols’s contribution is supplemented by Paul Hedges’s more recent and provocative critique.

By way of entry into the discussion, Nichols directly asks if Milbank has a specific, concrete ecclesia in mind, an example within concrete history that best corresponds to his aims. Nichols does not see promising candidates for Milbank’s ecclesiology in the individualism of evangelical and liberal Protestant communities or the subjugation of Eastern Churches by Constantine’s empire.169 Roman Catholicism, with its enforced papal unity and its openness to natural law reasoning is also ruled out.170 According to Nichols, Milbank’s Church is the humanist theocracy erected in sixteenth-

169 Nichols, 330. He is simply pointing to Milbank’s own descriptions of these examples, and then argues that they are oversimplified. Nichols is presumably referring in part to the passing comment in Milbank, 18, regarding conciliarism in light of the medieval papacy, that “the unrestricted scope of conciliar authority, especially as allowed and summoned by the Emperor, is no less a harbinger of absolutism than the canonical plenitudo potestas of the Pope . . . .”
170 Nichols, 330, presumably referring to the description of the medieval papacy in Milbank, 17.
century Tudor England, albeit “shorn of those monarchical, aristocratic and proto-bourgeois features which militated against its (as it were) ‘socialist’ character.”\(^{171}\) Independent of papal control and natural law reasoning, Milbank is free to envision an *altera civitas* in which a Church adhering to a pure and “uniquely valid mythos of Christianity” is “the key to all proper social co-existence . . . in whose peace alone the otherwise ineliminable conflicts of the human *polis* are assuaged.”\(^{172}\) The problems with this “idealized ecclesiology” will now be explored.\(^{173}\)

One way of discussing the problems with Milbank’s idealized ecclesiology comes from Paul Hedges, who has raised the possibility that the (potentially pejorative) term “liberal” could still be applied to Milbank’s thought. This centres on Milbank’s over indebtedness to distinctly modern modes of discourse, chiefly (a) an essentialism and (b) reducing the present situation to that of competing ideologies. First, Hedges questions the essentialist nature of Milbank’s theology of revelation and its exclusivity as a reified construct. Milbank does not sufficiently attend to his context of twentieth-century western mainline Christianity, nor does he sufficiently account for the pre-Christian and linguistically mediated nature of Christian doctrine itself.\(^{174}\) This includes Milbank’s claim that Christian revelation deserves an exception to the requirements of contextual sensitivity due to its ontological priority of peace and its grounding in the virtue of charity. Milbank himself summarizes this claim to the ontological priority of peace in terms of inter-Trinitarian difference.\(^{175}\) Hedges in turn understands this ontological

\(^{171}\) Nichols, 331.
\(^{172}\) Ibid., 330–31. Again, Nichols here clearly refers to the attribution of the Church as an *altera civitas* in Milbank, 440.
\(^{173}\) Healy raises his concerns with idealized ecclesiologies that insufficiently take concrete history into account in “Blueprint Ecclesiologies,” chap. 2 in *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 25-51.
\(^{174}\) Hedges, 805–6.
\(^{175}\) Milbank, 429-40.
priority of peace as an overall claim of the Radical Orthodoxy movement, but repudiates it as yet another self-referential and self-definable truth claim. Hedges’s critique echoes Nichols’s concern that “charity, with its indefinitely flexible creative constitution of its own ethos” requires far more contextual particularity and openness to the Other than Milbank is willing to grant. To state that the Triune God possesses an ontological peace within Himself is a helpful way of articulating the Church’s foundational dogma about God. However, the humble distance of the Church from God as required in the petitionary aspect complicates the claim that the visible Church always already possesses this ontological peace simply because her God does; the petitionary aspect in turn complicates any attempt to exempt Christian revelation from contextual sensitivity.

Moreover, peace as an ontological priority has seen scant embodiment in the “mingled history of grace and sin” that is the Church’s presence in the world. Indeed, both Milbank’s essentialism and the Church’s violent history raise the bleaker spectre that Milbank succumbs to seeing the world as a situation of competing ideologies. Hedges argues that this is far closer to Nietzsche’s “will to power” than the mission of the Gospel. Hedges also points to Milbank’s tone: he is simply “right,” his opponents are simply “wrong,” and between them is simply an appeal to experience a la Tillich or Schleiermacher or “rhetoric, that is, . . . an appeal to taste.”

Rowan Williams locates his critique in historiographical terms, but for that is still eschatological and ecclesial. Like Nichols and Hedges, Williams is also concerned that

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176 Hedges, 798–99.
177 Nichols, 332.
178 See Catholicism, 326–33, especially “Unify to Distinguish,” 329–33.
179 Nichols, 332.
180 Hedges, 807–8. This is developed further in Rowan Williams, “Saving Time: Thoughts on Practice, Patience and Vision” New Blackfriars 73, no. 861 (June 1992): 323: see below.
181 Hedges, 807–9; Nichols, 328.
Milbank “[slips] into a picture of history as a battlefield of ideal types.”¹⁸² Williams agrees that Milbank risks “the danger of setting the common life of the Church too dramatically apart from the temporal ways in which the good is realized in a genuinely contingent world.”¹⁸³ Williams’s “Augustinian minimalist theodicy” is particularly concerned to “save time,” to take seriously the reality of present contingency, the incommensurability of goods and subsequently the conflict and violence that arise in the “rational beings’ self-subverting choices of unreality over [the] truth” of God’s generous will.¹⁸⁴ Williams, Milbank, Nichols, and all others involved are deeply engaged in articulating how the Church can constructively respond to this contingent reality,¹⁸⁵ but in Milbank’s ecclesiology “it seems that we are again confronted with something ‘achieved’, and left with little account of how it is learned, negotiated, betrayed, inched forward, discerned and risked.”¹⁸⁶ He sees in Milbank the risk of a collapsed eschaton in which the state of ontological peace already exists in the visible Church.

Williams responds to Milbank by recalling the historical, cultural, and otherwise contingent contextual reality that is the Church’s existence in this age, albeit with the

¹⁸² Williams, 320.
¹⁸³ Ibid., 323.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 322.
¹⁸⁵ As a bishop and especially as Archbishop of Canterbury, Williams was later engaged in concretely enacting such responses to contingent reality as pastoral and political concerns.
¹⁸⁶ Williams, 321. In outlining his conclusion regarding the ontological priority of peace, Milbank argues that “to be virtuous one must ‘refer’ all to the infinite goal and find the right path, the right perspective and sequence for desire—the path constantly laid out, redrawn, re-traced, by Jesus and the Church (all genuine Christian community) in history. This double requirement supplements the goal with the way, and reconceives the goal as itself still the way, thus collapsing the ‘circle’ and the ‘arrow’... It is this supplementation which is summed up in Augustine’s Christian re-definition of virtue as ‘rightly ordered love.’” (Milbank, 439-440, emphasis original) Milbank’s connection between the “way” and the “goal” is another example of his clear explication of the consecratory aspect of the Church as the “way” that authentically pursues the “goal” of perfect virtue. His inadequate attention to the distinction between the “way” and the “goal” means that the connection between “way” and “goal” borders on a conflation of “way” and “goal,” as if the “goal” is “achieved” by the “way.” The first part of this chapter explored the way Milbank’s collapse of the “circle” and the “arrow” is expressed in his critique of de Lubac’s transcendent metaphysic.
super-contingent eschatological horizon always in view. More importantly, Williams sees the salvific efficacy of healing grace as clearly present in God’s gratuitous response to contingency and conflict within the Church:

Grace does not give innocence, . . . it gives absolution, and the Church’s peace is a healed history, not a ‘total harmony’ whose constructed (and thus scarred) character doesn’t show. And in our history, healing is repeatedly imperilled and broken by new decisions. The Church actually articulated its gospel of peace by speaking the language of repentance: failure can be ‘negotiated’ into what is creative. But this means that the peace of the Church as an historical community is always in construction. It does not promise a new and finished innocence in the order of time, but focuses the freedom of God constantly to draw that order back to difference that is nourishing, not ruinous.

While de Lubac does not dwell so much on such conflict ad intra, the confluence and entanglement of providence with contingency strongly echoes de Lubac’s return to the patristic vision of grace (providence) that heals and perfects nature (contingent history) as discussed above. As will be demonstrated in chapter 2 below, Williams’s point is strongly reminiscent of the gradual building up the Church as it continues to incorporate the “fruits of the earth.” Further, such perfection is beyond the present time: instead of being “confronted with something achieved,” students of the incarnation of the Word and the historical nature of the Church are rather confronted with the question, “how much place is systematically given for the patience that contingency enjoins?”

Milbank’s vision of the Church is that of an altera civitas that pursues an ontological peace in a constructive “‘discourse about difference.’” This may sound much like de Lubac’s authentic human unity perfected in grace described above, or the

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187 Williams, 322.
188 Ibid., emphasis original.
189 Catholicism, 282–88.
190 Ibid., 325.
191 Milbank, 209.
Church as the *corpus verum Christi* described in chapter 2. De Lubac’s understanding of
the consecratory aspect can even be described as the gratuitous act of the Triune God
who continually forms humanity according to His own ontological peace by
incorporating the human family into the *corpus Christi*—that is, the *corpus Filii*. I must
therefore clarify the distinction between de Lubac and Milbank, if de Lubac is to avoid
Healy’s charge of an “epic” or “idealized” ecclesiology. The distinction is a difference
within Augustinianism between de Lubac’s *prima ecclesia* and Milbank’s *sola ecclesia*.
It is the Dominican Nichols who helpfully clarifies how the Jesuit de Lubac stands apart
from Milbank. This is especially exemplified in the Thomistic strain in de Lubac’s
thought that is more open to historical consciousness and natural law reasoning:

> It is an incorrect interpretation of de Lubac’s thought to say that, by
> insisting on the essentially supernatural orientation of human nature . . . he
> rejected any formal distinction of nature from the supernatural. The
> literary practice of both [de Lubac and von Balthasar] as historical
> theologians shows that they were far from denying a relative autonomy to
> the expression of the transcendentals found outside the Judaeo-Christian
> order.\(^{193}\)

Again, there is no “supernature” floor within which nature is obliterated or collapsed:
paradoxically, nature retains a “relative autonomy” insofar as it expresses its sheer
dependence on supernatural grace.\(^{194}\) The problem with Milbank is that he would deny
the “relative autonomy” of those pursuing truth “outside the Judaeo-Christian order.”
This would prescind the Church from the possibility of peaceable dialogue with the
world on the basis of a common reason. Since the Church affirms that this common

\(^{192}\) Healy, 130.
\(^{193}\) Nichols, 328.
\(^{194}\) Again, this will be described in chapter 2 with a discussion on the “fruits of the earth.” See
reason is founded on the *logos* that is Christ, Milbank is right to emphasize the limitations of this philosophical dialogue within the metadiscourse of Christian theology. However, he inadequately accounts for the possibility and necessity of dialogue within this metadiscourse.

Whether or not Nichols is correct in locating Milbank’s Church specifically in post-Reformation Tudor “theocracy,” he nevertheless accurately diagnoses Milbank’s predilection for what he terms “hermeticism.” Far from an *altera civitas* founded on an ontological peace, Milbank’s Church risks becoming a rather violent, ideological response to the contemporary reality of religious pluralism. Nichols warns that by “[seeking] to restore Christendom (*Theology and Social Theory* is dedicated to ‘the Remnant of Christendom’),” Milbank would “systematically write out of the social script all clauses—based on natural law, human rights, or whatever—which would safeguard in a Christendom society the protected place which, in conscience, unbelievers, and those of other faiths, should be accorded.” In other words, Milbank’s exclusivity on “pure Christianity” as he perceives it is a prescription for a “disengagement” of imposition, the assertion of a separate, competing political entity that is cut off from the contributions of those outside the Church, since they supposedly have nothing to offer. Milbank’s

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195 Regensburg Lecture.
196 Milbank, 1.
197 Regensburg Lecture. Milbank is dismissive of a dialogue in which “theology has...sought to borrow from elsewhere a fundamental account of society or history, and then to see what theological insights will cohere with it.” He claims that on the contrary, “it has been shown that no such fundamental account, in the sense of something neutral, rational and universal, is really available. It is theology itself that will have to provide its own account of the final causes at work in human history, on the basis of its own particular, and historically specific faith.” (Milbank, 383)
198 Nichols’ description far more closely corresponds with the initial political aims of the Oxford Movement.
199 Milbank, 383, emphasis original: “The Church is *already*, necessarily, by virtue of its institution, a ‘reading’ of other human societies...” The Church is therefore “*already*...other” to the human societies in which Christians live.
200 Milbank, 331–32.
eschewal of dialogue with other faiths betrays his inadequacy in accounting for the petitionary aspect. More importantly, this eschewal of dialogue reveals that a constructive, dialogic presence in the world is itself a fruit of the humility before God enjoined in the petitionary aspect of the Church.

__Authentic Humility and Kenotic Engagement__

In response to Milbank’s project, I will employ two critical correctives that emphasize the petitionary aspect in de Lubac’s approach. First, I will emphasize the distinction-in-relation between Christ and the Church, which allows a relating of the latter to the former in submissive apposition. Second, I will discuss how the union between Christ and the Church can emphasize the kenotic and cruciform nature of the Church. I will nevertheless recall that this dynamic must also be true in reverse: the cruciform Church constitutes a critical aspect of Christ’s reign through the Church. The consecratory aspect is therefore present as well. In both correctives, the point is that the Church is to be oriented not within itself but beyond itself: its end is realized in Christ at the end of time rather than in its own present life. The more plerotic emphasis on Christ’s relationship to His body as sacrament of Christ will be the focus of chapter 2.

First, the distinction between Christ and the Church ought to be clarified. Susan Wood raises concerns with de Lubac’s own understanding of the Church as a form of the hypostatic union “because Christ as both human and divine represents more than just divinity,” and therefore “when the Church is joined to Christ, it is joined to Christ in his
humanity and divinity.” Wood does not deny that the Church is joined to Christ; the crux of her concern is to deny an understanding of the Church that is simply collapsed into Christ, one in which “the relationship between Christ and the Church could not be free.” She does not elaborate much on this point, but perhaps it can be understood in light of the simultaneous concern of collapsing Christ into the Church. The result of such collapse would be a Church that is not only bound strictly by Christ’s will but one in which its members are understood to be free from sin and error. An example of this form of immanentist ecclesiology is the above-mentioned example of neoscholasticism’s understanding of ecclesial infallibility in the “supernature floor”: the preconciliar establishment expanded this understanding of infallibility to authoritarian extremes at the same time as it confined it to magisterial institutions. Such an ecclesial authoritarianism rested on a notion of duty and obedience that, to quote de Lubac, “works only from without by way of authority, instead of effective union.” Ad intra, the result was the fragmentary silencing of dissent rather than the “effective union” of robust dialogue. Ad extra, there was a withdrawal from dialogue with the world and the collapse of the Church into becoming another competing political institution that sought

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202 Wood, 85. Wood is concerned with the language of the Church as the “continuation of the Incarnation” as mentioned in a passage on the “Sacramental chain” in Catholicism, 76. Having addressed Wood’s concerns here, I will nevertheless approach this passage more positively in chapter 2 below.

203 Ibid., 86.

204 The Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue has denied this by problematizing the distinction between sin and concupiscence, allowing for some correspondence between the Lutheran doctrine of simul justus et peccator and Roman Catholic doctrines regarding the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation. Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, October 31, 1999, no. 4.4.

205 See Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, Authority in the Church I (1976), no. 15, 19, 24. The hesitancy on the part of ARCIC I to employ the term “infallibility” is implied in ibid., no. 3.

206 Catholicism, 76.

207 Recall that de Lubac himself experienced this until his vindication under John XXIII. Komonchak, 579–81. De Lubac’s attempt to grapple with his situation can be detected in the impassioned and extended description of the vir ecclesiasticus in chap. 7 of Splendor, 236–78.
to control a pluralising society: it is this situation that Nichols warns against in raising questions of Milbank.\textsuperscript{208}

Related to this concern is that a “collapsed Church” is not free to be the receiver of grace if it is not properly Other to the giver of grace. The dogmatic denial of adoptionism settles the question of the freedom of Christ’s humanity \textit{vis-à-vis} His divinity. However, the receptive freedom of Mary at the Annunciation speaks to a critical point of the Christian understanding of human freedom. Reading the annunciation typologically,\textsuperscript{209} God confronts the Church with her vocation to bear the salvation of humanity. This confrontation is an act of grace that does not destroy the nature of the Church or her members but perfects it. The point is that in order to obediently receive grace, the obedient receiver must remain a free Other, if the grace received is to be consistent with God’s character of gratuitous self-giving that ensures the integrity of the Other \textit{as} Other. The paradox is that this gift, bestowed by the Creator of all life, is none other than the true, authentic self. Mary truly becomes Mary when she receives the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, and the Church truly becomes the Church when her epicletic petition is favourably answered.\textsuperscript{210}

Wood adds a corollary concern to that of the Christologically collapsed ecclesiology above. We ought to take seriously the nuptial dimension of the relationship between Christ and the Church—namely, as a relationship between a pair of free

\textsuperscript{208} Nichols, 331–32.
\textsuperscript{209} I am here following de Lubac’s affirmation of Mariological ecclesiology in \textit{Splendor}, 316–17.
\textsuperscript{210} On the cooperation between the \textit{fiat} of Genesis 1 and the \textit{fiat} of Luke 1, see Murphy, 421. On the universal scope of Mary’s \textit{fiat} and its relationship with the \textit{admirabile commercium}, see Jacques Servais, “Mary’s Role in the Incarnation” \textit{Communio} 30 (2003): 13–14.
covenanting partners. However, if this covenant were to be taken as even analogous to the hypostatic union, then the Christology analogized here would be Nestorian and adoptionist. For Wood, this covenant fellowship thus fails to be even an analogy to the hypostatic union as dogmatically defined.

However, *Lumen Gentium* affirmed that an analogy between the incarnation and the Church remains, (LG 8) for reasons with which Wood agrees. The transcendent mystery of eternal fellowship with God is truly present in the concrete, visible life of the Church. This claim is at the very heart of my argument that the consecratory form positively defines the concrete acts of the visible Church. As I have implied above, included in these concrete acts defined by the presence of eternal fellowship with God is a prophetic critique against the falsely-humble denial of the presence of transcendent mystery in the Church. This in turn includes a prophetic critique of immanent and secular systems of thought and practice that would also deny the presence of transcendent mystery. Similarly, de Lubac recognized in the “experience of Protestantism” a history of false humility that “acknowledged in the visible Church a mere secular institution.”

To be fair, this comment regarding the “experience of Protestantism” likely betrays de Lubac’s impressions of Reformed ecclesiology in light of this own concerns rather than a historically neutral assessment. A more neutral assessment would see this “experience of Protestantism” as rooted in the mystical reality that is the proclamation of the Word, and patterned by a suspicion of institutional ecclesial authority that would

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211 See Wood, 93–104 for a discussion on the de Lubac’s ascription of the Church as the *Sponsa Christi*, which also examines the Mariological aspect. It therefore draws heavily on chap. 9 in *Splendor*, 314–79.

212 Wood, 86.

213 Ibid., 86–87.

214 *Catholicism*, 75.
obscure the proclamation of the Word. This encounter with the Word in Scripture has been emphasized by the Roman magisterium in the years since de Lubac first made that statement, especially insofar as this encounter with scripture strengthens rather than weakens the encounter with Christ in the sacrament. Moreover, there are two points to be made in light of Protestant concerns with exaggerating the union between Christ and the Church. First, to see in this union a universalizing, Hegelian, “incarnational principle” would dishonour the incarnation Himself, and thus we may affirm that this union between Christ and the Church is not simply an abstract principle or a theory but a “sacramental ontology” as will be seen in chapter 2. Far from devaluing the “once for all” incarnation of the Word of God, a sacramental ontology affirms that the Church is the visible work of the Spirit of Christ in the present time, making the life of Christ a reality to us in this present time. It is nonetheless critical to recall, to use Barthian terms, that even if the “Christ moment” includes the “Church moment” (to coin a term), this “Church moment” must not only involve the plerotic and victorious aspects of Christ’s miraculous signs, His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to the right hand of the Father. It must also attend to the kenotic and cruciform aspects of His birth into poverty, His rejection by society and above all His death on the Cross. In maintaining a “sensible bond” between Christ and the Church, it must be remembered in both ecclesial doctrine and ecclesial ethics that the Church’s plerotic moments of

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215 This is most notably affirmed in DV 2.
216 The term “sacramental ontology” is from Boersma, who writes from the Reformed tradition. See Boersma, 263.
218 Boersma, 264.
proclamation, prophetic critique, and confident celebration must be accompanied by kenotic moments of service to the world, fraternal dialogue with the world and penance for the Church’s sins in the world. A sacramental ontology of the Church is not a theory, but rather means that the concrete acts of the Church are accountable to their “true selves” as expressions of the Church's identity as the epicletic sacrament of Christ. Thus the content of those acts must attend to both the petitionary and consecratory aspects of the Church’s epicletic form. 219

As discussed in the introduction, the Church is brought to its summit when it anamnetically enters Christ’s High Priestly prayer, prayed “on the night when he was betrayed” (1 Cor 11:23). This is the epiclesis par excellence, in which the Church in Christ asks the Father to “glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you” (John 17:1) through His and our self-offering to the Other. Secondly therefore, such humility and dialogue is in service to the consecratory reality of the Church as a sign and instrument of God’s self-glorification. If asked the question, “did the Church die for the life of the world?” we are able to reply, “yes, at Calvary, and this continues to be true today,” but only if we firstly recall that in His blood Christ truly did purchase the world for Himself, and secondly that this redeeming sacrifice is only complete in the splendour of the Resurrection. We must say, as is sung in Holy Week, regnavit a ligno Deus, 220 and we must remember, with Paul, that “if we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him” (2 Tim 2:11-12). And we can only say this if by “death” we do not mean the end of the Church’s existence on earth, but rather the end of

219 The conclusion to this thesis will explore the concrete example of the content of episcopal leadership, drawing on the particular example of the bishops’ response to the Pinochet regime in Chile as recounted by Cavanaugh in Torture and Eucharist, 253-77.
220 “God has reigned from the tree.” From the traditional hymn for Good Friday and Holy Week, Vexilla Regis.
the Church’s claim as an immanent, rival polis whose mission can be reduced to a political agenda. The Church’s endurance unto death in participation with the paschal reign of Christ is the very witness of the martyrs, the “seeds of the Church.” It is the continually remembered sacrifice of the Mass, it is in the self-emptying charity in the everyday lives of the priesthood of all the faithful, and in the threshing-floor struggle of transforming violent, self-interest-driven conflicts of “us” against “them” into the great common “Us” of a united humanity before God.

De Lubac concludes Catholicism in this light, reminding us that any “splendour” present in the visible Church derives solely from its nature as the signifier of Christ. The Church therefore stands in eschatological judgment under the One that it seeks to signify, who ultimately separates the wheat from the tares. However, the consecratory aspect recalls that in the midst of many tares the wheat nonetheless remains. As Rowan Williams has argued above, such wheat itself includes the cruciform self-abnegation of repentance for the contingent failure of the visible Church to perfectly signify Christ. The sacrament of penance is, after all, a sacrament of grace in preparation for the Eucharist. And the crucifixion, after all, was Christ’s self-abnegating victory over all immanetizing and divisive powers, be they of pagan Rome or of faithless Israel. It is into this victory that the Church anamnetically and epicletically enters via the Paschal Mystery.

To add to my comments above, the image of Mary as an allegorical type of the Church is helpful in understanding both aspects of the epicletic form, since it speaks directly to both the distinction between Christ and His Church and of His gratuitous

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221 Catholicism, 367–69.
222 Williams, 322.
presence within her.\textsuperscript{223} On the one hand, Wood sees this mariological dimension as a powerful way of correcting an exaggerated bond between Christ and the Church without allowing it to be reduced solely to the image of the Church as “People of God.”\textsuperscript{224} On the other hand, an exaggerated focus on the image of “People of God” can lead to a falsely-humble devaluation of the mystery that is Christ’s presence in the institutional life of the Church.\textsuperscript{225} As Virgin, the mariological image speaks of the Church as the faithful, receptive covenant partner that is truly and freely other. As Mother, it speaks of the Church as the authentic bearer of Christ’s presence in deed, in Word and above all in sacrament.\textsuperscript{226}

Thus while the turn toward a richer ecclesiology of the sacrament of Christ may entail the primary content of the Church’s renewed response to this violent world, the first response must be that of repentance before God for failing to be its “true self.”

\textit{Gaudium et Spes} also sees how dialogue is a fruit of the petitionary aspect, in which the Church’s theological anthropology is enriched with the insights of historical, psychological and other objective and scientific fields.\textsuperscript{227} I have mentioned above how the repentant form is related to the sacrament of penance, and how dialogue can be understood as a sacramental affirmation of the presence of the \textit{logos} in history.\textsuperscript{228} The third and more positively Eucharistic form is the way in which the catholicity of the Church shows us the presence of the universal in the particular, and how this entails the

\textsuperscript{223} \textit{Splendor}, 316–17.
\textsuperscript{224} Wood, 96–101.
\textsuperscript{225} De Lubac himself raised this concern by critiquing an exaggerated emphasis on the “People of God” in the interpretation of Vatican II. See “The Council and the Para-Council,” Appendix C in \textit{A Brief Catechesis}, esp. 245, 253.
\textsuperscript{226} Wood, 96–101.
\textsuperscript{227} Chap. 4 in GS esp. 44.
\textsuperscript{228} Regensburg Lecture. See chap. 9 in \textit{Catholicism}, 282–302.
convergence upon the transcendent Other; describing this concretely will be a preoccupation of chapter 2 and the conclusion.

To briefly summarize both what this chapter has argued to preview the argument of chapter 2, the epicletic paradox can be stated in both directions. Stated one way, we are made in the image of God, but we are only an image. Stated the other way, we can only and imperfectly reflect the Divine Splendour, but in doing so authentic human dignity and unity truly shines forth. Stated one way, the Church will only be consummated in the kingdom of Heaven, since such perfect consummation is beyond its present self. Stated the other way, the Church may not be perfect in its present form, but it truly and anagogically participates in its future consummation, and therefore such consummation is integral to its nature. Stated one way, the Church bears the gospel of salvation for all humanity, but it is not already the dimly hoped-for societas perfecta or altera civitas. Stated the other way, the Church may not be the societas perfecta, but it does indeed bear the presence of the risen Christ in Word and sacrament, in witness to peace and human unity and against injustice and division, in ministry to the sick and the poor, and in shining forth the hope “of the hereafter,” which “is far nearer than the future, far nearer than what we call the present.”

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229 Catholicism, 362.
Hoc est enim Corpus Meum

In his Epistle to the Church of God that is in Colossae, St. Paul exhorts his audience to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body, and be thankful (kai euchariostoi gineste, Col 3:15).” This chapter will discuss de Lubac’s correlation between the sacrament of the Eucharist—the Great Thanksgiving—and the mystery of the Church’s unity as the body of Christ. This correlation is not a theoretical attempt to resolve the tension between the visible Church and the Mystical Body, a tension that will nonetheless arise in this chapter. Rather, the Eucharist–Church correlation is part of a “sacramental ontology” by which the Church is able live within her epicletic paradox. This ability derives from the paradox’s primary concretization, the actual dialogue between epiclesis and consecration in the Eucharist itself. As an epicletic form rather than an abstract theory, the sacramental ontology is a pneumatology that seeks to describe the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son to and in the Church that is in the world. As stated in the introduction, the epiclesis-consecration is therefore not simply a pedagogical analogy, but the “fount and apex” of the whole concrete life of the Church. (LG 11) To envision a sacramental ontology is to make an affirmation of faith in the efficacy “of a society, which under the appearances of a human institution hides a divine reality.” It is “not so much” an affirmation of faith “in a paradoxical efficacy” of a certain isolated event, “of a rite or perceptible action.” To envision a sacramental ontology is nevertheless to make an affirmation of faith in the efficacy of a single, overarching paradox, namely the

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230 Boersma, 263.
231 Catholicism, 76; Boersma, 263.
232 Catholicism, 82, quoting Scheeben, Das Mysterium des Christentums, n. 82 s.
multiform mystery of the real, visible and effective presence of the ineffable God in Christ and in the Church through the Holy Spirit.233

This chapter will begin with a brief excursus engaging the patristic metaphysical basis for de Lubac’s argument—one that despite de Lubac’s efforts has yet to re-emerge. Following this excursus, the main body of the chapter will proceed in three steps. The first step will raise the need to distinguish and relate the visible Church to the Mystical Body of Christ by clarifying what the term “visible Church” concretely entails. The second step will sacramentally relate the Mystical Body in the Eucharist with the visible Body of the Church, primarily in terms of the medieval corpus triforme as rooted in the methods of spiritual exegesis of scripture. In light of these two steps, the third step will continue the argument in chapter 1 regarding the communal dynamic of nature and grace. It will examine how a consecrated Church pursues the authentic unity of humanity in eternal fellowship with God. The excursus and three steps of this chapter will clarify how de Lubac understands the concrete acts of the visible Church to be consecrated in the Eucharist as the Church’s “fount and apex.”

Excursus: The Reality of Symbol

Before proceeding to de Lubac’s sacramental ecclesiology, a brief foray into his metaphysical and epistemological underpinnings is in order. In making a similar brief foray, Boersma states that the concluding chapter of Corpus Mysticum “is at least in one sense the most significant one,”234 since it broadens the scope of Corpus Mysticum to encompass the larger intellectual history of high medieval Europe. De Lubac’s intent is to

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233 Boersma, 259.
234 Ibid.
question the split between the concepts of “visible” and “mystical” in postmedieval western thought, and to recapture the sacramental mysticism of the Fathers and medievals.\textsuperscript{235} This discussion is critical to understanding the consecratory aspect of the epicletic form, because it expresses the underlying assumptions of the consecratory aspect. These underlying assumptions allow for an understanding of the sacramental presence of grace in the visible Church and the way this sacramental ontology may ground the concrete acts of Church unity.

In this last chapter of \textit{Corpus Mysticum}, de Lubac traces the split between visible and mystical to a methodological priority of “dialectic” over “symbol” that emerged in the Middle Ages. Beginning with the Berengarian controversy, which de Lubac calls the “foot of . . . a downward slope,”\textsuperscript{236} the mindset of the medieval world underwent a gradual shift toward a dialectical rationalism that epistemologically opposed empirical proofs and mystical faith (240). De Lubac argues that this began with the replacement of “contemplative understanding” in favour of mystical faith:

> the mystery to be understood gave way before the miracle to be believed, because the very idea of what ‘understand’ means had changed. Faith does not open up a path to contemplative understanding: it is an obstacle, set up by God himself, to cut across the appetite for rational speculation. (Ibid.)

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The novelty now consisted in saying of the Eucharist, that is to say of a mystery, what Gregory asserted with regard to a miracle, and sometimes even in claiming the authority of his words, which were condemning a profane and rationalising enquiry, in order to stop short any effort at ‘understanding’. (243)

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\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., 260.
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\textsuperscript{236} \textit{Corpus Mysticum}, 226–27. Subsequent references will be in parenthetical citations.
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In reaction to this growing antagonism to intellectual curiosity, “against mystically, not truly, was set, in no less exclusive a sense, truly, not mystically.” In other words, that which was mystical could not be “understood” as true, and that which could be “understood” as true could not be granted almost blind assent now required of a mystery.

De Lubac here articulates a fundamental shift in metaphysical horizon, a turning away from the patristic synthesis of “contemplative understanding” that understood how mystical and social realities wrought by divine grace (such as human unity in Christ) are authentically pursued in concrete acts and symbolic objects within nature (such as ritual, bread and wine). As a result of the split between “mystically” and “truly,” the high medievals and early moderns turned to a historicist metaphysic in which the truth of nature is sought within itself. This is critical in establishing the context for de Lubac’s own sacramental ecclesiology. Once this shift began, both Berengar and his opponents in the eleventh-century intellectual establishment had already lost the dynamic relationship between the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as “the truth of flesh and blood” and the real mystery of Christ present in the visible Church as “the power of unity and love.” This is because the metaphysical split has ultimately resulted in the loss of ability to comprehend the visible Church as the sacramental presence of the totus Christus, the union of Head and members in the Mystical Body (226), and the loss of ability to comprehend the Eucharist as tangibly effecting that mystery (244–47). Instead, the terms mysterium and sacramentum have become understood as a “thing” that is “objective and static” (51). While true to a point, mystery and sacrament as “thing” falls

237 Ibid., 223, emphasis original. Boersma, 259, points to this as the core of de Lubac’s argument, at least in the chapter in question.
238 Boersma, 248. Recall the discussion in chapter 1 regarding historicism and extrinsicism. The split can potentially be blamed for the split concepts of “supernature” and “nature.”
239 Catholicism, 97; Corpus Mysticum, 226.
woefully short of the patristic connotation of these terms as an action, as a drama,\textsuperscript{240} as the relational dynamic and “communication of idioms” between Mystical Body and visible Church, between \textit{sacramentum} and \textit{res} discussed below (49–54).

De Lubac therefore seeks to return to the Augustinian milieu that had previously opened the mind to mystery, mysticism, experience, and symbol. “For the Fathers, the essential mainspring of thought was not identity, or analogy, but \textit{anagogy}.” (234–35, emphasis original) Critically, this patristic milieu had in no way jettisoned reason and intellectual contemplation: it simply required that reason be correctly understood in the light of faith.\textsuperscript{241} Gregory the Great and others would be led not to condemn the use of reason itself but to condemn “a profane and rationalising enquiry” that, without the necessary light of faith, renders us incapable of “understanding” that which is constituted by the mystery. Specifically, this papal condemnation came most heavily upon attempts to over-rationalize miracles (242–43). In asserting that most of eucharistic doctrine and piety did not come under such condemnation, de Lubac takes the example of Hildebert’s seemingly nonchalant comment that the Eucharist “is a great sacrament and is not lacking in reason.”\textsuperscript{242}

\textit{Corpus Christi quod est ecclesia}

\textit{Sacramental Ontology}

How then does de Lubac understand the sacramental unity of the \textit{totus Christus}? At the heart of the epicletic paradox is the contradiction that a group of finite and sinful

\textsuperscript{240} To employ von Balthasar’s term as fixed upon by Healy. See Healy, 52-76.
\textsuperscript{241} Regensburg Lecture.
\textsuperscript{242} \textit{Corpus Mysticum}, 233, quoting Hildebert, \textit{Versus de mysterio missae}. 
humans are consecrated as the corpus Christi and sponsa Christi. This fundamental contradiction presents considerable complications for describing the relationship between Christ and the visible Church. These complications must nevertheless be confronted, however, since the claim throughout this thesis is that the encounter between God and humanity is primarily in Christ in the visible Church.²⁴³ It is thus also a question of the relationship between the visible Church and the “Mystical Body of Christ,” which de Lubac and Wood describe as the communal dynamic of grace in the world.²⁴⁴ This relationship between the visible Church and the Mystical Body is the efficacious sign of the inherent dignity in unity of all creation and each creature, especially those made in God’s image.²⁴⁵ As discussed in chapter 1, the visible Church’s witness to this dignity is complicated by the ambiguity of history wrought by the presence of sin. This history requires us to take seriously the imperfection and incompleteness of all immanent realities, and to point beyond these realities by humbly invoking the healing and perfecting grace of God.

The Church’s epicletic paradox was a problem that preoccupied de Lubac, its tension succinctly clarified in the quote from Catholicism quoted in the introduction above:

We do not adore [the Church]. We do not believe in the Church in the same sense in which we believe in God, for the Church herself believes in God and she is the “Church of God.” All the more then do we reject Monophysitism in ecclesiology just as we do in Christology, but none the

²⁴³ I have inserted the modifier “primarily” here to leave open the possibility of encountering God in Christ outside the visible Church, which challenges too closed and institutional a notion of “church.” This will be discussed below, and is part of the basis for the dialogic openness called for in chapter 1.
²⁴⁴ Catholicism, 67–68. See Wood, 129. Recall that the French and English subtitles to Catholicism are, respectively, Les aspect sociaux du dogme (The Social Aspects of Dogma) and Christ and the Common Destiny of Mankind.
²⁴⁵ Catholicism, 25. I am referring especially to the very first lines of Catholicism.
less strongly do we believe that dissociation of the divine and the human is in either case fatal.246

Chapter 1 discussed how the ecclesiological problem described here bears similarities to that encountered in the fundamental affirmations of Christology. On the one hand, we do not want to make an exact, univocal identification between our visible, ecclesial institutions and the grace present in the Church. This line of thinking constituted an “incomplete notion” of neoscholasticism that required an absolute, deontological obedience to magisterial teaching. It thus “work[ed] only from without by way of authority, instead of effective union.” De Lubac’s critique of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ecclesiastical establishment is echoed in Nichols’s critique of Milbank,248 which is why Wood’s analysis of ecclesiology in light of Christological doctrine was employed as a corrective of Milbank.

On the other hand, de Lubac also exhorts that “our faith should never make separate what God from the beginning has joined together: sacramentum magnum in Christo et in ecclesia.”249 Our understanding of the Church “must undergo no Docetist mitigation”250 by reducing this to merely an analogy or “sign” in the more contemporary, rather empty sense of the term. The Church as the sacrament of Christ must also be understood in the broader Trinitarian mode. Lumen Gentium describes the consecratory aspect as such:

By no weak analogy, [the Church] is compared to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature inseparably united to Him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does

246 Ibid., 75.
247 Ibid., 76. See also Komonchak, 579–81.
248 Nichols, 327, 331–32. On the preconciliar Catholic “subculture” as the context of de Lubac’s earlier writings, see Komonchak, 580.
249 Catholicism, 74.
250 Ibid., 144. The context of this quotation reminds us that temporality is a characteristic proper to visibility.
the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in the building up of the body. (LG 8, citing Eph 4:16)\textsuperscript{251}

The Divine Word that proceeds from the Father reveals the Father in the human nature of the Son as \textit{the} “living organ of salvation”—namely, Jesus Christ Himself. Similarly, the Spirit of the Divine Word that proceeds from the Father and the Son reveals the Father-in-the-Son in the visible Church “as a living organ of salvation.” In an age of Church division and discord, this is simply to say that the only thing truly holding us together and bearing fruit is the only thing that has always held Church together and borne fruit, namely “the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3).

In stating the Trinitarian mode more forthrightly, de Lubac uses the term “sacrament” to describe these processions and missions:

\begin{quote}
If Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ; she represents him, in the full and ancient meaning of the term; she really makes him present. She not only carries on his work, but she is his very continuation, in a sense far more real than that in which it can be said that any human institution is its founder’s continuation.\textsuperscript{252}
\end{quote}

Due attention to the petitionary aspect and its attendant Christology can mitigate the issues with the term “continuation.” However, commenting more appreciatively on this passage from \textit{Catholicism} and one similar to it found in \textit{Splendor of the Church},\textsuperscript{253} Boersma describes the dynamic of Trinitarian procession and revelation as

\begin{quote}
a sacramental chain . . . that points from the Eucharist to the Church, from the Church to Christ, and from Christ to God. . . . [T]hrough the sacramental means of Christ, the Church, and the Eucharist, God is present in the world.\textsuperscript{254}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{251} See Wood’s clarification of the comparisons in Wood, 86.  
\textsuperscript{252} \textit{Catholicism}, 76.  
\textsuperscript{253} \textit{Splendor}, 202.  
\textsuperscript{254} Boersma, 263.
\end{flushright}
This present engagement of God with the world in the visible Church is what Boersma means by the term “sacramental ontology,” which

overcomes . . . the false dilemma between [neoscholastic] extrinsicism and [secular] immanentism. Sacraments, after all, are not some kind of tertium quid occupying a distinct space in between nature and the supernatural….Instead, they are ‘mediatory’: . . . sensible bonds that unite the transcendent to the immanent, the supernatural to the natural.  

This underlines the epicletic paradox with an emphasis on the consecratory aspect. The Church’s sacramental life is petitioned, merely mediatory, and seen only “in a mirror, dimly” (1 Cor 13:12), rather than fully known or claimed in the present. However, Boersma’s use of the term “ontology” is critical to the consecratory aspect. God is truly present with us—emmanuel—in a way that defines immanent realities by their pursuit of transcendent ends in grace. This ontology consists of “sensible bonds” that we can see and know in Christians’ concrete acts of charity for the other, bonds that can be seen above all in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.  

_Distinguishing Bodies_

This being said, the authentic humility of the petitionary aspect still requires a clear distinction between the visible Church of contingent history and the Mystical Body of Christ. This distinction is nonetheless pertinent to the emphasis on the consecratory aspect, since it clearly identifies the visible Church that is consecrated. Consecrating grace does not destroy or collapse the nature being consecrated, but elevates it to its “true self” in its consecration. Far from reinforcing the oppositions between “mystical” and

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255 Ibid., 264, citing Splendor, 202 and Motherhood, 93–94. De Lubac would later affirm that Blondel “overcame the opposition between an extrinsicism which ruined Christian thought and an immanentism which ruined the objective mystery which nourishes this thought.” A Brief Catechesis, 38.  
256 Catholicism, 78–79.
“real” that emerged in the Berengarian controversy through dialectic contrast, de Lubac’s distinctions serve to reverse these oppositions by way of mystical paradox.

Specifically, de Lubac sets out a series of pairs that relate visible and mystical by way of “a distinction . . . not indeed between two realities with no intrinsic connection between them, but as it were a series of parallel conclusions none of which exactly corresponds to its opposite number.” In describing these “parallel conclusions,” he is also filling out what is referred to by the terms “visible Church” and “Mystical Body.” In words that would be echoed in Lumen Gentium, the visible Church is a “historic institution,” “a society founded by Christ for the salvation of men . . . a means” to the end of salvation, and “a group with fixed laws and well-defined frontiers . . . in the midst of other sects.” Respectively, the Mystical Body is “the very city of God,” “no longer . . . a means to unite humanity in God, but she is herself the end [of salvation], . . . that very union in its consummation,” and therefore “a vast spiritual organization, unseen even by those who are its members, which is known only to God.”

Continuing with this series of pairs, the present life of the Church is not simply the dynamic of means and end of salvation, but also entails reception and receptivity to the fruit of healing and perfecting grace given through the Mystical Body. The Church is the harlot taken in and the spotless bride adored, the “daughter of strangers [and] the daughter of the King.” Similarly, she is the corpus mixtum of wheat and tares and the “Ecclesia in sanctis, virgo mater” (the Church in the saints, virgin mother), the communion of saints. To this should be added the observation that the Church comprises

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257 Corpus Mysticum, 226.
258 Ibid., 68.
259 LG 8: “constituted and organized in the world as a society.”
260 Catholicism, 68-70
our visible attempts at anticipating the kingdom of Heaven and is the true anticipation itself. As the receiver and bearer of the Gospel, she is “the assembly of the human race” and “she . . . who summons them,” the gathered and the great gatherer, the congregatio and the convocatio.\(^{261}\) In short, “she is baptized and also baptizes.”\(^{262}\)

The term “visible” does not simply refer to that which can be perceived visually, but rather more generally to concrete realities that can be perceived within the economy of natural Creation. Along with visual perception, “visible” includes that which can be heard, that which can be smelt, tasted, touched, felt (emotionally and physically), read, believed and known by human creatures.\(^ {263}\) Moreover, it is the human “who”: those who are obeyed, those who are taught, those who are encouraged and corrected, those who sing and preach and minister and are ministered to, those who administer the sacraments and the communicants who receive them, what they wear as much as what they say.

It is therefore also the institutional and spatial makeup in which this is found, chiefly in the sacramental orders of bishop, priest, deacon, but also religious communities, lay organizations, male and female embodied persons, community development and advocacy organizations, national bishops’ conferences and parish councils, synods, conventions, ecumenical dialogues and organizations, websites and twitter feeds, altars and pews, “budgets, buildings, potluck dinners, parking lots” and everything in between.\(^ {264}\) Finally, it is not a static entity but a temporally observable dynamic life, a complex network of relationships among all-too-human creatures with

\(^{261}\) See ibid., 64.
\(^{262}\) Ibid., 68–70.
\(^{263}\) See Augustine, Confessions 10.27, in which the sensory range of the convert’s experiential encounter with God is concisely and emphatically (but not exhaustively) summarized.
very real desires, dreams, “joys and hopes, grief and anguish.” (GS 1) This network of relationships extends throughout all levels of society and places of social life, from the family dinner table to the Pope’s weekly Angelus message in St. Peter’s Square. It is global, it is local, it is united in baptism but divided by confessions and communions, and is above all concretely real in both its faithfulness to God and sinfulness against Him.

*Sacramentum Christi*

In a sacramental ontology, the standard of faithfulness and sinfulness for these multiform concrete realities is their expression or default on their “true selves” as expressions of the Church's identity as the epicletic sacrament of Christ. How then does de Lubac understand the concrete acts of the visible Church as consecrated in the “sacrament of Christ”? As a sacramental ontology, understanding the Church as the “sacrament of Christ” seeks to relate the visible Church and the Mystical Body in a way that understands the healing and perfecting grace of the incarnate Word truly present. As a sacramental ontology, it is not simply a theoretical abstraction meant to describe an idealized harmonization of two extremes in tension. Again, it is the subject of a positive affirmation of faith, “not so much ‘in a paradoxical efficacy, in the supernatural order, of a rite or perceptible action,” but “in the existence of a society, which under the appearances of a human institution hides a divine reality.’”\(^{265}\)

If this language of “appearances . . . hides a divine reality” comes close to sounding like that of “substance” and “accidents,” it is because for de Lubac, the relationship between the visible Church and the Mystical Body is precisely the

\(^{265}\) *Catholicism*, 82, quoting Scheeben, *Das Mysterium des Christentums*, n. 82 s.
relationship between the Church and Eucharist: the Mystical Body is in the visible
Church as the Eucharist is in the visible Church. Wood reminds us that “in de Lubac’s
thought the Church as the Mystical Body is indissolubly united to the Eucharist.” She
then quotes a portion of a paragraph of Splendor of the Church, quoted here in its entirety
to preserve its force of exhortation:

The Church, like the Eucharist, is a mystery of unity—the same mystery, and one with inexhaustible riches. Both are the Body of Christ—the same Body. If we are to be faithful to the teaching of Scripture, as Tradition interprets it, and wish not to lose anything of its essential riches, we must be careful not to make the smallest break between the Mystical Body and the Eucharist. It is even more important that we should not see the ecclesial symbolism of the Eucharist as a mere “secondary sense,” or . . . “a moral and accessory meaning,” an “oblique and collateral doctrine,” a “harmonic.” We should not see in the patristic explanations of it nothing more than “moral” discourses fit merely to edify the piety of the hearers once “instructed in the substance of the faith.” The two mysteries must be understood by one another and their point of unity grasped at depth.

De Lubac thus highlights the consecratory aspect in its natural habitat: the
eucharistic community cannot be reduced to an immanentized moral voice, but is
instead consecrated with the moral weight and responsibility as the body of
Christ.

The main point in highlighting the relationship between the communion of the
Church and her sacramental life is that the sacraments are the primary concrete acts that
embody this communion with the Christ in the Church. De Lubac describes this
communion at the personal level:

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266 Wood, 76.
267 Splendor, 156, emphasis added. His target of critique here, whom he quotes in order to refute, is the seventeenth-century archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Jacques Davy Duperron, who in pp. 879–80 of his Réplique à la Response du Serenissime Roy de la Grand Bretagne of 1620, claimed that Augustine’s relationship between the Church and the Eucharist was just such a reduction to moral and political didactics. See Corpus Mysticum, 254. Cavanaugh also warns against this reduction in Torture and Eucharist, 11–14.
Since the sacraments are the means of salvation they should be understood as the instruments of unity. As they make real, renew or strengthen [a person’s] union with Christ, by this very fact they make real, renew or strengthen his union with the Christian community. And this second aspect of the sacraments, the social aspect, is so intimately bound up with the first that it can often be said, indeed in certain cases must be said, that it is through his union with the community that the Christian is united to Christ.\textsuperscript{268}

This is especially true of the Eucharist as the Mystical made visible, as the real presence of the Eucharistic \textit{corpus Christi} signifies and effects the sacramental reality that is the unity of the Church, the \textit{corpus Christi}. De Lubac is thus able to echo the patristic consensus by describing the Eucharist as the “\textit{sacramentum unitatis ecclesiasticae}” (the sacrament of Church unity),\textsuperscript{269} and by extension the sacrament of human unity. Again, the \textit{epiclesis}-consecration in the Mass is not simply a pedagogical analogy but the source of the rest of the Church’s life.

\textit{Medieval Distinctions: The Threefold Body}

In \textit{Catholicism} and \textit{Corpus Mysticum}, de Lubac describes the relationship between Christ, the Eucharist, and the Church by turning to two tripartite relationships found in the medieval synthesis. First is the classic \textit{corpus triforme}, with its three meanings of the term \textit{corpus}. The first meaning of \textit{corpus} here is the incarnate Word Himself—born of a virgin, crucified, risen, ascended and now enthroned in heaven. The second meaning is the body on earth today, the \textit{verum corpus} that is the Church. Third is the body of the Eucharist, a presence that is no less “real” precisely in that it mystically mediates the grace of the first body to the second in the Holy Spirit. This is why the definitive concretization of the Church is the \textit{epiclesis} and consecration in the Mass.

\textsuperscript{268} \textit{Catholicism}, 82.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid., 89.
Indeed, it is the *corpus mysticum* that is the dynamic real presence in the Eucharist that signifies and effects the *veritas*, the truth of the *corpus* that is the Church.\(^{270}\)

The relationships within the *corpus triforme* are clarified by another threefold reality, which points to the mystery of the Eucharist as signifying and effecting the true union between Christ and humanity in the Church. It is also therefore that which signifies and effects the authentic unity of humanity. For the medievals, the immanent, observable aspect was known as the *sacramentum tantum* (the sacrament alone), the “form of bread and wine.” Along with what would later be known as “species” or “accidents,” the *sacramentum tantum* included the rite that provided the liturgical context for the Eucharist, the visible and audible action taken by the Church as embodied in the celebrant and communicants. The second aspect, the *sacramentum et res* (the sacrament and the reality), is that which could be “observable” only by faith as “the body of Christ itself: the truth of flesh and blood.” This is the “deeper reality” of the sacrament that would later be called the “substance” present in the consecrated elements, and the preoccupation of later scholastics maintaining a belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. That there was an objective real presence of the crucified and risen body in the body confected on the altar had been well established by the early Middle Ages.\(^{271}\) However, the primary reason for maintaining this union was for the sake of the third aspect, the *res tantum* (the reality alone). The *res tantum* is the “definitive fruit of the

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\(^{270}\) Ibid., 98–100, 100n68. The exchange of terms, after which the Church was known as the *corpus mysticum* and the Eucharist was known as the *verum corpus*, is given book-length treatment by de Lubac in *Corpus Mysticum*. As noted above, the turning point was the High Scholastic preoccupation with asserting the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist over against the Berengarian heresy. The result was an amnesia of that which should have been *anamnetically* remembered most—namely, the real presence of Christ in the Church. Recall that de Lubac is recovering a closer correspondence between the terms “mystical” and “true.

\(^{271}\) Recall that the doctrine of transubstantiation was formulated to curb the excesses of eucharistic realism that had emerged through the piety of previous centuries.
sacrament”—namely, the “power of unity and love” that binds humanity to Christ in the pursuit of authentic unity of all peoples in the Church. Thus in the “form of bread and wine,” the “truth of flesh and blood” is manifest as the “power of unity and love.”

Novo cedat ritui

What then does it mean for the Eucharist to “signify and effect” the unity of humanity in the Church? The medievals held that the res of human unity in Christ is somehow present in the sacramentum, but how are we to account for this relationship? Susan Wood’s contribution broke new ground on this question by being the first to bring together two major strands of de Lubac’s thought—namely, his sacramental ecclesiology and his spiritual exegesis. In doing so, she clarified the basis of de Lubac’s Christocentric ecclesiology of the corpus triforme in a way that was possibly more lucid than de Lubac’s own treatment of the topic. Finally, while the corpus triforme deals in abstractions, Wood’s attention to the ecclesial setting concretized de Lubac’s ecclesiology rather than letting it slip into an “idealized blueprint.”

It is here that the discussion on mystery and symbol at the beginning of this chapter comes fully to bear. The key for Wood is the spiritual dynamic between the Old and New Testaments, and especially the way the Christ event in the New Testament allegorically discloses the true meaning of the concrete events of the Old Testament. Critically, this is a reciprocal dynamic that grounds the spiritual senses (the Christological “meaning” disclosed in the New Testament) in the literal sense (the

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272 *Catholicism*, 96–97. Note that given the necessity of the “form of bread and wine” in this formulation, the Mystical Body is not, strictly speaking, “invisible.” That the visible Church is primarily the embodiment and effect of this “power of unity and love” is one way of articulating the preoccupations of the rest of this thesis.

273 See Healy, 25-51.
“events” of the Old Testament), and in turn opens up the literal sense to the transcendence of the anagogical sense.\textsuperscript{274} Similarly, the *sacramentum tantum* is understood as the literal sense. This is because the concrete act of the *sacramentum tantum* grounds the broader ecclesiological (allegorical) and personal/moral (tropological) signification of the *sacramentum et res* and anticipates the eschatological (anagogical) consummation of the *res tantum*.*\textsuperscript{275}

The concrete grounding of the consecratory aspect can therefore be understood in terms of the general relationship between the four senses of scripture. First, the mystical understanding of the allegorical and tropological senses are grounded in the truth of the literal sense. The Church’s disclosure of doctrine in the allegorical sense and the Christian soul’s disclosure of spiritual and moral truth in the tropological sense actually occur in events integral to literal history rather than ethereally floating as a platonic ideal. That is to say, doctrine and morals are truly known particularly in historical events (45). In this way, “de Lubac approaches a sacramental view of history. As Christ is the sacrament of the Father, so in an analogous way the allegorical meaning is the sacrament of the historical meaning. The historical meaning is encompassed within the allegorical meaning” (37–38). This requires the Church to take concrete and contingent history seriously,\textsuperscript{276} while also requiring agents within history to transcend immanent realities. As Oliver O’Donovan argues, “moral theory admits we think both ‘down’ and ‘up’; so

\textsuperscript{274} It would be very fruitful to engage in a more detailed clarification of these terms in their own right, but this would take us beyond the ecclesiological focus here. I am assuming a common understanding of such terms as they were used in de Lubac’s study of spiritual exegesis, and will therefore only engage in brief descriptions of them.

\textsuperscript{275} Wood, 67–68. Subsequent references to Wood will be in parenthetical citations.

\textsuperscript{276} Williams, 322.
what is meant by the general value-term at the top depends on the content it acquires from practical decisions at the bottom.”

Second, the allegorical and tropological senses (and therefore the literal referents that disclose the allegorical and tropological senses) are directed to and accountable to the content of their eschatological perfection in the anagogical sense. The first coming of Christ discloses the allegorical sense in the Church’s doctrine and the tropological sense in the moral direction of the Christian life. Doctrine and moral teaching disclosed in the first coming of Christ in the New Testament are together perfected in the eschatological \emph{parousia} pointed to in the anagogical sense. This is because the relationship between the communal reality of the Church and her doctrine and the personal reality of the spiritual life are only perfected in the beatific vision (44). It is at the end of time that the full union between head and members, the perfection of the \emph{pleroma} of Christ, is achieved. This union of head and members is therefore truly understood in the anagogical sense (46).

The literal, allegorical, and tropological senses present in the Church’s life today disclose the anagogical sense by speaking of the unity of humanity before God in the age to come; this is precisely what is meant by the Church being a foretaste or anticipation of the kingdom of God.

Again, de Lubac understands the internal relationship of the \emph{corpus triforme} of the body born of Mary, the eucharistic body and the ecclesial body as one of allegorical-tropological and anagogical signification. Wood makes a series of clarifications on this score, which are helpful to recount here. First, she reminds us that the internal relationship of the \emph{corpus triforme} is also the relationship between the \emph{sacramentum tantum} and the \emph{res tantum} in the \emph{sacramentum et res}. This is fundamentally how the

\footnote{Oliver O’Donovan, “Life in Christ” \textit{The Tablet} (July 2, 1994), 827.}
Eucharist is tied to the Mystical Body as mentioned above. “We who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). Following the logic of the “for” in this statement from 1 Corinthians, “de Lubac sees the Eucharist as related to the Church as cause is related to effect, as means to end, sign to reality” (54). Second, while the emphasis here is on the ecclesiological fruit of the Eucharist, the objective “realism of the Eucharistic presence is never called into question” (55). The ecclesial emphasis is not anachronistically opposed to later doctrinal developments, most famously that of Thomas Aquinas.278

Third—and most critically for our purposes here—Wood clarifies that “the unity of the Eucharistic body and the ecclesial body is never an extrinsic unity because the ecclesial body is not another body than the body of Christ, the *totus Christus*, the fullness of Christ.”279 However, it is also critical to remember that this is a sacramental and eschatological reality: to forget this is to risk claiming that the Church on earth today is the “continuation of the Incarnation,” that the body enthroned in heaven and the ecclesial body (especially its institutional authorities) stand in a univocal relationship (57).

Circumscribing this distinction was part of the task of chapter 1, which underscored the kenotic humility of the petitionary aspect. If there is a hesitant univocation to be made in the consecratory aspect, it is between the kingdom of heaven and the Mystical Body on earth. The unity of the communion of saints remains intact, since the Word of God

is not [solely] in heaven, that you should say, “Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?” Neither is it

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278 It is important to note however, that for such an extensive study of medieval eucharistic doctrines, *Corpus Mysticum* hardly ever engages the Thomistic achievement and Thomas himself is only briefly mentioned in passing and as part of a far more vast intellectual history. See, for example, *Corpus Mysticum*, 113, 247. Nonetheless, Thomas’s florid and evocative verse (written as the culmination of this great flowering of medieval contemplation) will be employed here.

beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?” No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe. (Deut 30:12-14)

In the Spirit of Christ, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near” for those who “repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:15).

Wood’s fourth clarification is therefore that the unity of the Church in Christ through the Eucharist is “not a collective unity, but a unity accomplished by Christ in one flesh” (57). This takes up the nuptial image of caro, the union spoken of in Genesis 2:24 and eucharistically related in John 6:51, 54. Wood distinguishes caro from the Pauline image of corpus in order to distinguish between the virtus of the Church’s union with Christ (caro) and the res of Christians’ unity (corpus) with each other (57–58). Following de Lubac, Wood’s basic point in all these clarifications is that it is helpful to first distinguish aspects to be related prior to actually relating them. This is especially true if these aspects are none other than Christ and the Church: the dire consequences of improper relationships in this regard were examined at the end of chapter 1. Finally, Wood emphasizes that this vision is “synthetic rather than analytic.” It kaleidoscopically and non-exhaustively combines multiple images and aspects that may complement or stand in opposition to each other, to the enrichment of our whole understanding (58–59).

Finally, then, the allegorical-tropological and anagogical relationship between Christ, the Eucharist and the Church is expressed in the meaning of the term corpus mysticum.280 Specifically, Wood sees de Lubac attaching three meanings to the term corpus mysticum. The first of three meanings of the term corpus mysticum as it pertains to the Eucharist is the objective real presence as encountered above. However, I have also...

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280 Recall that the adjective mysticum should not be set against the adjective verum. Corpus Mysticum, 223; Boersma, 259.
already mentioned that the anagogical relationship between the Eucharist and the Church understands the objective real presence as intrinsically connected to the other two meanings of the term that will be described shortly. This stands in contrast to postmedieval accretions that fixated on relation between the first two bodies of the corpus triforme at the expense of the third.281

Recall that “the essential perspective of [the] terms ['mystical' and 'spiritual'] is not the Eucharist as a presence or object, but . . . as an action and a sacrifice.”282 The heart of de Lubac’s argument can be summarized as such: the “action” or fruit of the corpus mysticum is that the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the literal sense that grounds the broader ecclesiological signification of the unity of humanity in Christ (68). The dynamic between Eucharist and Church in Christ is itself the second meaning of the term corpus mysticum: as the real presence of Christ, the Eucharist is the sacrament of the paschal lamb. The Eucharist thereby signifies the allegorical relationship between Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary and the sacrifices of Israel’s temple (60–61). Furthermore, it is possible at this point to add another scriptural warrant—namely, the transformation of the first Passover meal (Israel’s inaugural feast) into a type also fulfilled by the Last Supper (the Church’s inaugural feast and integral to the Passion narrative of Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary). Thomas Aquinas poetically indicates the relationship between the “types and shadows” of the Temple and the Passover present and transcended at the Last Supper: et antiquum documentum novo cedat ritui.283 As the real presence of Christ, the Eucharist marks both the connection and discontinuity between Israel and the Church.284

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281 Corpus Mysticum, 226.
282 Wood, 63, quoting Corpus Mysticum, 65.
283 Corpus Mysticum, 65.
284 Wood, 60, quoting Corpus Mysticum, 64.
This speaks of the role of the Exodus and the Temple in binding Israel together and causing it to be a nation.\textsuperscript{285} This is an allegory of the way the sacrifice of Christ present in the sacrifice of the Mass binds the Church together and causes it to be the People of God. This is more fully seen in the third meaning of the term \textit{corpus mysticum}.

This third and most important meaning of \textit{corpus mysticum} recalls how the anagogical sense “represents a synthesis of the literal and allegorical senses” (61). As the real presence of Christ and therefore of the “sacrifice of unity,”\textsuperscript{286} the Eucharist signifies the eschatological relationship between the Church today and the heavenly city at the end of time. It does so by anticipating both the marriage supper of the lamb (the inaugural feast of the communion of saints; Rev 19:7-9), and the adoration of the paschal lamb in heaven (Rev 7:9-12). Moreover, the Eucharist is the efficacious foretaste of this relationship, since the communion of saints, the “great multitude . . . from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white” (Rev 7:9) is none other than that perfected unity of the Church (and therefore of humanity) in union with Christ (61). This is the fundamentally communal nature of the sacrament’s role in sanctification:\textsuperscript{287}

\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
Just as the anagogical sense envisages the Church as the \textit{pleroma} of Christ, so does this third interpretation of the Eucharist view the Eucharist as building up the Church. The Eucharist causes the Church and looks forward to its completion at the end of time. As the anagogical sense is the scriptural sense related to the theological virtue of hope, so is the Eucharist the sacrament of hope. The Eucharist is the \textit{vignus}, pledge, of the bond of charity which will unite all the members of the Church to each other in Christ. (61)
\end{quote}
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\textsuperscript{285} Of course, this is only one aspect of Israel’s relationship to the Temple, since the Scriptural witness is itself varied. The corruption and general faithlessness of both priests and people caused the breakdown in this relationship, recalling the discontinuity between Israel and the Church and casting the relationship between Temple and People as merely a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

\textsuperscript{286} See \textit{Catholicism}, 88–105, esp. 102–105.

\textsuperscript{287} Ibid., 88–92.
As Thomas’ hymn succinctly exclaims, *O salutaris Hostia, Quae caeli pandis ostium.*

This historically grounds the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church as that between the literal and the allegorical/tropological as completed in the anagogical. This grounding occurs precisely as the anagogical and ecclesial *res tantum* is truly present in the allegorical *sacramentum et res*, which in turn is truly present in the literal *sacramentum tantum*.

The outward rite signifies and effects the real body and blood of Christ. Communion with the sacramental Christ in turn signifies and effects the union of Christ with his Church, for it is partaking of the one bread that we become one body, namely the body of Christ which is his Church. This union of Christ and his Church in the New Covenant is an effective sign of that final union of the whole Christ in the eschaton. (62)

In other words, the concrete life of the Church epicletically takes part in the Holy Spirit’s work of unifying humanity and building it up until the end of time.

Ultimately, Christ, the Eucharist, and the Church are not three free-floating aspects that are extrinsic to or vaguely inform each other, but together constitute one integral *corpus triforme* that is the eschatological *pleroma* of the *totus Christus*. The vertical *caro* as the source of the *virtus* may be distinct from the horizontal *corpus* bound by *caritas* and *veritas*, but this *caro* is the efficacious nourishment for the life of the *corpus*. The unity of the body (*caro*) depends entirely on the union of the body (*corpus*) with its Head. The union of the body with its Head is primarily given in Baptism, Reconciliation and the Eucharist, the “Sacraments of Unity.”

It is here that de Lubac deduces the patristic basis of Blondel’s philosophy of catholicity. Blondel held that every discrete, particular action corresponds to the whole as each particular action is a concrete site of disclosure of the necessity and presence of

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288 Ibid., 82-105.
grace in the world. To employ Milbank’s helpful summary of Blondel’s philosophy of action, each particular action is a concrete site that discloses grace in that it either explicitly affirms or explicitly rejects (and thereby implicitly affirms) the necessity and presence of grace. This is because all actions are judged according to the nature of their self-giving to the whole. As a judgment rooted in self-giving, the sign under which our actions are judged is therefore that of sacrifice and charitable self-giving to the other, which comes to us from beyond ourselves.

Blondel would sanction the explicit claim his philosophy of action is none other than a philosophical account of the pleroma of Christ incarnate, crucified, and risen. The sacrifice and charitable self-giving to creation of God’s self in Christ is the one “action” that defines all others, the concrete instantiation of grace in which the literal, the allegorical, the tropological and the anagogical come together. In searching for Blondel’s Christology in his philosophy of action, Milbank finds that “the logic of action itself . . . demands a divine-human mediator, and the quest of the human will to ‘equalize’ itself can now only be the attempt to be equal to the central revelation of the mediator, and to all the particular words and actions by which it is conveyed and repeated in the society of the Church.”

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289 Milbank, 212. Note that an “abstract site of disclosure” is a logical impossibility, which is why for de Lubac, an “invisible Church” is an impossible abstraction. The communion of saints remains a concrete site of disclosure in its entirety, since those who have attained beatitude never escape a bodily form and are therefore visible to each other and more importantly are visible to God. The saints in heaven are partly visible to the Church on earth as well, in the sense that we can communicate with them by invoking their intercession and maintaining patronage and personal devotion.

290 Ibid., 211; Catholicism, 354.

291 Milbank, 215.

292 Ibid., 217, citing Blondel, L’Être et Les Êtres, 332–33.
Vocati ex Congregatos

Flourishing Diversity

I will now turn to discussing what the unity of humanity entails in light of de Lubac’s sacramental ecclesiology discussed above. In doing so, I will return to the discussion on supernatural perfection of nature in grace from chapter 1. This is because the communion of the Church tied together in “sensible bonds,”<sup>293</sup> as the sacrament of Christ as formed by the Eucharist, is the “social embodiment” of grace in the world.<sup>294</sup> Taking the arguments of <i>A Brief Catechesis</i> and <i>Catholicism</i> together, the relationship between the Church and the world can be described as such: if grace obliterates sin and perfects human nature, then the Mystical Body, <i>gratia plena</i>, perfects humanity itself, heals us “poor banished children of Eve.”

How does <i>Catholicism</i> describe this? First, the Church is the place of repentance and liberation from sin. As stated above, both <i>A Brief Catechesis</i> and <i>Catholicism</i> describe sin as the contradictory dual-movement of self-divinization and self-abasement entailed by denying the transcendent Other who creates humanity in His image. In denying our Creator, we deny our created dignity. Recall also that if the goal of our common human nature is unity, then sin is fundamentally division.<sup>295</sup> <i>Catholicism</i> therefore argues that to be liberated from sin,

It is absolutely necessary . . . that humanity should have a meeting-place in which, in every generation, it can be gathered together, a centre to which it can converge, an Eternal to make it complete, an Absolute which, in the

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<sup>293</sup> Boersma, 264.
<sup>294</sup> Interestingly, the dissertation version of Wood’s monograph was originally “The Church as the Social Embodiment of Grace in the Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac (Eucharist, Nouvelle Theologie, Spiritual, Exegesis)” (PhD thesis, Marquette University, 1986), http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations/AAI8618724/.
<sup>295</sup> Catholicism, 33. Subsequent references will be in parenthetical citations.
strongest and most real sense of the word, will make it *exist*. It needs a magnet to attract it. It needs . . . Another to whom it can give itself. (354)

Earlier, de Lubac makes plain that this “centre of convergence,” this “magnet of attraction” and this “place of gathering” is Christ in the Church as the reception of the “sacramental chain.” Taking up the meaning of *ecclesia*, he reminds us that through the Church, God calls humanity out of sin and into His transcendent life (1 Pet 2:9). Through this call the visible Church “summons all men so that as their mother she may bring forth to divine life and eternal light.” She is thus a “is a *convocatio* before being a *congregatio*” (64–65).

This chapter quoted Boersma’s comment that, for de Lubac, the grace received in the Sacrament of the Church “overcomes . . . the false dilemma between extriniscism and immanentism.” If grace does not obliterate but perfects nature, then in the Church we are simultaneously called “out of ourselves” and also called further in to receive God’s gracious affirmation of personal and contextual particularity. This is echoed in Augustine’s invocation of God who is both *interior intimo meo* and *superior summo meo*. Similarly, de Lubac at one point marvels at the Augustinian “awareness” that “could engender the story of the *Confessions* and also think out the *City of God*” (348).

Pursuing the supernatural perfection of the “true self” therefore requires an affirmation of the personal, the local and the concrete in a way that allows the “particular self” to authentically contribute to the global human family. Conversely, to set the local and global in fundamental opposition is to uphold the false dichotomy between a doctrine of

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296 Boersma, 263.
297 Ibid., 264, citing *Splendor*, 202 and *Motherhood*, 93–94. Also see *A Brief Catechesis*, 38.
298 *Confessions*, 3.6.
sola diversitas on the one hand and “the vision of an entirely monotonous world” on the other.\textsuperscript{299}

For de Lubac, the affirmation of the local involves the flourishing of diversity experienced in our contexts of culture, history, society, and even in other religions. It is a flourishing of diversity within the visible Church, as these cultural and social artifacts are progressively employed to embody the faith of the Church. This incorporation of the “fruit of the earth” is part and parcel with the reality of the visible Church as a created part of the temporal order, since diversity, temporality, and temporal development are features proper to creation (Gen 1–2). Moreover, as a feature proper to creation, the incorporation of the “fruit of the earth” is proper to a Church that bears the incarnate Word and follows the nature-consecrating logic of the incarnation. Therefore, “with the growth of the Church this human contribution must increase” (286). Important examples of this include the efforts at missional inculturation by Francis Xavier and Matteo Ricci, (290) and more importantly the incorporation of Greek philosophy into the formulation of doctrine in the patristic period.\textsuperscript{300} It is here that de Lubac merges Augustinian thought on human teleology with Ignatian missiology: if God is truly “in all things” as his Jesuit charism informs us, then the same God who “made us for Himself” is supernaturally active in incorporating and calling the diverse complexities of created existence to their fecund, perfected end in Him.

There are two further points to be made here. First, as sin is still very present in the world today, the incorporation of the experiences of history into the Church requires not simply an incorporation of flourishing but the bearing of suffering as well. This is a

\textsuperscript{299} Catholicism, 361. See also chap. 3 in Being Consumed, 59-88.
\textsuperscript{300} Catholicism, 286–87. See also the Regensburg Lecture.
potent way in which the intercessory nature of the petitionary mode converges with the healing of the consecratory mode. Such incorporation with human suffering entails a deep solidarity with the sufferings of Christ and is a participation in His solidarity with the poor and the suffering in the world today. In the twentieth century, the witness of Oscar Romero, Maximilian Kolbe, John Paul II, Mother Theresa, and countless others attest to the transformative power of such solidarity, especially as it is transformative of the Church itself. Furthermore, this ethic of incorporation requires the presence of the Church and of her members to embrace an abiding charity that resists systemic injustice and pursues peace and the common good in local societies today:

Charity has not to become inhuman in order to remain supernatural; like the supernatural itself it can only be understood as incarnate. He who yields to its rule, far from giving up his natural qualities, contributes to those societies of which he is naturally a member an activity that is all the more effective because its motive is more free. (365)

Underlying this with the same idea with which Gaudium et Spes would begin, de Lubac continues: “No human problem, no human anxiety can find in him a stranger: all awake within him an echo that is all the deeper for his realization of their eternal consequences” (Ibid.). To repeat a point made in both the introduction and chapter 1 above, these “eternal consequences” are “at the heart of all temporal development” (362).

The second point is related to Nichols’s argument that de Lubac remembered to articulate how a common natural law reasoning can provide the basis for constructive dialogue with those of other faiths. De Lubac is cautious about the limitations of incorporating non- and pre-Christian ways of expressing the Christian faith, but his main

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301 “Mysterium Crucis,” epilogue to Catholicism, 367–69.
302 Nichols, 328; see also the Regensburg Lecture.
objective is to deny any quarter for a human-defined circumscription of salvation on an individual level. He addresses this by way of engaging the question of those who die without ever having been preached the Gospel and offered baptism (233–40). This is almost an *aporia* for those who conceive of salvation as primarily individual, but de Lubac’s drumbeat of salvation as primarily communal with personal implications provides a way forward.

This incorporation of non-Christian and pre-Christian religious traditions is a direct application of the temporality and temporal growth of created grace in the Church. Here de Lubac makes a distinction-in-relation between “the less” and “the more”: it is precisely the tension between the less and the more that preserves the missional impetus of the Church. Essentially, “the less” is anticipatory. In missionary activity as a concrete act of the visible Church, a pagan group and culture encounter the Gospel present in the visible Church. In this encounter, it is part of the missionary task to discern how aspects of pagan culture or daily life can contribute to the presence and growth of the Church as a whole and therefore can pertain to the whole of the eschatologically-unified humanity. Insofar as the Church benefits from this “fruit of the earth,” such aspects are revealed *in this encounter* to be providential and in some sense salvific, (233) and therefore to be respected in charity through subsidiarity and solidarity.

As alluded to above, the most important example of this was the employment of ancient Greek philosophical concepts in articulating Trinitarian and Christological

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303 This goes beyond hyper-Calvinist “bean counting” to include its evangelical counterpart of reducing the Gospel solely to a notion of individual salvation as a “personal relationship with God” and individual entrance into heaven. It is also a critique of ultra-confident and perfectly clear claims of “in” and “out” present in Roman Catholicism as well. While de Lubac’s point in *Catholicism* is not to outrightly deny a conception of personal salvation, it follows from what will be discussed shortly below that de Lubac argues that personal salvation can only be understood as the personal implications of what is fundamentally a collective, ecclesial salvation.
doctrine. Important contemporary examples that illustrate this emphasis on localized contextuality include the incorporation of pre-Christain practices in the ongoing work of liturgical inculturation and the trajectory of community development and poverty alleviation as one of appreciative inquiry and local contribution rather than mechanistic, top-down projects. Such appreciative inquiry can summarize the dialogic side of missionary and diaconal service, “to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world.”

To recall Cyprian’s formula, there is a sense here that while the “more” of the concrete, fully visible Church may not be present throughout humanity, the Church in these pre-evangelized contexts is present in these anticipatory aspects. Therefore according to de Lubac, those living in these contexts “are saved . . . by means of a very real though indirect and more often hidden bond with her body” (234–40).

This being said, any account of de Lubac must be careful not to paint him as upholding universalism as an ideology, or as watering-down the necessity of believing the Gospel and entering the Church through baptism upon encountering the Gospel present in visible Church. The reality is quite to the contrary: he is not a universalist or a syncretist, but a Roman Catholic meditating on the meaning of the catholicity that marks the Church catholic. He is therefore clear that while there is much to be admired and incorporated in other religions, “the ‘less’ is sufficient . . . not in itself, . . . but insofar as it aspires to the ‘more,’ insofar as it is ready to be lost in this ‘more’ directly the exterior obstacles which hide the ‘more’ from it are removed” (236–37). “The topmost summit is never reached” in other religions (223), nor is it reached in an easy

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305 Healy’s accusation that de Lubac holds to an “epic” or “idealized” ecclesiology is based on what Healy percieves to be de Lubac’s “maximal inclusivism,” which Healy, 130–31 spends only a paragraph describing.
“toleration” of the diversity of humanity. Thus while the flourishing of diversity is critical to the Church’s missional identity, it cannot be the final word on the Church’s missional identity.

Supernatural Unity

Indeed, the doctrine of *sola diversitas* is an idiosyncratically late-modern iteration of hubristic reductionism discussed in chapter 1, as it can quickly devolve into the “powerless” or even “mischevious” assertion of self-definition (351). As an expression of our sinful nature, *sola diversitas* therefore inclines us to recoil from becoming part of the gathered offering to the transcendent, Eternal Other. It is an inherent contradiction, since it prevents us from orienting ourselves toward the One who transcends the contingent temporalities in which such diversity is providentially developed (362). Finally, it is a default on the healing and gathering nature of the consecratory mode given through the Eucharist.

The ecclesial thrust of de Lubac’s Christian Prometheism is a constructive response to the late-modern promethean assertion of self-definition. Chapter 1 raised certain qualifications in line with the more petitionary emphasis of that chapter. With those qualifications raised, Christian Prometheism can now be discussed in light of the consecratory emphasis in this chapter. Murphy raises the point of Christian Prometheism in order to register her agreement that de Lubac’s Blondelian integralism provides a critical voice in political theology.\(^{306}\) She explicitly cites Milbank’s own agreement regarding the import of de Lubac for political theology, specifically citing his alarm at

\(^{306}\) Murphy, 415–18. The title of Murphy’s article—“De Lubac, Grace, Politics and Paradox”—is not insignificant.
ecclesial false humility and his preference for de Lubac’s vision that “supernaturalizes the natural.”307 To take an example of de Lubac’s import for political theology, much of this chapter is devoted to exploring how the eucharistic formation of the Church as a global body that seeks the welfare of the human family through its acts of unity and charity. This bears deep implications for political concerns of human community, human freedom, global governance, relations between Church and state, and many others. This chapter will conclude with comments pertaining to human freedom and community, and the conclusion of this thesis will explore some implications for global governance and Church—state relations by way of concrete example.

In citing de Lubac’s Christian Prometheism, Murphy seeks to address the question of Christian freedom. Recall that the danger of Christian Prometheism in our day would be to confuse it with a Nietzschean and Marxist “defiance” of original sin and its consequences, for the sake of underlining the autonomy of the immanent.308 De Lubac himself warned against an “allergy” to the “idea of sin” that is itself a product of original sin.309 This “allergy” is the spectre of the Pelagian heresy in modern and postmodern guise: original sin is denied, and the strength to gratify one’s own desires is elevated above all. Western capitalist societies prioritize negative liberty above all else by locating Prometheus in a *libido dominandi* that preaches individual choice but surrenders personal agency to international market forces.310

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307 Murphy, 416, citing Milbank, 207–9. As seen in chapter 1, Milbank ultimately reverses his assessment of de Lubac’s potential in political theology.
308 Murphy, 422, 426
310 *Being Consumed*, 15–32.
De Lubac’s response to the now-classic problem of the “freedom from” raised by Nietzschean defiance is the appropriately Augustinian “freedom for.” Human dignity is not something we have created; it is something given and to which we are called. As the image of the Triune God, we cannot have created our own autonomy, nor are we only called into an “I–thou encounter.” As revealed in the unifying sweep of the sacrament of Christ, human personal agency is particularly ordered to communal, global, ecclesial, and (ultimately) eternal life in the communion of saints, and to the giving of self for our fellow creatures. Only in this self-giving is our “true self” found (Mark 8:34-35).

Quoting *Catholicism*, Murphy reminds us of de Lubac’s assertion that

“the mutual love of two beings complete them both, and call forth in each of them higher and more irreducible qualities” . . . There are three Persons in God, “constitut[ed] . . . in their entirety” by the “distinctions” amongst them, who for that reason exist in “the unity of . . . one same Nature.” Being a person is thus, by analogy, taking up a role or having a “part to play.” “The summons to personal life,” that is, God’s summoning grace, or constitutive call, “is a vocation, that is, a summons to play an eternal role.”

This is the paradox of unity in diversity and diversity in unity, phrases that (along with the term “community”) have fallen into the definition-eroding trap of *normaltheologie*. A reading of de Lubac’s epicletic ecclesiology recovers these concepts from a hollow notion of “reconciled diversity,” and requires us to recognize how our nature impels us to the unity of our common destiny.

This destiny is tropologically and anagogically signified by the concrete life of the visible Church, living in the tension of the global, the local and the personal, signified

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311 Murphy, 421–27, esp. 424–25; chap. 3 in *Being Consumed*, 59-88.
312 Milbank, 228.
314 Murphy, 422, quoting *Catholicism*, 328–29, 331.
by the presence of the universal in the concrete particular. Echoing Wood, Murphy recalls that it is the anagogical reality of the Church that makes her liturgical and political actions meaningfully intelligible in the present. Such actions constitute the “literal sense” that must conform to a tropological exhortation for the present and an anagogical vision beyond the eschaton. To employ de Lubac’s own words, “as [the sacraments] make real, renew or strengthen [a person’s] union with Christ, by this very fact they make real, renew or strengthen his union with the Christian community.”

We are indeed called to communion on the personal scale, as de Lubac’s language leads us to consider. In this way, the Nietzschean sort of Prometheism is soundly denied. More to the point, we are called to communion on a global scale, and it is here most urgently that de Lubac’s call to converge on the transcendent Other ought to infect our political life. This thesis has already examined how “breath[ing] the upper air” prioritizes the personally transcendent in the midst of both Marxist and ecclesiological “collectivism.” To this must now be added that “breathing the upper air” repudiates and transcends the bland, “plastic,” commodifying, and voraciously violent forces of global capitalism and the doctrine of sola diversitas.

Thus while the Church is first a convocatio, it is ultimately the “congregatio generis humani.” The “gathering of the called” is the primary effect of ecclesial consecration considered in this thesis, and comes at the head of the de Lubac’s series of pairs discussed near the beginning of this chapter. In contrast to a doctrine of sola

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315 Murphy, 419–21.
316 Catholicism, 82.
317 Ibid., 354.
318 Ibid., 359; Murphy, 422.
319 Chap. 2 in Being Consumed, 33-58.
320 Catholicism, 68.
321 Ibid.
diversitas, the author of the Apocalypse sees the vision of a New Jerusalem with open gates through which “people will bring into it the glory and honour of the nations” (Rev 21:25-26).\textsuperscript{322} This is how the kingdom of heaven is the perfected and glorified People of God, itself glimmering with diversity yet “built as a city that is at unity with itself” (Ps 122:3).\textsuperscript{323} The fecund diversity of humanity is perfected only by that which more directly perfects our natural inclination to unity, commonality, and sociality—namely, the supernatural, catholic unity of the Church. Here we see how the New Creation is made fundamentally out of the “stuff” of the Old Creation, since it is the Old Creation perfected and rightly ordered by supernatural grace.

Thus the natural inclination to flourishing diversity and fecundity is revealed to be rightly ordered if it is oriented to a deeper and stronger unity of humanity’s sole end in God. This is tentatively revealed in the catholic unity of the Church: it is a convocatio for the sake of it becoming a congregatio: it calls so that it might gather.\textsuperscript{324} Recall that our liberation from sin involved a turn from ourselves and towards God as our centre of convergence. Likewise, we are called out from absolutizing our various conflicting identities and loyalties and gathered as the Church.

\textit{Local and Particular}

While we may need to bracket off a certain inauthentic ecclesiological collectivism,\textsuperscript{325} this chapter has examined de Lubac’s argument that in its catholicity, the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{322}Consistent with the rest of the Apocalypse, this vision applies the eschatological hermeneutic to a promise made to Israel, in this case regarding the postexilic rebuilding of the Temple in Haggai 2:6-7. See also Joseph Mangina, \textit{Revelation} (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2010), 242–43, especially with regards to the “open gates.”
\item \textsuperscript{323}Translation taken from the Psalter in \textit{Book of Common Prayer}, 498.
\item \textsuperscript{324}~\textit{Catholicism}, 68.
\item \textsuperscript{325}~Murphy, 422.
\end{itemize}
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visible Church possesses an authentic ecclesiological collectivism in pursuing the flourishing of human unity and dignity. De Lubac understands the Church’s catholicity as the sacramental mediation between global unity and local diversity, mediated by the presence of the universal in the particular.\textsuperscript{326} This sacramental mediation is concretely explained in part two of \textit{The Motherhood of the Church}.\textsuperscript{327} Here de Lubac makes a sharp clarification between the terms “local” and “particular” regarding the structure and identity of the Church. The “local” is “of a \textit{socio-cultural}” and “merely human order.”\textsuperscript{328} Echoing the distinctions made in \textit{Catholicism}, the “local” concerns local customs, cultures, and mindsets, the expression of a local identity and the telling a specific history of a specific people in a specific place. It is essentially a matter of contingent, immanent history and can be evaluated and discussed in scientific terms of sociological research and historical study.\textsuperscript{329} It can also be a way of describing the visible Church in its local environs: understood as local, the visible Church is a set of institutions and communities within a broader society, even if its contacts and resource flows are global in scope.\textsuperscript{330}

Such contextual locality is an undeniable reality: my description of the visible Church near the beginning of this chapter all involved contingent, immanent realities. For example, Hauerwas’s “budgets, buildings, potluck dinners [and] parking lots”\textsuperscript{331} are surely western inventions and preoccupations, even as they may be present in other

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{326} \textit{Catholicism}, 326-37.
\item \textsuperscript{327} Appropriately titled “Particular Churches in the Universal Church,” part two in \textit{The Motherhood of the Church}, 171-335.
\item \textsuperscript{328} \textit{Motherhood}, 194–95, emphasis original.
\item \textsuperscript{329} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{330} That the visible Church exists within a broader society is particular to the “pre-Christendom” and “post-Christendom” situation. The situation of Christendom could be summarized by the notion that the visible Church was either confined to clergy, coterminous with civil society, or some tension between these two extremes. It could be argued that the primary purpose of the Second Vatican Council was to grapple with the changed situation. Either way, the visible Church, as \textit{local}, does not transcend the present society.
\item \textsuperscript{331} Hauerwas, 382.
\end{itemize}
localities. I have also mentioned the examples of Greek philosophy and various liturgical inculturations. Beyond simply acknowledging an undeniable reality, such diversity ought to be celebrated and encouraged. This is because the distinct acts, flavours, processes, and attitudes that comprise a local context may be consecrated by God for the building-up of the local church community. Alongside this, the ecclesial repentance present in the petitionary aspect must surely include ways in which one form of local church has violently destabilized or obliterated another culture. De Lubac himself states that “nothing is more legitimate in principle” than the cultural diversity of multiple localities, because here in the Church do we see the authentic pursuit of flourishing inherent in human nature. Quoting J. J. von Allmen, de Lubac reminds us that “‘God does not save anthropological abstractions’ which would be the same everywhere, ‘but men and women of flesh and blood.’”

However, diverse local expression is legitimate in practice only insofar as “the peace and unity of the Catholic Church have never been troubled” by such diversity. Another response to the doctrine of sola diversitas is the “peace and unity” involved in the term “particular,” as in as a particular presence of the ecclesia catholica. The “particular” and the “whole” are therefore “of an essentially theological order.” “The particular church is not . . . determined as such by topography or by any other factor whether or the natural order or of the human order.” For de Lubac, conceiving of local ecclesial realities in terms of “particularity” signifies that the particular is oriented to the

332 The example of Aboriginal Residential Schools in Canada comes to mind. 333 Motherhood, 209. 334 Ibid., quoting L’Eglise locale, 516. 335 Ibid., quoting a letter of Firmilian of Caesaria to Cyprian of Carthage. 336 Ibid., 194, emphasis original. 337 Ibid., 193.
whole: it is centrifugal in nature, and the concern is for the “building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:12-13). Understood as particular, the visible Church enables its members to “breathe the upper air,” to transcend the present society by incorporating them into the communion of saints. This is a disposition that stands in stark contrast to the centripetal assertion of local priority and prerogative. A divisive assertion of the diversified local over the universally-oriented particular quickly raises the spectre of liberal proceduralism in the Church, a spectre raised in the election campaign for the Anglican bishop of Sydney and in the preoccupations and politics of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

Conversely, de Lubac repeats Yves Congar’s comment that “between the particular church and the universality of the Church ‘there is, as it were, a mutual interiority.’” Supplementing Congar’s statement with a comment from Joseph Ratzinger, de Lubac relays that “each [particular Church] is a living cell ‘in which the whole vital mystery of the one Body of the Church is present, each one is open on all sides through the bonds of communion and preserves her existence as Church only

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338 Ibid., 199. In Roman Catholicism, the only possible exception to this is the particular church in the city of Rome, which is centripetal by virtue of its particularity; see chaps. 6–7 in Ibid., 275-335. Is there something similar to be said for the Archdiocese of Canterbury, at least in the way Anglicans ought to conceive of it? I am not suggesting the establishment of any sort of “Anglican curialism,” but rather that we remember that the Archbishop of Canterbury—along with the other three instruments—constitutes a global locus of unity around which the contingent features of our polity may be reconfigured. Before turning to questions of polity within Roman Catholicism, de Lubac quotes Ramsey, 115, regarding an orientation towards unity; Motherhood, 232.

339 Catholicism, 76.


341 Motherhood, 201, La collégialité de l’épiscopat, 1.
through this openness.”\(^{342}\) Far from collapsing local diversity into monotonous unity, catholic unity is the ground for catholic diversity. De Lubac quotes Rahner in stating that “the particular church . . . ‘is not merely an administrative division of the total Church’; she does not ‘result from a partition which would fragment the expanse of the universal Church, but from a concentration of the Church exercising her own capacity for fulfillment.’”\(^{343}\) De Lubac illustrates this with the example of Pauline salutation. When Paul addresses “the Church of God that is in Corinth” (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1), he is indeed addressing and exhorting the community locally situated in Corinth. More centrally, however, he exhorts that particular “Church of God” to orient themselves towards the whole Church of God.\(^{344}\)

The presence of the universal Church in the particular Church is a primary example of the epicletic consecration of concrete ecclesial realities. To use Blondelian terms, it is a matter of faith that the particular life of the visible Church in a specific place is the concrete disclosure of the bond of charity that is the universal Church. The particular Church is consecrated by virtue of its pertaining to the transcendent whole, which therefore requires the humility to understand that local endeavours are accountable to the whole. Recall that such disclosure is performed in both the explicit affirmation of grace and the explicit denial—and therefore implicit affirmation—of grace.\(^{345}\) The particular as an explicit disclosure of grace is thus a way of defining the local, visible Church as an expression of the *catholica*, the universal whole, both in the local unit’s

\(^{342}\) Ibid., 202, quoting “The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality,” trans. by Tarcisius Rattler, *Concilium* 1 (1965), 44-45. For the sake of consistency throughout this section, I have kept Englund’s translation from *Motherhood*.

\(^{343}\) Ibid., 199, quoting “Quelques réflexions sur les principes constitutionnels de l’Église,” in *L’Épiscopat et l’Église universelle* (1962), 549, 555.

\(^{344}\) Ibid., 202.

\(^{345}\) Milbank, 211.
faithfulness and faithlessness in expressing this whole. The point bears repeating: the vision of the Fathers and the medievals transcended any sort of procedural or deontological notions of unity by unambiguously tying unity to the relational and sacramental bond of charity. Again, the fruit of the sacrament is the singular power of unity and love. 346 “Caritas unitas est ecclesiae. Sive caritatem, sive unitatem nomines, idem est, quia unitas est caritas, et caritas unitas.”347

346 Catholicism, 97.
347 “Charity is the unity of the Church. Whether we call it charity or unity is all the same, because unity is charity and charity is unity.” Ibid., 78, quoting Hugh of St. Victor, De Sacramentis 2.11. He also cites Augustine, Cyprian, Hippolytus, and others, especially as the source of Hugh’s thoughts on the matter.
Conclusion: Pontifical Humility

In *Motherhood of the Church*, de Lubac sees the sacramental mediation of the universal in the particular as concretely exemplified in the public nature of the episcopal office. The “universality and unity of the Church” is made concrete and present in the bishop, precisely as the principal celebrant of the “sacrament of unity” in that particular church. Far from seeing this sacramental reality as the basis for an autonomous local sufficiency, de Lubac claims that “fuller attention to the nature of the episcopacy and to the mystery of the Eucharist avoids this partiality.” Just as “there is a true Eucharist only where there is unity,” “the episcopacy is in fact one . . . a Christian becomes bishop only through his admission to this undivided body of the episcopacy.”

Like all the sacraments, the fullness of holy orders is a sign of unity. It is within this sacramental unity that we see the role of the bishop as apostle and guardian of catholic faith. An Anglo-Catholic or “Reformational Catholic” contribution to this discussion might emphasize that the sacrament of holy orders is not in its full expression anywhere, if we are to understand the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the churches of the Reformation to be in a state of schism from each other. Far from admitting total impotence, however, this deficiency of holy orders

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348 *Motherhood*, 175.  
349 *Catholicism*, 89; *Motherhood*, 206.  
351 *Catholicism*, 93.  
352 *Motherhood*, 204.  
354 While is a decidedly Anglican and Protestant claim, *Unitatis Redintegratio* acknowledges that “often enough, people on both sides were to blame” for the schisms of the sixteenth century. Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), November 21, 1964, no. 3. This seems to suggest an openness to at least the aretological dimension of this idea within Roman Catholic discourse, and is certainly part of what underlies the sea change from *est to subsistit in* found in LG 8. At the very
expresses the reality that we are impelled toward unity *ad intra*, and the recognition of our common need to converge upon the transcendent Other.

I have briefly followed de Lubac’s examination of the episcopal office as a concrete example of a much broader sacramental ontology: these realities are not confined solely to bishops but are present in different examples in different ways. As will be discussed below, bishops are called to pursue global and diocesan unity in charity and what I term as “pontfical humility.” This is a normative exhortation rather than an empirical observation: the concrete history of episcopal power contains many bishops who have opted to burn rather than build bridges. If episcopal polity is a matter of the *esse* rather than merely the *bene esse* of the Church, it is a matter of *esse* because bishops are called to be a requisite locus of the catholic unity present in the particular. Moreover, if the bishop in communion with the episcopal college is called to be a requisite locus of ecclesial unity, he is therefore called to lead his church in the pursuit of human unity before God. As the most visible and public figure in a particular church, the bishop stands at the intersection of *ad intra* polity and *ad extra* politics. This is especially true if we embrace a more complicated and intertwined vision of Church and society required by the supernatural infusion of nature as described above.

To claim that “unity is charity and charity is unity” is to affirm that unity is driven by the unsettling dynamic of self-giving and self-surrender to the other. In this vein, Pope Francis exhorted a group of papal representatives to shun what de Lubac referred to as a “spiritual worldliness,” that “succumbing to the spirit of the world that leads to acting for one’s own fulfilment rather than for the glory of God, to that sort of

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Catholicism, 78, quoting Hugh of St. Victor, *De Sacramentis*, 2.11.
‘bourgeoisie of spirit and life’ which spurs us to lie back, to seek a comfortable, quiet life.”

Francis’ comment points to the prophetic and transformative nature of humility explored in chapter 1. In the integrity of the epicletic form, a humble bishop who rejects the world’s pomp and convenience for the sake of his flock and the unity of the Church bears a transformative witness to the world precisely in his humility.

An example that illustrates the episcopal rejection of worldly authority for the sake of the flock is the account found in *Torture and Eucharist*, in which Cavanaugh details how the Chilean bishops employed sacramental discipline and liturgical formation to mobilize the people of Chile in ousting the Pinochet regime and strengthening civil society. As Healy critically highlights, the bishops’ prior failure to counter the violence of the regime was partly rooted in the very extrinsicism/historicism *détente* questioned by de Lubac decades earlier. This Maritainian “New Christendom” had introduced a division of labour in which “the Church would be responsible for the souls of Chileans, in effect handing their bodies over to the state for political and military duty.” It had allowed the bishops to live in ease and safety in the midst of violent regime change.

In the face of widespread state-sponsored torture and abduction, the bishops abandoned their “spiritual worldliness.” In their authentic humility, they led a transformative movement in Chilean society. Their use of ecclesial resources was exemplified by three practices. First was the declaration of excommunication *latae sententiae* upon agents of the Pinochet regime: by employing violence to fragment

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356 Francis, “Address to Participants in the Papal Representative’s Days,” June 21, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130621_rappresentanti-pontifici_en.html. He explicitly cites *Splendor*, 377–78. It is critical to remember that these representatives are actively engaged with both governments and episcopal conferences, and are themselves titular bishops.

357 Healy, 48.

358 *Torture and Eucharist*, 71.
society and deny the common humanity of torture victims, agents of the regime failed to “discern the body” of Christ and thus sinned against the Church. The bishops declared that state agents had therefore excluded themselves from eucharistic fellowship. This declaration served to publicly clarify and protect the identity of the true body of Christ, mobilizing clergy and laity to work for a more unified and healthy society.  

The second and more positive practice is a concrete example of this work for a more unified and healthy society. This was the establishment of the Committee of Cooperation for Peace in Chile (COPACHI) and its transition into the Vicariate of Solidarity. Through these the Church reestablished the “intermediate social bodies between the individual and the state” by providing health services, recreational groups, legal aid and other social activities that the Pinochet regime had suppressed. These “intermediate social bodies” were established under the institutional protection of the Church as a formal diocesan vicariate, independent of (and at times in opposition to) the state. As an act of both localized solidarity and episcopal oversight, the Vicariate’s actions and organizations were directly tied to the eucharistic realities of particular presence with the poor and of the bishop’s primary pastoral responsibility of eucharistic presidency. As a third example, the laity were empowered by the Vicariate to extend the prophetic role of eucharistic presence in the Sebastian Acevedo Movement against Torture. By liturgically denouncing the violence of the regime, they extended such eucharistic presence by publicly denouncing the regime’s captivity on the social

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359 Ibid., 253–64.
360 Ibid., 38.
361 Ibid., 249, 264–68.
imagination and by proclaiming and imagining the eschatological anticipation of the victory of the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{362}

The importance of this example for the present thesis is in the Church’s use of institutional resources as consecrated spiritual resources to uphold the dignity of Chileans—not simply as Chileans but as part of the human family. Most decisively for our purposes here, Cavanaugh argues that the bishops rooted their understanding of the consecration of the visible Church in the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist championed by de Lubac in \textit{Corpus Mysticum}.\textsuperscript{363}

In \textit{Torture and Eucharist} and his other contributions, Cavanaugh demonstrates how his “anarchic oppositionalism” carries on Milbank’s concerns but contains more nuance than Milbank’s “hermeticist” approach.\textsuperscript{364} On the one hand, Cavanaugh is clear that the Church ought to oppose a political ideology that necessitates a particular immanentist system of thought and practice (such as that which upheld the Pinochet regime) or upholds it as a morally neutral entity. He asserts that the “unity in the earthly city . . . is a false unity, one based on the \textit{libido dominandi}” and “maintained by the pursuit of war, uniting a fractious populace against a common enemy.”\textsuperscript{365} Furthermore, the fragmentary violence of the Pinochet regime is cited precisely in its power to \textit{unite} Chilean society under the control of state institutions. Since the claim to sovereignty of such institutions have flourished under western affluence, Cavanaugh’s argument can

\begin{footnotes}
\item[362] Ibid., 273–77.
\item[363] Ibid., 230.
\item[364] Nichols, 327; Mary Doak, “The Politics of Radical Orthodoxy: a Catholic Critique” \textit{Theological Studies} 68 (2007): 377. Doak has coined the term “anarchic oppositionalism” to describe Cavanaugh in contrast to the reclusion and reification connoted by the term “hermeticism” discussed in chapter 1 above.
\item[365] \textit{Migrations}, 58, citing Augustine, \textit{City of God} 5.12.
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also be applied to liberal democratic states in the global north, albeit with certain nuanced differences.\footnote{This is welcomed in Torture and Eucharist, 9, 15. The explicit critique of the claim of state sovereignty in western countries in light of the Church’s sacramental unity is effectively Cavanaugh’s academic preoccupation, as exemplified in his other works cited here.}

However, Augustine’s relevance is sought precisely because he predated and prepared Christendom’s approach to the question of the relationship between Church and society. Augustine does not seek a stark, either-or between the heavenly city and the earthly one. As discussed in chapter 1 above, this lack of either-or is in part because the wheat-and-tares of the visible Church cannot be perfectly identified with the heavenly city.\footnote{Ibid., 57. The contrast between “complex” and “simple” space itself comes from Milbank. See ibid., 19n33, citing John Milbank, “On Complex Space,” chap. 12 in The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 268–92.} More importantly, Augustine’s nuance concerns the historical, tangible nature of the Church’s anagogical signification of the heavenly city. Rather than an extrinsicist either-or between Church and state, Cavanaugh argues that the heavenly and earthly cities share a “complexifie[d] space” because the very public “City of God makes use of the same temporal goods as does the earthly city,” albeit in service to and love of the transcendent God rather than in love of self.\footnote{Migrations, 59.}

By claiming that “the City of God is not so much a space as a performance” of the love of God,\footnote{Ibid.} Cavanaugh affirms Doak’s evaluation that Cavanaugh “may be evolving to a more nuanced and less thorough repudiation of the state.” Cavanaugh accomplishes this, to again quote Doak’s reflection, “with a more moderate call to demystify the state rather than reject it altogether.”\footnote{Doak, 380n42.} State institutions are simply on-par with the “telephone
company” rather than some mythical sole champion of the common good.\textsuperscript{371} The Church’s demystification of the state is made clear when the Church proclaims that only the Gospel of the crucified Christ and not the defense of the state is worth dying for, and that this Gospel de-necessitates any violence done on behalf either the Church or the state. The situation of complex space allows the visible Church to “be a distinct polity transforming society from within,” and to enter into “ad hoc alliances with the state for the purpose of combating some other particular evil.”\textsuperscript{372} The example of an alliance that immediately comes to mind is cooperation of Church institutions and organizations with government aid and housing agencies and their involvement in crafting legislative proposals for these executive agencies. Another example is the explicit support on the part of Christian organizations for international non-governmental organizations, be they explicitly Christian or not.

On the one hand, Cavanaugh clearly shares Milbank’s ecclesiological priority. This has led Cavanaugh to drift into difficulties similar to those described of Milbank in chapter 1, difficulties that are exemplified in the lack of recognition of the ways in which the liberal state has been beneficial in an age of church division.\textsuperscript{373} On the other hand,


\textsuperscript{372} Doak, 380. See \textit{Migrations}, 66.

\textsuperscript{373} The idea that the liberal state as peaceful mediator between conflicting western Christian traditions is of providential origin has both its merits and problems. These merits and problems were debated in a panel discussion at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Literature on November 25, 2013. This was raised by Radner’s direct critique in chapter 1 of \textit{A Brutal Unity} of the ecclesiological implications of Cavanaugh’s argument in William Cavanaugh, \textit{The Myth of Religious Violence} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). He had initially sparked the debate by presenting his argument fourteen years earlier in William Cavanaugh, “‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House:’ The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State,” \textit{Modern Theology} 11 (1995): 397-420. Cavanaugh’s aim here is to demolish the claim that the liberal state emerged as the sovereign peacemaker in the midst of the Wars of Religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Radner argues that to utterly demolish the claim of liberal state as peacemaker is “not only wrong but dangerous” (A
Cavanaugh nuances his ecclesiological priority to render the Church more effective in its witness. By “evolving to a more nuanced and less thorough repudiation of the state” through the affirmation of a complex space, Cavanaugh positions the Church as free to set the terms of its own debate.374 This especially allows the Church to affirm its catholicity as a global communion, one that exists not only within local society but maintains a particular place throughout the localities of the world. The Church can thereby affirm the authentic unity of humanity even in “ad hoc alliances” with the agents of false unity, when—through the “definitive fruit of the sacrament”375—it is free to perform “its ministry of uniting people organically, ‘knitting people back together, connecting them as members of one another,’ especially in its liturgical enactment of the Body of Christ as an alternative to the perverse and atomizing violence of the state.”376

Vis-à-vis the state, Cavanaugh envisions a flexibility in which the Church is free from state and corporate coercion so it can discern which policies to resist, which to support and advocate for, and when to work independently. To affirm the complex space is the very opposite of false humility, since it allows the Church to maintain theology as the metadiscourse for its own discernment in a globalizing context.377 Maintaining theology as the metadiscourse increasingly involves both clear proclamation in global affairs and the voice of Christian particularity in peaceable dialogue.

Thus the account of the Church’s resistance and overthrow of the Pinochet regime is an important example of ecclesial engagement for the sake of human dignity. It is even

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374 Doak, 380n42.
375 Catholicism, 97.
376 Doak, 379–80, quoting Torture and Eucharist, 267. This is Cavanaugh’s description of the fruit of the Vicariate of Solidarity.
377 Milbank, 1.
possible to employ the term “ecclesial success” in describing this in a limited way. However, the bishops only succeeded by remembering that the common destiny and identity of humanity is an anagogical and eschatological reality. Murphy reminds us that as we pursue our “promethean” vocation to communion, we are called to embrace that eschatological contradiction that is an ad extra version of the epicletic tension. On the one hand, “there is . . . a genuine Christian commitment to human progress, which entails the undoing of historical social injustice.” The visible Church is called to constructively partner with the rest of society in all aspects of social life, be it economic, physical, cultural, intellectual and social well-being of our neighbours and ourselves. As the heralds of the spiritual well-being of humanity, the building-up of the human family is itself the building-up of the family of God. On the other hand, Murphy quotes de Lubac’s point in the *Drama of Atheist Humanism* that “the ‘success’ of our work for humanity ‘will never be such that the noble wound’ in humanity ‘is healed’. For that wound consists in a ‘dissatisfaction’ which prohibits us ‘from being content with a progress carried on in the same line.’” As open as human nature may be to the in-breaking of grace, it is still an in-breaking. It is Other and it comes to us, and our attempts to ultimately attain it through contingent processes will never reach the “topmost summit.”

Chapter 1 of this thesis concluded by stating the epicletic tension of the Church in both directions. Similarly, this thesis will conclude by clarifying the epicletic form of the Church in a series of contrary pairs. On the one hand, no amount of planning or feats of

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378 See *Torture and Eucharist*, 222–27.
379 Murphy, 426.
380 Ibid., quoting *Drama*, 457, 459.
381 Catholicism, 223.
social engineering on our part can attain the kingdom of heaven: the spectre of Babel is still among us. Furthermore, we can only request the presence of the Holy Spirit upon the bread and the wine, upon the eucharistic community and upon the processes within contingent history that seek to alleviate suffering and build up the human family. On the other hand, the conviction of the consecratory aspect is that God graciously responds by using such contingent processes for the building up of His family: the vision of the New Jerusalem is also among us. This perfect city at once “com[es] down out of heaven from God,” “for the first heaven and the first earth [will pass] away,” but is also now only being “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:1-2). Its dimensions are presently intelligible to human measurement and its jewels and materials are presently available on earth, but its dimensions are so large and its construction is so perfect that it defies even the creativity of the image of God. What is primarily given to the members of the visible Church is to say in the tangible and audible sacramentum tantum,

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts, that they may be the sacrament of the body of Christ and his blood of the new covenant. Unite us to your son in his sacrifice, that we, made acceptable in him, may be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, reconcile all things in Christ, and make them new, and bring us to that city of light where you dwell with all your sons and daughters, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.³⁸²

To consecrate the Church for the salvation of humanity can only be the work of the Creator Himself, who is “pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20).

It is to this “peace through the blood of [the] cross” that the Church must bear witness by her epicletic nature. She bears witness to her own consummation as the

kingdom of God—and thus to the consummation of humanity. She bears witness to the affirmative reality of grace in herself and in the world, and to the sin of division in herself and in the world. She discerns between Babel and the New Jerusalem by the sign of charity, known to her by her faith in the Triune God and her hope in the eternal vision of God. “For God is love . . . [and] since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:8, 11-12).
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