The Exposed Life

*The kenôtic ecclesiology of Donald M. MacKinnon*

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Bachelor of Theology (Honours)
October, 2011
**Statement of Originality**

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the School of Humanities and Social Science Thesis Library being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Contents

Introduction
   page 5

The Sacramental Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac
   page 8

The Christology of Donald M. MacKinnon
   page 17

The Problem Within
   page 32

MacKinnon’s Ecclesiological use of Kenōsis
   page 43

Conclusion: The Holy Insecurity of the Exposed Life
   page 49
Abstract

The works of Donald M. MacKinnon offer a significant contribution to the academic examination of *kenōtic* ecclesiology. Stemming from the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:5b-11, the notion of *kenōsis*, self-emptying, understands the nature of Christ as selfless and self-denying for the sake of the *Other*. This paper will aim to explore how, within the *kenōtic* movement of the incarnation, the nature of the church, as the 'Body of Christ,' is gifted to it by Christ. It therefore may be possible to critique the ethical conduct of the church against the life and conduct of Christ. This thesis is fostered upon N.T. Wright's reading of Philippians 2:5b-11, which affirms the revelatory quality of the incarnation, by stating that Christ reveals that God is *kenōtic* by nature. He argues that Christ’s selflessness is the revelation of the *kenōtic* nature of the Trinity. This provides a foundation for contrasting MacKinnon's articulation of *kenōtic* ecclesiology with the explicitly Christocentric form presented by Henri Cardinal de Lubac. MacKinnon’s call to the ‘exposed life’ is a call for a paradigm shift by members of the church of how they understand themselves, each other, the nature of the whole body and their relation to Christ. Influenced by the kenōticism proposed by P.T. Forsyth and H.R. Mackintosh, MacKinnon's understanding of *kenōsis* develops around his understanding of theological honesty, tragedy and divine incomprehensibility. Interconnected within his oeuvre, these themes form the basis of his critique of the broad ecclesiological type MacKinnon identifies as ‘Constantinianism.’ Through his critique, MacKinnon offers a repair of Christocentric ecclesiologies and non-Christocentric ecclesiologies alike in which the place of Christ's *kenōtic* nature has, arguably, been misunderstood. It is hoped that this paper will demonstrate how MacKinnon’s insistence on a *kenōtic raison d’être*, located in Christ, remains significant for contemporary contemplation in the struggles the whole world-wide church continues to face in the 21st Century.