The Exposed Life

The kenôtic ecclesiology of Donald M. MacKinnon

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

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Abstract

The works of Donald M. MacKinnon offer a significant contribution to the academic examination of kenôtic ecclesiology. Stemming from the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:5b-11, the notion of kenôsis, 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 kenôtic 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 kenôtic by nature. He argues that Christ’s selflessness is the revelation of the kenôtic nature of the Trinity. This provides a foundation for contrasting MacKinnon's articulation of kenôtic 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 kenôticism proposed by P.T. Forsyth and H.R. Mackintosh, MacKinnon's understanding of kenôsis 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 kenôtic nature has, arguably, been misunderstood. It is hoped that this paper will demonstrate how MacKinnon’s insistence on a kenôtic 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.
Introduction

According to the late Donald M. MacKinnon (1913-1994):

For Christians there is no escape from the issues raised by the involvement of the author and finisher of their faith in history. It is at once their glory and their insecurity that he is so involved.¹

In late 1968, MacKinnon delivered the Gore Memorial Lecture in Westminster Abbey in a time of vast social change, civil unrest and authoritarian methods developed to try and control these. MacKinnon’s lecture was a rigorous critique of power and notions of ‘establishment’ within the English Church. Entitled “Kenōsis and Establishment,” MacKinnon called for the church to be self-critical in the light of the kenōtic nature of Jesus Christ. MacKinnon’s emphasis on Christ’s kenōsis, self-emptying, from the hymn of Philippians 2:5b-11² and the church’s participation in that guide his criticism. MacKinnon builds a complex critique of the institutional forms of the church which he perceives as being ethically unfaithful to the life they are meant to have in Christ.

This thesis will build on a premise exemplified by the reading of N.T. Wright on Philippians 2:6. Wright believes that instead of translating this verse as “Although/ Though/Despite that he was in the form of God,” the Greek text should be translated as “Because he was in the form of God.”³ The problem with ‘although,’ ‘though’ or ‘despite that’ is that the words predispose the theology of the hymn as negating the revelatory quality of the incarnation. Against this notion, Wright believes that “The real theological emphasis of the hymn… is not simply a new view of Jesus… It is a new understanding of God.”⁴ If, as Philippians 2:5-11 suggests, that the church has its life from Christ, and

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² The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used with permission. All rights reserved.
⁴ Wright, The Climax of the Covenant, 84.
according to Paul should ontologically and ethically align to that nature, then what does it mean for the nature of the church to be *kenōtic*?

*Kenōsis*, ecclesiology and a sense of irreducible theological honesty are deeply interconnected for MacKinnon. For him these engage the theologian in trying to prevent the radical resistance of the Gospel from being mitigated. MacKinnon does this particularly through the themes of the tragic and divine incomprehensibility. In the 20th Century, theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann, Michail Tareev, Sergii Bulgakov and Hans Urs von Balthasar all developed profound theological systems in which Christ’s *kenōsis* plays a key role. However, it should be asked whether all theological uses of *kenōsis* are truly *kenōtic*? This examination will begin by discussing the ecclesiology of Jesuit theologian Henri Cardinal de Lubac, a contemporary of MacKinnon’s, who offers an example of an explicitly Christocentric ecclesiology in which the use of *kenōsis* arguably has been misused. Far from simply dismissing the vast academic achievements of Cardinal de Lubac, this exploration into his work seeks to offer a repair of his sacramental ecclesiology in order to shed greater light on the nature of the church.

Building on the works of writers such as Dutch Augustinian prior Robert Adolfs, 5 MacKinnon allows theological ontology to reshape ecclesiology. His central criticism is offered through interrogating the ecclesiastical attitude he categorises broadly as “Constantinianism.” He defines a “Constantinian Church” as “the Church whose status is guaranteed and which allows the manner of that guarantee (i.e. the State)... to invade the substance of her life.”6 In a similar vein, Kerr insists that it is a deceptive self-understanding that believes the church is a fixed, ‘established’ sociological entity distinct from the historical person of Jesus.7 Himself a devout High Churchman in the Scottish Episcopalian Church, MacKinnon criticised not as an outsider, but as one deeply involved within the

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tradition. In the Gore Memorial lecture he presented his disappointment that such
great scholars, like Gregory Dix and W.B. O’Brien of “Anglo-Catholic
inheritance,” at various times dedicated their energies to acts of “the harshest and
most intransigent bigotry.” Through the way MacKinnon uses the language of
*kenōsis* he assembles a case against abuses of power in the church. In so doing he
equally reshapes how language of *kenōsis* had been theologically used by many
up until that point.

The church, wrote Gore, is “the extension in idea and in reality of the
Incarnation.” It is the extension and perpetuation of the incarnation “because it
embodies the same principle and lives by the same life.” De Lubac argues
something that might sound similar, and yet while he produces a “Triumphant”
ecclesiology with the Eucharist at its heart, MacKinnon’s work could force one
to ask whether de Lubac’s use and understanding of *kenōsis* is authentically
*kenōtic*. After presenting de Lubac’s Christological critique of neo-Scholasticism
in the mid-20th Century, this essay will then shift to explore MacKinnon’s own
Christology. MacKinnon’s understanding of Christology enables him to provide
an ecclesiological critique that is situated within the ongoing interrogation that is
provided by *kenōsis*. This shapes his connection between theological integrity,
tragedy and Trinitarian doctrine within ecclesiology. The thesis will then move to
discuss the problems MacKinnon perceives in the implications of the
Constantinian form. It will be argued that de Lubac’s sacramental ecclesiology
may be understood as both Constantinian in some ways and *kenōtic* in others. At
which point, this thesis will finally explore how MacKinnon applies *kenōsis* to
ecclesiology or more accurately how ecclesiology could be authentic to the
notion of *kenōsis*.

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8 MacKinnon, “Kenôsis and Establishment,” 21. MacKinnon makes this remark in regard to the
issues surrounding the Church of South India scheme.
10 Ibid.
The Sacramental Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac

Dissatisfaction with the neo-Scholastic, or neo-Thomist, construction of ecclesiology caused prominent 20th Century French theologian Henri Cardinal de Lubac S.J. (1896-1991) to contest its ontological authenticity through a historical study of the sacrament of the Eucharist.\(^{11}\) The Christocentrism of de Lubac revolves around how he envisages the three-fold nature of the Pauline “Body of Christ.”\(^ {12}\) However, this study will question whether a *kenōtic misplacement* causes de Lubac’s ecclesiology to shrink from political and ethical connotations that might be drawn from a sacramental and somatic construal of ecclesiology.

**Critique of Neo-Scholasticism**

It is from within a critique of the three-fold nature of somatic ecclesiology that de Lubac’s thesis is gradually formed. He believed that in drawing distinctions between the three uses of ‘Body of Christ’ their ontological indistinctiveness is lost. It is in his willingness to critique the widely accepted theology and received traditions of the church, that de Lubac’s understanding of sacramental ontology within the church is developed. In his *oeuvre*, de Lubac continually provides examples of how contemporary theology and terminology, which are often taken for granted, are constantly changing within the “ceaseless flux of history.”\(^ {13}\) His *oeuvre* suggests that “doctrine must be restored to its historical context if it is to be properly understood.”\(^ {14}\) His own ecclesiological understanding is drawn from an extensive study of the scriptures, Patristic writers and Thomas Aquinas whom he believes have been misrepresented in neo-Scholastic scholarship.

A fundamental shift occurred during the Medieval period, Pickstock writes, when Scholastic theologians began to distinguish between the ‘true’ or ‘real’ body of

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\(^ {12}\) The Body of Christ considered in its three primary uses – to describe the person of Christ, the Church and within the Eucharist.


\(^ {14}\) McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation*, 58.
Christ as the Eucharist and the ‘mystical’ body as the church. However, de Lubac believes that neo-Scholasticism, influenced in particular by the commentaries of Suarez and Cajetan on Aquinas’ work, had caused a non-theocentric shift to occur within Roman Catholic ecclesiology. There is evidence, according to de Lubac, that the patristic understanding of the Body of Christ was abandoned in this period. The somatic distinction of the three-fold body caused the ‘mystical body,’ which had previously been undifferentiated, to become an ecclesiastical label for the church and ‘the true body of Christ’ as a liturgical title for the sacrament.

In *Corpus Mysticum*, he traces the beginning of the problem particularly to the academic dispute between Amalarius of Metz and Florus of Lyon in the 9th Century. The dispute itself revolved around the works of Paschasia Radbertus and his understanding of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. In the Scholastic period, when intense study of the nature of the Eucharist and transubstantiation was born, de Lubac argues the Patristic meaning of ‘mystical’ was corrupted. This, he believes, is significant because an ontological shift had taken place and the life and being of the church were now considered separate from Christ in the Eucharist and, as an extension, Christ on the cross. If described as the “mystical body of Christ,” de Lubac writes this should mean that “the body of Christ (is) signified by means of the sacrament.” Against what he perceives as a “flat

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19 De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 23.
20 Ibid., 23.
21 Ibid., 111.
22 Ibid., 248-277.
23 Ibid., 47. De Lubac understands the classic meaning of ‘mystical,’ not as something that is secretive or unknown but pertains to anything that is ontologically linked with the sacrament of the altar.
24 Ibid., 250.
notion” of ‘mystical’ conceived in liberal Protestantism, de Lubac seeks to affirm the notions of sacramental ecclesiology that were being expounded in the mid-20th Century.

Sacramental Ontology

The way de Lubac sought to repair neo-Scholasticism’s ecclesiological shift was to mend the perceived ontological divide between nature and the supernatural. Picking up on Aristotelian influences within Scholasticism, Cajetan and Suarez believed that since the object of desire could not naturally be attained, human beings had no natural desire for God. However, in what he believed to be a more accurate Thomistic understanding, de Lubac argued that human beings are created as imago dei and as such have a natural desire for God within them. Aquinas had argued this was something paradoxical within human beings because this natural desire could only be fulfilled by grace. For this purpose de Lubac describes the created nature of human beings as the datum optimum, the ‘first gift.’ This datum optimum desires fulfilment in the donum perfectum, the second gift which only can only be imparted gratuitously from God. This donum perfectum, the ‘spirit of God’ or ‘Spirit of Christ,’ is central to de Lubac’s ecclesiological repair. De Lubac’s Christocentrism is guided by the way he understands Christ and the place of kenōsis.

The whole mystery of Christ’s person is reflected within the events of the Passion and the Resurrection. In dying on the cross, de Lubac writes, the

25 De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, 251.
26 De Lubac himself admits that The Splendour of the Church was influenced by the papal encyclical Mystici Corpus Christi. Written during the midst of the Second World War, the encyclical by Pope Pius XII calls for all Christians to be united in the ‘Mystical Body of Christ’ in spite of the national conflicts around them (Pius XII, Mystici Corpus Christi (1943), point 6). See de Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, 11.
27 McPartlan, Sacrament of Salvation, 50.
28 De Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural, 291.
29 McPartlan, Sacrament of Salvation, 50.
30 De Lubac, The Mystery of the Supernatural, 98.
31 Ibid., 101-102.
32 Ibid., 122 & 127.
“humanity he took bore whole and entire… renounces itself and dies.”

However, he writes “the mystery is deeper still.” The “culmination of kenōsis” is what inaugurates “reunion” and is an “efficacious sign” of that act. However, this understanding of Christ’s nature is bound up for him within the life of the institution of the church. Consequently, the church is an extension of the incarnation and as such continues as Christ’s presence on Earth.

Christ “lives within” and “upholds the Church,” communicating directly to its members “power, movement and energy.” He is the head of the Body who governs not from without but guides from within. The nature of who Christ is can never be separated from the nature of the church in de Lubac’s understanding. Arguing linguistically on the basis of biblical exegesis and liturgical tradition, he writes, ‘mystery’ and ‘sacrament’ should be considered interchangeable. His argument develops further so as to assert that linguistically ‘church’ and ‘Christ’ should also be understood “interchangeably.”

This for de Lubac is key and within his oeuvre Christ is primarily viewed within the context of the sacraments and the sacramental nature of the church.

It is only through a theocentric picture that all of humanity can be united in the Body of Christ. While the church exists in many places, there are not several churches, but the church is entire in each of its parts. The church’s existence transcends the spatio-temporal boundaries that would inhibit its unity and catholicity. As Peter Damian writes the church is “one in many” and “mysteriously total in each.” From this de Lubac firmly draws the conclusion that the catholic church is mysteriously bound up within the nature and identity of the Head, Jesus Christ. Without the donum perfectum human beings would be

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34 De Lubac, Catholicism, 368.
35 Ibid.
36 De Lubac, Catholicism, 368.
37 De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, 42.
38 De Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, 84.
39 Ibid.
40 De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, 45.
41 De Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, 84.
42 Ibid., 105.
43 Peter Damian, Super Dominus Vobiscum, v.; cited in De Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, 105.
like “scattered atoms, isolated from God and one another.” A non-theocentric ecclesiology, McPartlan believes, can only invite division and foster individualism through anthropocentrism. According to this view, the greatest abuse to the Christian ethic is submitting the donum perfectum to individualism. Through Christ, however, humanity advances towards the Father and in so doing finds reconciliation and peace through his Body. It was from this foundation that de Lubac builds his Christocentric ecclesiology and argues that the church is itself a sacrament, from which all other sacraments stem.

Eucharistic Ecclesiology

For de Lubac the “Church is the sacrament of Christ,” in the same way as Christ is the “sacrament of the Father,” and so is the continuation of the incarnate life. The nouvelle théologie, of which de Lubac was part, was highly critical of this ecclesiology and employed “a primitivist approach” to focus their critique through a return to scripture and the Fathers. De Lubac affirms Gregory of Nyssa’s statement that “He who beholds the Church really beholds Christ.” The Body of Christ is not just a body but the body of Christ, which de Lubac supports by quoting Origen- “let them not separate the Church from the Lord.” As mentioned earlier, de Lubac believes the Eucharist is an extension of the incarnation and in being so he writes that “Christ in his Eucharist is the heart of the Church.” The church is the ‘Bride of Christ’ and as such the bride cannot be a bride without a bridegroom. The identity of the bride is intertwined with her husband. Divinely ordered, with Christ as its centre and as the Head of the Body,

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44 McPartlan, Sacrament of Salvation, 53.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 McPartlan, Sacrament of Salvation, 53.
48 De Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, 147.
49 De Lubac, Catholicism, 76.
50 Adrian Nichols, Catholic Thought since the Enlightenment (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1998), 134-138.
52 De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, 26.
53 Origen, In Matt., xiv.17; cited in De Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, 112
54 De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, 42.
55 De Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, 113.
56 Ibid., 2.
the church is the recreation of humanity in Christ. The Head makes the unity of the Body and as such, de Lubac argues, the “mysterium fidei is also the mysterium Ecclesiae, par excellence.” The church’s existence is understood not as a stemming or perpetuated from itself but as a response to God. That is, the church exists not because it is a human construct but a response to the work of the Divine. Its continuing existence is as a continuing response to God and because God wills it to be.

Arguing that the church and the Eucharist “are mutually constituting,” de Lubac emphasises that all three forms of the Body of Christ are inextricably intertwined. The Eucharist, he argues, has always been considered in relation to the church. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 10:17-18, he writes that the “communion of the body of Christ” was by merit of the community’s union in the sacraments. The unity of the church is as “the mystery of one Body formed by those who shared in the one Bread.” As such, de Lubac draws his now widely known conclusion that “the church produces the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also makes the church.” De Lubac’s statement is to be understood ontologically not chronologically. Like the snake eating its own tail, the description is a never beginning and never ending circle of events - the two events being the Eucharist and the church. Without each, the other does not exist because neither can exist without Christ and both stem from the Divine Life itself. It is in this pouring out of himself in the Eucharist, that the whole of the Body is knit together by Christ as it partakes of him in the bread and wine. It is this kenotic outpouring that enables the church to be the extension of the incarnation and the representative of God on Earth.

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57 Ibid., 107.
58 Ibid., 22.
60 De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, 248.
61 Ibid. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:17-18.
62 De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, 248.
63 De Lubac, The Splendour of the Church, 92.
64 Ibid., 92-93.
65 De Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, 42.
The church is constituted and legitimated by Christ, who is present in the Eucharist and in the church, both of which are described as the Body of Christ by Paul in 1 Corinthians. However, it is as such that de Lubac proceeds to argue that the present organisation of and uses of power by the church are legitimated by Christ in the Eucharist. “The highly developed organisation that wins our admiration” is an expression of the “interior unity of a living entity” given through Christ. If a catholic Christian, de Lubac argues, is to be a member of the Body then they must be “subject to a power… and (their) legal dependence of this power is to the end that they may have part in the life of that body.” However, is any application of ecclesial authority, de Lubac believes legitimated by Christ in the Eucharist, faithful to the very elements he calls upon? Could it be argued that Christ only legitimates the church to wield certain kinds of power, modelled after his own example, which are expressed through the Eucharist itself?

**De Lubac’s fall into Triumphalism**

This section has explored how de Lubac’s explicitly Christocentric ecclesiology attempts to repair an alleged ontological deficiency within neo-Scholastic thought patterns. In doing this, de Lubac uses the Eucharist as his guiding narrative to construct a complex somatic ecclesiology. However, within this, de Lubac also writes that the divine origin of the institution legitimates “that strongly hierarchical and disciplined society” which is “the only real Church.” While affirming that the church as sacrament is but a signpost to the coming kingdom, much of de Lubac’s *oeuvre* sways towards a realised eschatology in which the form and organisation of the church is an end within itself.

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66 Cf. 1 Cor.10:16 and 12:27.
67 De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 76.
68 Ibid.
69 De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 76.
71 De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 76.
One of the so-called temptations that de Lubac believed had become more frequent in his era was the “critical temptation.”\textsuperscript{72} Developing “under a camouflage of good,” de Lubac believes that this temptation, to be critical of the body of Christ and its order, could cause division amongst the members and, in particular, separation from the Head.\textsuperscript{73} While he concedes that there does exist a healthy kind of self-criticism,\textsuperscript{74} such as his own, de Lubac also writes that “solidarity” in the face of criticism “may be more profitable in shaking us out of our illusions.”\textsuperscript{75} While the church faces many temptations in regard to abuse and misdirection from the unity it has in its Christic identity, he writes that “Love should, of course, be our only reaction to our Mother the Church.”\textsuperscript{76}

It is because of this that de Lubac is critical of an “overly-spiritual” Constantinian critique which would reduce the influence of the church within ‘secular’ society and compromise current forms of the institution.\textsuperscript{77} De Lubac’s own ecclesiology, it could be argued, features both kenōtic and Constantinian properties. While he concedes that a Constantinian (or put more correctly he writes a “Theodosian”)\textsuperscript{78} model of ecclesiology is “an incomplete notion,” he argues that it provides “a cure, albeit a partial cure.”\textsuperscript{79} This so-called “cure,” he believes, can curb “all denial and revolt” and all schismatic, individual tendencies.\textsuperscript{80} In this, de Lubac fails to offer a middle way between an overt acceptance of a Constantinian form of the church and a pietistic retreat like that of 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Catholic theologian Jacques Maritain.\textsuperscript{81} The danger, in this understanding, is that Christ empties himself into the church and so legitimises the authority and power of its members. De Lubac’s use of the Eucharist poses the question of whether the Eucharist in fact legitimates the application of ecclesial authority based in itself. What sort of influence is authentic to the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} De Lubac, \textit{The Splendour of the Church}, 212.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{75} De Lubac, \textit{The Splendour of the Church}, 218.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 208.
\item \textsuperscript{77} De Lubac, \textit{The Splendour of the Church}, 125.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{79} De Lubac, \textit{Catholicism}, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
church? Does the Eucharist itself witness to a particular ethic that the church is called to embody?

Given that de Lubac uses the Eucharistic narrative as an ontological basis for his ecclesiology, is his understanding of the *kenōsis* sufficient to critique authoritarian structures within the church that might be deemed unfaithful to the nature of Christ? Does de Lubac’s love of “Our Mother the Church”\(^\text{82}\) prevent him from providing a critical self-reflexivity in his Christocentric understanding of ecclesiology? In line with this question, MacKinnon’s work can begin to offer a repair of this type of *nouvelle theologie*. In the following sections, it will be argued on the basis of how he understands *kenōsis* and the Christic identity of the church, that MacKinnon’s *oeuvre* can provide an honest repair to the ecclesiology proposed by de Lubac.

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\(^{82}\) De Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, 208.
The Christology of Donald M. MacKinnon

The previous chapter discussed how de Lubac produces his maxim “the Eucharist makes the Church” out of the context of a critique of Neo-Scholasticism. It has also been shown that significant challenges can be placed against de Lubac’s understanding of Christ as presented by the Eucharistic narrative. Essentially, this is a matter of Christology. Christologically, the *kenōtic* narrative of Christ’s life and following the example of his integrity should be an ongoing challenge for the institutional life of the church. That is, if it is to avoid misconstrued ecclesiologies. In this chapter it will be argued that the different facets that shape MacKinnon’s Christology are what allow him to provide another understanding of how *kenōsis* is manifested in the life of the church. MacKinnon’s *oeuvre*, it will be argued, might enable a sufficient repair to de Lubac’s Christocentric ecclesiology by insisting on the notion of *kenōsis* in the church’s reflection of its ontological composition, behaviour and attitudes in ministry.

Influenced by the Scottish *kenōtic* tradition, MacKinnon’s own reflections build on a particular understanding of Philippians 2 exemplified by such writers as P.T. Forsyth (1848-1921) and H.R. Mackintosh (1870-1936). For MacKinnon this shapes the theological landscape of his *oeuvre* and continually builds signposts directing the traveller to the cross. It is from the *kenōtic* manifestation on the cross that MacKinnon presents his irreducible sense of theological integrity. This in turns leads to his account of tragedy within the discipline of theology. Subsequently, this section will discuss MacKinnon’s conviction on the incomprehensibility of God manifested in the incarnation and the challenge that proposes to ecclesiology. The various themes produced by a reflection on the divine *kenōsis* are simultaneously interweaving within his ecclesiological imagination and will be seen to combine and produce an ecclesial critique with the *kenōtic* movement at its heart and as its form.
The Cross and Kenōsis

Like the Philippians hymn the penultimate moment of the *kenōtic* movement for MacKinnon is in the death of Christ on the cross. 83 *Kenōsis* is, as Gore writes, the “supreme act of respect and love for His creatures by which the Son of God took into himself human nature in order to redeem it.” 84 Similarly, MacKinnon’s most basic premise is that “in the Rabbi of Nazareth we discern the nature of God as he is in himself.” 85 For him the notion of *kenōsis* calls the church to attentiveness not only to Paul’s wording in Philippians 2 but “also to the unflagging stress of the fourth Gospel on the Son’s dependence on the Father.” 86 The Son’s lordship is affirmed within the “context of supreme humility” and “infinite self-abnegation.” 87 In the patience and obedience of the Son who, in his ‘last hour,’ accepted the secret of that hour from his Father and did not flee from or renounce the suffering that was endured, the selfless nature of God is revealed. 88 The *kenōsis* of the incarnation is the very presence of God within creation and reveals “concretely, decisively and effectually” God’s “changeless love and all powerful humility.” 89 MacKinnon profoundly concludes that we cannot see “love apart from the *kenōsis*.” 90 This moral emphasis that MacKinnon places on his understanding *kenōsis* was a particular feature of the Scottish kenōticists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Forsyth and Mackintosh both made comprehensive contributions to the British patterns of *kenōtic* theory which developed during the 19th Century. Like de Lubac and MacKinnon, Forsyth was critical of the pietistic, individualism he saw developing within the church. 91 It is only by bearing witness to Christ’s *kenōtic*

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85 Ibid., 25.
86 Ibid., 17.
87 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
action, not in submitting to cultural norms, that the church can encourage unreserved transformation within society.\textsuperscript{92} For Forsyth this transformation comes through the crucial act of humanity’s salvation, the cross, and he insisted that authentic witness of scripture could not avoid this act of divine selflessness.\textsuperscript{93} In this, MacKinnon was drawn to Forsyth’s emphasis that the cross accentuates the morality of the incarnation.\textsuperscript{94}

Crucially, Mackintosh’s and Forsyth’s kenōticism is developed \textit{a posteriori} to Christian scripture.\textsuperscript{95} In fact, one of the problems they perceived with 19\textsuperscript{th} Century Continental kenōticists, such as Thomasius, Ebrard and Gess, was that they all tried to reconcile modern scientific propositions and 19\textsuperscript{th} Century pietism with the classical Christology of Chalcedon in an \textit{a priori} fashion.\textsuperscript{96} However, for Forsyth and Macintosh kenōtic theory should only be based upon what is revealed in the incarnation, as witnessed to in the biblical texts.\textsuperscript{97} Theologians, they believed, should not try and fit the incarnation into a preconceived set of philosophical truisms, which decide what God can and is allowed to be \textit{a priori} before approaching revelation.\textsuperscript{98} Arguing from this basis could only produce an anthropocentric rather than theocentric/Christocentric understanding of theology

\textsuperscript{92} Hugh R. Mackintosh, \textit{The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 472.
\textsuperscript{93} Forsyth, \textit{The Work of Christ}, viii.
\textsuperscript{95} A. Michael Ramsey, \textit{An Era in Anglican Theology: From Gore to Temple - The development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War 1889-1939} (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 39.
\textsuperscript{96} Law writes that the problem for 19\textsuperscript{th} kenōticists, was that for them the divine prerogatives God had to necessarily possess (lest he not be considered truly divine) were that God be “eternal, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent.” However, they also held that in comparison the human condition is “temporal and finite, and their powers and knowledge are limited. How, then, can Christ live a genuinely human life if he possesses divine attributes that appear fundamentally to contradict what it means to be a human being? The problem, then is how can the affirmation that Christ is \textit{truly} human be reconciled that he is simultaneously \textit{truly} divine?” (emphasis Law’s) What formed the basis of Continental kenōticism, amongst others, was the belief that Christ emptied himself of certain divine prerogatives in order to be fully human – David R. Law, “Kenotic Christology,” in \textit{The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology}, ed. David Ferguson (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 251.
\textsuperscript{97} Mackintosh, \textit{The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ}, 486.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
and the church. Instead, divine prerogatives should be discerned only when reflecting Christ’s outstretched arms on the cross. Forsyth believed that kenōtic theory had not only the potential to expand upon the incarnate revelation but also had the potential to provide theologians with the ability to speak of what was unseen in the incarnation. As such, he believed, kenōticism could speak of the self-sacrifice of the Son that occurred not only on the cross but also of the self-giving movement prior to the incarnation. He writes:

His sacrifice began before He came into the world, and His Cross was that of a lamb slain before the world’s foundation. There was a Calvary above which was mother of it all. Like the Philippians hymn, the Scottish kenōticists uncover the underlying trajectory of Christ’s incarnation. Its finality is decided upon before Bethlehem. All the subsequent development of Christ as a human being is still played out upon a ‘downward’ trajectory towards death. It because Jesus will not deny who he is, in full humility and obedience to the Father, that the trajectory of kenōsis leads to his betrayal and execution.

Like Forsyth and Mackintosh, MacKinnon believed that the church’s Christology had to be derived from its soteriology, centring on the events of the Passion, and

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99 Viladesau writes: “If the Christian is to imagine God, it must be as God is portrayed in the Scriptures – that is, as compassionate, not as ‘unfeeling.’ But this correct image does not preclude a (negative) theoretical understanding of the transcendence of God’s being (knowledge) in terms of nonreceptivity… the image and presence of God are found in the poverty, ugliness and suffering of the world.” – Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 196.


101 Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, 271.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

not vice versa.\textsuperscript{105} The soteriological nature of the church’s existence in Christ determines its identity. MacKinnon writes:

Soteriology is the very nerve centre of specifically Christian theology. The Cross reveals the final secret of the relation of man and God. Apart from the darkness of Golgotha, we know neither what we do, nor what we are. Its bitterness, its pain, its sheer questionableness are the condition without which we are neither bound to God nor to ourselves.\textsuperscript{106}

Expanding on this, MacKinnon believes that the church is “the place wherein the scandal of the Cross is forever actual.”\textsuperscript{107} It is only in recognising the paradox of humanity’s healing in the self-revelation of the self-concealed God, that the church has any “social function.”\textsuperscript{108}

**MacKinnon’s Theological Honesty**

In continually pointing his readers to face the reality of the man on the cross, MacKinnon stresses the necessity of uncompromising theological honesty.\textsuperscript{109} This entails not succumbing to theological projection or ideological idolatry. It is the cross itself and Christ’s constant integrity, such as displayed in the Temptation narrative,\textsuperscript{110} that necessitates theological integrity and urges the theologian to hold fidelity to the truth hidden in the mind of the Father as Christ does.\textsuperscript{111} For MacKinnon the Socratic principle, “to follow the argument withersoever it leads,” must remain for theological integrity to be wholly intact.\textsuperscript{112} This allowance of the Socratic principle is not vague permission for heterodoxy but endorses instead a ‘radical’ (from the Latin word \textit{radix} – ‘roots’)

\textsuperscript{106} MacKinnon, “Revelation and Social Justice,” 159.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} MacKinnon, “Revelation and Social Justice,” 159-160.
\textsuperscript{110} See MacKinnon, “Evangelical Imagination,” 196.
sense of orthodoxy. The authenticity of the church’s doctrine should only be verified by a ‘return to its roots’ in Jesus Christ.

The theologian is called to academic honesty because the incarnation, not human constructs of any kind, is what determines the identity of the church and the content of theology. Honesty is imperative for the theologian because it is Christ who reveals what it is to be truly divine and truly human. MacKinnon picks up on the ‘Adamic Christology’ found in Pauline literature, in which Christ is revealed as “the second Adam, the representative of mankind restored into the image of God.” This revelation is revealed not ahistorically but in history and conditioned by the cultures, peoples and choices of that time. However, it is in the particularities of that history that God reveals God’s own self. In this history, MacKinnon writes, Christ “does not obliterate the substance of our humanity, but restores to it its true nature.”

In an exegesis of Philippians 2:6-8, Dunn points to the aorist tense of the Greek to favour the ‘Adamic Christology’ found elsewhere in Paul’s epistles as a method of extracting the meaning of kenōsis in the hymn. While Dunn’s theories are disputed by many, in this Adamic kenōticism Christ’s actions in the Philippians hymn are juxtaposed with those of Adam from Genesis. Unlike Adam’s disobedience in Eden, Jesus does not try to be like God but humbles

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113 Izuzquiza, Rooted in Christ, x.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
120 For Dunn, all the actions referred to in Philippians 2:6-8 as such can be explained without assuming Jesus’ pre-existence or divinity in this hymn. – Dunn, “Christ, Adam, and Pre-existence”, 74.
121 However, Hawthorne writes that the present participle υπαρχων stands in temporal contrast aorist participle λαβων. This, Hawthorne argues, indicates that before this persona described by υπαρχων kenōtically took μορφην δουλου, they already existed εν µορφη θεου. – Gerald F. Hawthorne, “In the Form of God and Equal with God (Philippians 2:6),” in Where Christology Began, ed. Ralph P. Martin et al. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 97.

The morphē theou is an allusion, according to Dunn, to Adam, the eikōn theou, and reveals Christ to be the “Second Adam” or “New Adam.” All the same, MacKinnon is opposed to Dunn’s views of kenōticism in that he insists that kenōsis regards pre-existence of the Son as essential to a valid conception of Christology. However, MacKinnon’s use of Adamic Christology runs in a similar vein to Dunn’s, in which Christ not only reveals what it is to be truly human but that there is also a renewal of all humanity in him. This is significant for theological honesty because the theologian should not be tempered for ecclesiastical purposes that would misappropriate Christ’s person.

MacKinnon bewails the “triumphalist pretensions” of theologians which hinder rigorous theological inquiry. Ultimately, he queries, could a theologian who believes in Christ’s divinity discard the statement “Christ is divine” if that statement was found to be groundless? MacKinnon would not be satisfied with anything less than a complete dedication to the search for Truth that will discard all that hinders that pursuit. He also deplored clerical theologians who compromised their academic integrity for the sake of apologetically preserving the institutions of the church. Is de Lubac also guilty of this?

Against the type of ecclesiological framework which makes Christ at best a background figure and at worst a variable in the life and conduct of the institution, MacKinnon’s Christocentric ecclesiology is one that continually calls itself to account. Christology, wrote MacKinnon, is the focal point of

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119 Dunn, “Christ, Adam, and Pre-existence,” 74.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid., 77.
123 MacKinnon writes: “The Christ is no deliverer who takes men out of history, he is revealed as victorious in history. He does not obliterate the substance of our humanity, but restores to it its true nature, which it had lost through sin. He is the second Adam, the representative of mankind restored into the image of God.” – MacKinnon, “The Tomb was Empty,” 257.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid., 4.
127 Ibid., 3; MacKinnon, “Authority and Freedom in the Church,” 54-55.
Christian theology and as such all ecclesiology, and/or critique of it, should have Christ at its centre.\textsuperscript{129} The cross is ultimately what enables the Socratic principle to operate in theology. Christ is a man of uncompromising integrity as well as, ultimately, the sole standard and revelation by which all for theological inquiry is judged.\textsuperscript{130} He is the measure of theological honesty. It is in the humility and humanity of Jesus and, particularly for MacKinnon, the darkness of Golgotha that the nature of God is disclosed.

\textbf{MacKinnon and the Tragic}

The theological honesty MacKinnon promotes means that he cannot escape from the surd movement he identifies within the Passion narrative and Christianity as a whole.\textsuperscript{131} The uniqueness and sovereignty of Christ, for him, are displayed in Christ’s self-giving within a moment of tragedy.\textsuperscript{132} While MacKinnon may have been heavily influenced by kenōticists such as Mackintosh and Forsyth, his appreciation of tragedy within \textit{kenōsis} distinguishes his \textit{oeuvre} from theirs. While McDowell notes MacKinnon’s publicised “appreciation of Forsyth,” he also notes that MacKinnon’s “perspective on the tragic is more complex and subtle” than Forsyth’s.\textsuperscript{133} Wary of the “bloodless categories” of Chalcedon that Whitehead complained of, MacKinnon guards against doctrinal constructions in which Christ becomes an impassionate mechanism for salvation rather than the flesh and blood manifestation of God.\textsuperscript{134} Amongst the “ballet dance of bloodless

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{129} MacKinnon, “Ethics and Tragedy,” 195.
\item \textsuperscript{131} MacKinnon, “The Relation of the Doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity,” 103.
\item \textsuperscript{133} John C. McDowell, “Donald MacKinnon on Why an Honest Theology Cannot Stand Still,” unpublished paper.
\end{itemize}
categories" and sacrificial language, Christ can be lost amongst the metaphorical images of the narrative. This incarnation is not simply a sacrificial victim, but a human being who is betrayed, tortured and killed screaming in agony on the cross. The narrative of the Passion, for MacKinnon, is not only the story of the God who chose this path for the salvation of his people but the story of a man whose life is ripped from him. As a moral philosopher, as well as a theologian, MacKinnon places key emphasis on the core place of tragedy in theological reflection.

MacKinnon once wrote that “What is cushioned is likely to be invalid.” This is testament to a man who, Steiner writes, made Auschwitz the measure of his world. Hebblethwaite notes MacKinnon’s recurring conviction of the “ineradicability of the tragic from Christianity.” The “supremely authoritative moment in human history” is the moment when Christ cries from the cross “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” At that moment the Son of God in the depths of “perplexity, uncertainty, bewilderment, hopelessness and pain, even of God-forsakenness,” in full solidarity with the human condition, so reconciles humanity to himself. In this way, humanity is caught up within the kenōtic movement of the Son in the midst of the simultaneously reciprocal movements within the Trinity. For there on the cross, God is “decisively revealed as putting himself at the mercy of the world” and the location “where divine vulnerability reaches its climax.” The incarnation points back to the “perpetual mutuality” of the inner processions of the immanent Trinity and

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135 Ibid.
140 MacKinnon, “Philosophy and Christology,” 81; Cf. Mk 15:34 and Matt. 27:46.
through it the “traditional debates concerning the alleged divine passibility or impassibility are transformed.”

While the transcendence of God expresses the asymmetrical dependence of the world on him, that very same dependence is “expressive of his eternal relatedness.” In this way MacKinnon concludes that the very kenosis, which was willing to put at risk even divine unity, is the revelation of the Trinity. The grand, cosmic implications of kenotic doctrine, however, do not detract in any way for MacKinnon the tragedy wrought out in flesh and blood.

MacKinnon frequently meditates on the “surd element” within the story of Christ, particularly in the choices and events that immediately lead to his death on the cross. The tragedy of Jesus’ life, explored with particular reference to the Passion narrative, chiefly lies in three places for MacKinnon. The first he argues is in the abdication of “any responsibility that (Jesus’) influence might have conferred on him to arrest the movement of his people towards the final catastrophe of A.D. 70.” The second is presented within the figure of Judas Iscariot of whom “it would have been better if that one had never been born.” The tragedy here, “not in the language of devotion, but in that of literal fact,” is that because Jesus would not deviate from his mission or compromise his integrity, Judas is lost. The third, MacKinnon argues consistently, is in the darkness of Gethsemane and the horror of the cross. However, MacKinnon writes, the tragedy of the cross is not only the tragedy of Christ but also the tragedy of humanity as a whole.

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145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
149 See Matt. 26:24.
152 Ibid.
We cannot hope to know ourselves, unless we remember that revelation tells us that we crucified Him, who is of one substance with the Father.\(^{153}\)

By virtue of those involved, part of what also makes the cross tragic for MacKinnon is that it lays the grounds for a growing anti-Semitism within the history of the Christian community.\(^{154}\) For MacKinnon the surd drama of the cross is inescapable for Christian identity. For it is in Christ’s death and descent into the tomb “wherein all our hopes are set.”\(^{155}\) He writes that “In the Cross there is always hope, assurance that the abysses of which we are always dimly conscious have been plumbed.”\(^{156}\) The story of kenōsis is nothing less than a tragedy on a divine scale. Christ is the tragic hero who remains true to his identity even to death and will not compromise his integrity even in the negation of his being. The significance of this notion, caused MacKinnon to resist all notions that the uncompromising tension, created within the kenōtic movement, could be mitigated or ignored within the life of the Christian community.

There is a tendency within MacKinnon’s works to return to the uncomfortable notion of kenōsis, or at least a Christological focus, at the end of an argument or the end of an article. This witnesses to a theologian whose academic integrity continued to point towards Christ as the culmination of ontology.\(^{157}\) This is not done in a fearful, fundamentalist resignation of pursuit for ‘the truth’ but the ability to intelligently find the locus of truth in the tragedy of the cross. Quite on the contrary, within MacKinnon’s oeuvre he writes against fundamentalism, in whatever form it arises. Fundamentalism, he believes, seeks to secure itself in a

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153 Ibid., 254-255.
154 MacKinnon writes: “If for the Christian it is in the events of the first Good Friday that the sense of the final judgement of the world is to be glimpsed as well as the foundations of its hope, (they) must also remember that part of the price paid for the accomplishment of these things in human history was the unmentionable horror of an anti-semitism whose beginnings can perhaps be traced in the New Testament itself, and whose last manifestation in our own time was Christian acquiescence in the ‘final solution.’” – MacKinnon, “Atonement and Tragedy,” 103.
155 MacKinnon, “The Tomb was Empty,” 260.
set belief system rather than being caught up within the “holy insecurity”\textsuperscript{158} of the cross and resurrection, whether that fundamentalism be biblical, ecclesial or liturgical.\textsuperscript{159} Highly critical of this all too common tendency within religion, he stresses that “there is no escape from contingency.”\textsuperscript{160}

Tragedy is an essential element of the Christian understanding of Christ’s life and should provide poignant insight into the Passion narrative, and all that leads to it. For it is in the same tragic movement, the events of Good Friday, that the judgement of the world and the foundation of hope are glimpsed.\textsuperscript{161} If the world is simply as we perceive it or even if it is based on a Hegelian system, of necessary historical events that unfold as the movement of Geist, “the idea of irreparable and uncontrollable loss ceases to make sense.”\textsuperscript{162} Tragedy would be an invalid concept and in this way reading the cross as tragic enables MacKinnon to offer theological resistance to certain kinds of teleologies. The attempt to explain suffering ceases to treat suffering as suffering and “so is a quest for untruthfulness.”\textsuperscript{163} MacKinnon was wary of any metaphysical or theological construction which believed it had ‘answered’ the unanswerable.\textsuperscript{164} Anything else is an escape into a speculative theology, idealism or as Williams writes, “another variety of fantasy and avoidance of the truth” instead of the kind of rigorous realism that MacKinnon insists upon.\textsuperscript{165} The value of tragedy is then revealed as an essential part of his insistence on theological honesty, and also promotes the idea that kenōsis leads to the smashing of non-Christic ideological idols of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{159} MacKinnon, “Kenōsis and Establishment,” 19.
\textsuperscript{160} MacKinnon, “Philosophy and Christology,” 81.
\textsuperscript{162} Williams, \textit{On Christian Theology}, 154-155.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Cf. Rowan Williams’ obituary of Donald M. MacKinnon in \textit{The Tablet} (12\textsuperscript{th} of March, 1994).
\textsuperscript{165} Williams, \textit{On Christian Theology}, 157.
\textsuperscript{166} MacKinnon, “Nature of Christian Hope,” 295.
Kenōsis and Divine Incomprehensibility

Underlying his understanding of tragedy is the ontological character of the Trinity as revealed by the selfless outpouring expressed on the cross. However, the way MacKinnon unpacks this demands a profound emphasis on the incomprehensibility of God. Core to Christian witness, he writes, is the central element of divine revelation as kenōsis. It is in the poverty of the one of who became poor for the healing of the world that the richness of the God beyond all comprehension is revealed. However, within this kenōtic construal is also an apophatic element within MacKinnon’s theology that insists on the “inexpressibility of God.” He writes that agnosticism was judged less perilously by the Hebrew prophets and in the scriptures than anthropomorphism. Writing on MacKinnon’s work, Williams argues that Christianity cannot say what God is in himself, rather “all we have is the narrative of God with us.” That narrative can only speak of God within the “limits of particularity, of bodiliness and mortality.

MacKinnon notes the tendency of Christian mystics to distinguish the “darkness into which Moses entered” and the darkness of a “guilt-induced despair.” The fact that God is beyond the limits of language is not to create a sense of despair that there is nothing to say of God. Instead, MacKinnon points to the “silence of Christ in his Passion.” MacKinnon counsels silence when there are no immediately perceivable answers to theological complexity and human tragedy, and enlists Wittgenstein’s comment “What we cannot speak about that we must assign to silence.” It is only in a “most rigorous discipline of silence” and the dispossession of all images, that can create only a golden calf or God in our own

168 See 2 Cor. 8:9.
171 Williams, On Christian Theology, 159.
172 Williams, On Christian Theology, 158.
175 Cited in MacKinnon, “Kenōsis and Establishment,” 35.
image, that the depths of reality can be thought of.\textsuperscript{176} MacKinnon insisted that he was a theological realist. The “language of religion is in the end” must be, MacKinnon argued, language that declares what is real and what is unreal.\textsuperscript{177}

In an honest pursuit of truth, the church should point to the \textit{kenōsis} of Christ which as de Lubac writes is what “makes real,” although his emphasis was on the sacraments themselves.\textsuperscript{178} Here the eschatological \textit{telos} is returned to its right place. The culmination point of all ontology is to be found in the incarnation.\textsuperscript{179} The \textit{kenōtic} descent expressed most poignantly in the suffering of the poor carpenter is for MacKinnon paradigmatically declaratory of who God is in himself.\textsuperscript{180} The ontology of the Trinity cannot be broken away from \textit{kenōsis} as if in it Christ renounces the very nature of God in becoming human. Rather, like Wright’s construction of Philippians 2:5,\textsuperscript{181} in the incarnate act of self-emptying Christ reveals that self-renunciation is the very nature of God.\textsuperscript{182}

For MacKinnon, theology cannot neglect questions of ontology.\textsuperscript{183} If the church is to understand its own ontology, then as the Body of Christ it must explore the depths of Trinitarian ontology revealed in the incarnation with theological honesty. There in the ultimate expression of the humility of the Creator before its creatures is bound the sole reason for being and the sole paradigm for the practices of the church.\textsuperscript{184} It is from Christ’s descent up that the church’s understanding of the Trinitarian God and itself are to be constructed.\textsuperscript{185} MacKinnon writes:

“That God is ultimate humility, a selflessness that in the life of the Incarnate shows itself in a total indifference to the survival of ‘institutional Christianity’ if only the Father’s truth may be affirmed

\textsuperscript{176} MacKinnon, “Inexpressibility of God,” 19.
\textsuperscript{178} De Lubac, \textit{Catholicism}, 82.
\textsuperscript{179} MacKinnon, “Revelation and Social Justice,” 160
\textsuperscript{181} Wright, \textit{The Climax of the Covenant}, 86-87.
\textsuperscript{183} Williams, \textit{On Christian Theology}, 154.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
redemptively for those ‘lost sheep’ to whom he came (cf. again the refusal to descend from the Cross) – these are strange, paradoxical truths: yet they may be arguably more easily perceived by a Church that must seek to redefine its *moyen d’être*, and in consequence made receptive of its *raison d’être* as the embodiment of Christ’s sheerly precarious existence, in the new freedom of the post-Constantinian age.”

This ecclesiology is prepared to critique even what is most beloved within the structures and traditions of the church because it is faithful to the “author and finisher of our faith.”

The presented themes of theological honesty, tragedy and Trinitarian revelation are all intertwined within MacKinnon’s theology. For him these all stem from attentiveness to the mystery of *kenōsis* in history which determines the identity of the church. Awareness of the gifted nature of the church is what enables him to present a critique that pursues, with integrity and without presupposed outcomes, a Christic identity of the church. However, in order to discover what MacKinnon incorporates within his critique, the problems he perceived within the church in the mid-20th Century should first be discussed.

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186 Ibid. While MacKinnon himself writes of a ‘Post-Constantinian age,’ he also perceived its manifestations in the very era he spoke of as ‘Post-Constantinian. – Cf. MacKinnon, “Kenōsis and Establishment,” 15.

The Problem Within

One of the principle theological errors that MacKinnon perceived in the 20th Century ecclesiology was a lingering ecclesiastical attitude he labelled as ‘Constantinianism’ or ‘Triumphalism.’ However, MacKinnon’s use of the ‘Constantinian’ type is highly rhetorical and Connor believes lacks “historical nuance” in exchange for thematic deployment in his criticism of ecclesiastical government. Instead, it is perhaps better to understand a definition of ‘Constantinianism’ as a broad ecclesiological type. This type promotes not only ontological and eschatological distinction of the ‘Body of Christ’ from the ‘Head of the Body,’ but also certain forms of power within the church. Similarly, Kerr believes that the Constantinian type is “symptomatic of an heretical eschatology” which is founded upon a “misconception of the relation of Christ to history.” The danger of Constantinianism is, as MacKinnon writes:

“Jesus becomes virtually a variable to whom it is possible to assign as values whatever likeness a favoured tradition of public and private devotional practice may crave.”

Once again, a similar notion is also found in Kerr’s argument that Constantinianism proceeds as if what happened in the incarnation had “not profoundly altered history.” In this section, an example of the Constantinian type provided by Eusebius of Caesarea will be discussed as well as a repair of that form by Augustine of Hippo. This paper will then progress to MacKinnon’s own understanding of the Constantinian type. How he perceived specific examples of it occurring in the 20th Century will also be given. Through this, it will be argued that his Christocentric repair is significantly different and substantially better than other critics of Constantinianism.

189 MacKinnon, “Theology as a Discipline of a Modern University,” 1.
190 Timothy G. Connor, “From Galilee to Jerusalem to Galilee: The Kenotic Trajectory of the Church in Donald MacKinnon’s Theology” (PhD diss., Wycliffe College and Toronto School of Theology, 2003), 120n13.
191 Kerr, Christ, History, and Apocalyptic, 11.
192 Ibid., 7.
194 Kerr, Christ, History, and Apocalyptic, 7.
Writing in the Fourth Century, after the so-called triumph and conversion of the Emperor Constantine, Eusebius provided an eschatological rewrite of church history in the light of Constantine’s ascension. This rewrite, however, can be exposed as more idealised theology than realist history. The culmination of church history, in the Eusebian rewrite, lay in the rise of Constantine and the church’s new place as the official religious arbiter of the Empire. Evans argues that for Eusebius Constantine, as the first Christian emperor, became the chief “revelation of the hand of God in history.” Understood as the “instrument of a higher purpose,” Evans notes that Eusebius points to the downfall of Constantine’s enemies as “as proof of God’s favour towards the Emperor.” Eusebius also provided an apologetics of Constantine’s piety and argued that the imperial court was earthly representative of the heavenly court.

A contemporary of Eusebius’ and tutor to the Imperial family, Lactantius, also provided an apologetic for Imperial supremacy. The victory at Milvian Bridge, Lactantius believes, was authored by God so that evil would be rooted out of the earth by the victor. His victory was evidence that Constantine had become God’s champion to stamp out evil in the world using the God-given might of the empire. Lactantius also petitions God, in his writings, to bless and protect the

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197 Ibid.
201 Baker, Constantine the Great and the Christian Revolution, 298.
emperors and declared that the enemies of the imperial family are now by default the enemies of God. Just as the “Lord of Heaven” would guide people to their eternal happiness, so also Lactantius believed the “Lord of Earth” would guide the citizens of the Roman Empire to their secular prosperity.

Bullock writes that within the Eusebian form of Constantinianism, the church instead of challenging society to *metanoia* accepts the norm of society’s spirituality as its own. Eusebius’ grandiose historical, however, involves a compromising of the church’s theological integrity and faced harsh opposition even in the Fourth Century. Despite this, the acceptance to become Constantine’s state church lead to wider unforeseen processes of theological re-identification by certain members of the church. Drake writes that, in the new setting, “bishops became players in the game of Empire” and the church began to remodel itself after the structures of the Empire, e.g. the formation of dioceses. As a consequence, MacKinnon writes:

“Since Constantine’s conversion, churchmen have kept company with men of power, and not only learnt to talk *de haut en bas*, but have come to see the fundamental Christian mystery as such a communication.”

The process of re-identification would interpret history, and eschatology, in the light of the potential of an ‘established church.’

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203 Ibid.
209 MacKinnon, “Theology as a Discipline of a Modern University,” 7-8.
210 MacCulloch writes “According to Luke’s Gospel, the Mother of God celebrated her pregnancy with a song praising God for putting down the mighty from their seat and send the rich empty away. Now Christianity was becoming the religion of the powerful and it was entering what might be seen as an increasingly cosy alliance with high society.” – Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: the First Three Thousand Years* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 195.
Conversely, some like Augustine of Hippo doubted the theological validity of the kind of Eusebian Constantinianism being promoted.\textsuperscript{211} Essentially, there is a divergence between Eusebius and Augustine on their understanding of history.\textsuperscript{212} Eusebius’ history finds its earthly \textit{telos} in the conversion of Constantine and the end of persecution (at least during Constantine’s reign), while Augustine insists that it lies in Christ.\textsuperscript{213} Entering into what Brown calls the “pamphlet warfare” common in the Early Church,\textsuperscript{214} Augustine’s \textit{De Civitae Dei} (‘The City of God’) is, like Eusebius’ work, a universal history. \textit{De Civitae Dei} gives an account of the entire history of creation according to Augustine. Contrary to the Eusebian history, Augustine’s narrative asserts a radically different politics through the conception of the “two cities” – the Heavenly City and the City of the World.\textsuperscript{215} The Heavenly City differs from the world, in that the foundation of the City of God is Christ.\textsuperscript{216} According to Augustine, peace is not granted by the authority, or sword, of emperors or the security of Empire. Rather peace is found through life in the Heavenly City, the \textit{Sabbatium Christianum}.\textsuperscript{217} Temporally, the church exists in the world which causes a mixed city, with citizens of both cities living side-by-side.\textsuperscript{218}

Augustine writes that while the “Heavenly City… is on pilgrimage in this world, she calls out from all nations and so collects a society of aliens, speaking all languages.”\textsuperscript{219} At its foundations then, the church is not established in this world

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\textsuperscript{211} Wilken notes Ambrose of Milan as a bishop of the fourth century who, at various times, was in sharp opposition to the imperial court. – Robert L. Wilken, “A Constantinian Bishop: St. Ambrose of Milan,” in God, Truth and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas, ed. L. Gregory Jones et al. (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2005), 74.
\textsuperscript{217} Evans, “Introduction,” lii.
\textsuperscript{219} Augustine of Hippo, \textit{The City of God}, xix:17, 878.
\end{flushright}
but is a transitory entity that is passing from one age into another. The church should continually point towards the Kingdom of God in which its culmination, \textit{telos}, is in Christ. For the meantime, self-awareness in the church should contain recognition that the two cities are built on different foundations but are together “to the end of their history.” Kerr writes that an accurate reading of church history will always return the teleological focus of the church to “the distinctive historicity of Jesus of Nazareth.” It can be argued that Augustine’s model offers a strong repair of the Eusebian historical narrative. Through it he returns the locus of the church to Christ, its true foundation and cornerstone, instead of establishment in the Empire. Like Augustine, MacKinnon’s understanding of church history is Christocentric, albeit flavoured by his own disestablishmentarianism. He insists that:

“The history of the Church is the history of a conflict, of an eschatological conflict, for in the Church is present the power of God unto salvation. The theological reading of the history of the Church is inevitably a \textit{theologia crucis}.”

Here, once again, his connection between the nature of ecclesiology and the characteristics of Scottish kenōticism can be recognised.

For MacKinnon, the British reaction to the Spanish Civil War and the controversy over the Church of South India serve as modern examples of what he understands as the Constantinian attitude. Later in life, MacKinnon also believed that this attitude had resurfaced in the arguments against the ordination of women. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, MacKinnon throughout his life continued to be critical of the unreserved and uncritical support that the

\begin{footnotes}
\item 220 Augustine of Hippo, \textit{The City of God}, xviii:54, 842.
\item 221 Kerr, \textit{Christ, History and Apocalyptic}, 125.
\item 222 MacKinnon, “Revelation and Social Justice,” 149.
\item 224 See MacKinnon, “Kenōsis and Establishment,” 21.
\end{footnotes}
British Church gave in support of General Franco’s rebellion. He was extremely critical of the notion that Franco’s troops fought to preserve the place of the church in Spain, which allegedly became a chief reason for British support. This attitude towards securing power, MacKinnon writes, is what he means by a ‘Constantinian’ model of ecclesiology. It cannot be theologically justified because it does not follow the way of Christ. It seeks to preserve the comfort of Christians rather than taking up its cross and following Christ albeit through the tragedy of suffering. He criticises the “ghastly paradox of ‘a war to make the world’ (or this or that country) ‘safe for Christianity.’” One of the other examples he gives of the Constantinian attitude is the debate regarding the establishment of the Church of South India. Through a “venomous and obsessive campaign,” he criticises, the episcopate and theologians of England sought to impose their control over the Anglicans in that place. Structures within the church, in this Constantinian mindset, adopt a form of “royal absolutism.” He consistently argues that the external form of the church cannot be preserved through means which would compromise or contradict its principal nature i.e. its life in Christ.

MacKinnon writes that one of the worst features of the broad Constantinian type is that “the Christian God (is) endowed imaginatively with the attributes of a human Caesar.” While the church in this model can still be viewed as a ‘sacramental’ model, the image the church embodies is the image of “a transcendent Caesar.” It is not Christocentric, for the “vulnerable Nazarene”

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232 Ibid., 31.
233 Ibid., 28.
234 MacKinnon, “Christology and Protest,” 266.
235 Ibid.
whose way is the *via crucis*, becomes an embarrassment or, even worse, becomes the one who establishes comfort and corruption by his self-sacrifice. This is not dissimilar to the arguments of Torrance who queries whether an “Apollonian Mindset” exists within certain parts of the church. In this mindset, Torrance argues, the humanity of Christ is, effectively, denied and driven of the church. Christ then becomes strictly a spiritual figure, perfectly God but not human.

Returning to de Lubac, here the dire consequences of his reluctance to criticise the Constantinian form can be explained. At stake is whether or not the church embodies its own Christic identity or not. De Lubac’s reluctance to critique the form and powers of church hierarchy entails that Christologically invalid forms of power, leading to abuse, will be embodied from an image of Caesar, replacing the poor carpenter on the cross, at the heart of the church.

It is important to recognise that MacKinnon’s own critique of the broad Constantinian form in the 20th Century, is quite different like that of Hauerwas or Yoder. MacKinnon maintains, like Augustine, Yoder and Hauerwas, that the understanding of the church within the Constantinian type is intellectually intolerable and theologically dishonest. Albeit that MacKinnon’s understanding of the Constantinian type is heavily idealised, as are most uses of it (such as Yoder and Hauerwas), Christ remains more than simply an ethical exemplar for imitation within his ecclesiological critique. More accurately, Christ is the ontological basis of the Body and as such invalidates any type of non-Christocentric conceptions of the church. Similarly, in his letter to the Philippians, Paul challenges any mindset within the church that is not “in Christ.” The mindset held will ultimately bear fruit in a particular ethic. Paul

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236 Ibid.
238 Ibid.
243 Philippians 2:1-5.
encourages the church to conform to the *kenōtic* pattern of its Master, and so employs the hymn found in Philippians 2:5-11.\(^{244}\)

Similar to MacKinnon nineteen centuries later, Paul provides a Christological critique and encourages the Philippians to live out the life they have “ἐν Χριστῷ” – “in Christ.”\(^{245}\) This phrase, “ἐν Χριστῷ” is common within Pauline literature and is one of the key elements within Pauline theology.\(^{246}\) The existence of the community, the Body of Christ, is dependent on God. Everything it is, has, was and will be is χάρις – ‘grace.’ For Paul, life ἐν Χριστῷ is χάρις.\(^{247}\) χάρις proceeds from God, is concentrated in Christ and shapes the baptised.\(^{248}\) The ‘new life’ or ‘new being’ in Christ comes into being through χάρις and, Schnelle writes, “The prototype for this χάρις is the grace of Christ, for through his poverty he confers riches on the faith community (cf. 2 Cor 8:9).”\(^{249}\) *Kenōsis* is not so much manifested within the church as the church is bound in the *kenōtic* nature of Christ. MacKinnon argues that if the church is willing to embrace the insecurity and instability of Christ’s *kenōtic* action and emulate that as it participates in the *kenōtic* movement, then a truly Christic identity will come to the fore.\(^{250}\)

This Christological formation of identity is similar within the works of both de Lubac and MacKinnon. Like de Lubac, MacKinnon writes “It is in the divine society that is His Mystical Body that the work of Christ is accomplished.”\(^{251}\) However, how MacKinnon comes to that conclusion differs from de Lubac. Both de Lubac and MacKinnon allow their respective ecclesiological critiques to form on the basis of their Christology. Unlike MacKinnon, however, de Lubac’s works can be exposed as having both Constantinian and *kenōtic* tendencies. In saying

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\(^{249}\) Ibid., 483.


\(^{251}\) MacKinnon, “*Vexilla Regis*: Some Reflections for Passiontide, 1939,” 257.
that, the Constantinian form and kenōticism are not mutually exclusive, albeit that Constantinianism understands *kenōsis* in such a way that might be considered theologically unjustifiable. Nevertheless, the ecclesiology de Lubac forms seems to inevitably result in the pietism he fears or a Constantinianism in which the beliefs of the church are compromised for the sake of a secure place in society.

In their divergent understandings of Christ’s place in the Eucharist and how that provides the grounding of the church, as well as how that nature is involved in the *kenōtic* action, forms another key difference between de Lubac and MacKinnon. MacKinnon’s understanding of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist also accentuates his difference from the *nouvelle theologie*. For MacKinnon, the mishandling of eschatology that Constantinianism cultivates is exposed in the liturgy and the dependence of the church on Christ is displayed in contrast. He writes:

> “Anglican theology has wisely tried to correlate the Church’s performance of the Eucharistic action with the heavenly intercession of the Lord. But often there has been a failure to conceive that intercession eschatologically in relation to judgment at once past, present and to come. The incorporation of the Church’s prayer into the prayer of Christ, perhaps the ultimate meaning of the *praesenlia realis*, has been seen indeed as an incorporation into his prayer of consecration. But that that prayer is an eschatological mystery has been too easily forgotten.”

The very existence of the church is bound up within the movement of the Son. In this way, Christ is found not to be kenōtically emptied into the institution of the church, as is the danger in de Lubac’s sacramental ecclesiology. In what he considers are more appropriate *kenōtic* placement within the Eucharist, MacKinnon maintains, that independent from Christ, who is the same in the

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Eucharist as on the cross “We know not what we are made of; (for) we receive our sense from him and in him.” The Eucharistic narrative is significant in the church’s process of self-identification. It is to this Christic identity, gracefully given to the church, which both Paul and MacKinnon call the church authentically to return.

In Philippians 2:2, Paul encourages the church to “be of the same mind.” This mindset is formed by Christ who “took the form of a slave” and is “exalted” as “Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” It is through life in his Body, that members also share in Christ’s “relation to the Father.” The humility modelled can arguably be conceived as an authentic response to an awareness of the vitality that the church has in Christ. Love and service are not carried out because “love is a form of your self-fulfilment, in which you do not think out of your own self-centredness.” Rather, as Torrance writes, loving service is practiced out of an awareness of the individual’s place, necessarily amongst a community, within the Eucharist. He writes:

“Out of a centre in the incarnate Word who summons you to leave all and follow Him, and in which you do not pray or worship God in your own name or in your own significance but only in the name and significance of Jesus Christ… in which you do not feed upon yourself but feed only upon the Body and Blood of the Lord.”

Like Torrance and MacKinnon, Izuzquiza argues that only through self-despoilment and descent, observed in the Eucharist, is it possible to form a unified and compassionate body. He writes that “The church is a social body which, by God’s grace, incarnates this self-emptying… downward mobility” so

256 Phil. 2:7.
257 Phil. 2:9.
258 Phil. 2:11.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
263 Izuzquiza, Rooted in Christ, 173.
that it embodies the new creation in Christ structured around love.\textsuperscript{264} However, in order to carry this love out in self-awareness of its life as gift, the church should be continually self-critical in order to maintain its proper identifiability in following the narrative of Christ’s life and example in a kenōtically ordered integrity. In a similar manner to how Augustine’s oeuvre provides a repair of Eusebius and Lactantius’ construction of history by placing a teleological focus on Christ, so also MacKinnon uses the reparative language of kenōsis to critique abuses within the church he perceived in the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century. The connectivity between this kenōsis and ecclesiology that MacKinnon makes a case for in his oeuvre will be explored in the next section.

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid.
MacKinnon’s Ecclesiological use of *Kenōsis*

For MacKinnon, ecclesial ontology is shaped by the divine *kenōtic* movement. It is his appreciation of the gifted nature of the church, like Paul, that enables the reparative quality of MacKinnon’s oeuvre. In presenting his critique of the Constantinian form he pursues, without presupposed outcomes, a Christic identity which the church is called to embody. *Kenōsis*, as such, becomes a critical category for MacKinnon in his analysis of the institutional ethics of the Body of Christ. MacKinnon believes that the church has now ‘come of age’ and as an act of theological maturity radically should renew its own understanding of its presence within society.265 A post-Constantinian ecclesiology based on the unsettling notion of *kenōsis*, MacKinnon hopes, will also be able to encourage a radically self-abandoning ethical mood.266

It is primarily with the idea of ‘establishment’ that MacKinnon argues against theologically. Despite not being a member of an ‘established’ church, such as the Church of England, MacKinnon targets ‘establishment’ as a belief that the life and being of the church stems not from God and his Kingdom but as a wing of government. In this construct, the ecclesiastical body exists to provide religious rituals and moral guidance.267 Conversely, MacKinnon argues that complex ethical issues such as the church’s presence in society, war, abuse, and violence must be tested against the life of Christ not the *raison d’état* or convenience of the State.268 The church in this understanding, has embraced an anthropocentric autonomy, in which God fills the content of its doctrine but is not the ground upon which it stands (without which it would not, and cannot, exist).269 He believes that this is a flight to a false sense of security and “a withdrawal from accepting the peril and promise of the incarnation.”270 Despite that his nuances of

266 Ibid., 32.
269 Ibid., 28.
270 Ibid., 33.
*kenōsis* are mingled with his own sense of disestablishmentarianism, MacKinnon’s growing understanding of the link between ecclesiology and *kenōsis* began as early as the 1940s, such as in his book *The Church of God*.

In this volume, the *kenōtic* ecclesiology MacKinnon theorises is not an anti-episcopal or anti-hierarchical rant.\(^\text{271}\) He writes that clergy and bishops are not mystical persons to whom “some strange kind of undefined mysterious obedience” is owed.\(^\text{272}\) That would denigrate their office and create a skewed form of authority. Rather, the clergy and bishops are “responsible to bear witness to Jesus Christ” and to “hold the Church to that witness.”\(^\text{273}\) *Kenōtic* ecclesiology should foster a *kenōtic disposition* within all those who are called to serve, “just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.”\(^\text{274}\) If the nature of the Son is *kenōtic* then the ‘witness’ bishops are bound to embody should itself be *kenōtic*. However, not only the ordained but the lives of whole *plebs sancta Dei* should imitate Christ’s example as a servant for it is the whole Church which is the organ of the Gospel.\(^\text{275}\) The acts of Christ are affirmed by MacKinnon as “no mere human act, but an act of God wrought out in human flesh and blood.”\(^\text{276}\) MacKinnon writes that the Christian life is “set within the context of this movement to life through death. For in that principle is set forth the truth of Gospel, the law of human renewal, which in the last resort is Christ himself.”\(^\text{277}\) As such, the entirety of the Christian life and ministry should be modelled after Christ’s journey to Jerusalem. Furthermore, because Christ’s road is one that leads from life to death to life again, so also should the Christian life embody his self-giving movement.\(^\text{278}\)

MacKinnon writes that *kenōtic* ecclesiology should not be construed in such a way that it becomes a “cult of powerlessness or failure” like the “deeply


\(^{272}\) Ibid.

\(^{273}\) Ibid.

\(^{274}\) Matt. 20:28.

\(^{275}\) MacKinnon, *The Church of God*, 54

\(^{276}\) MacKinnon, *The Church of God*, 28

\(^{277}\) MacKinnon, *The Church of God*, 75

\(^{278}\) MacKinnon, “Christology and Protest,” 274.
unhealthy cult of despair as the only praeambula fidei, which was fashionable in the forties.”

Rather, the notion of kenōsis should promote a “defeat that is not a defeat, because it is eloquent of hope as well as of failure.” The church is empowered with the promise of what it is coming to be, eschatologically, and looks to kenōsis as the fidelity to which it is bound in the incarnation.

MacKinnon writes:

“In so far as that Church in any of its existing forms diminishes its fidelity to that sovereign inspiration, it invites mistrust, repudiation, contempt even if it seeks to justify that infidelity by reference to historical necessity or even pastoral opportunity… A Church acquiescent in the status quo, justifying its acquiescence by appeal to pastoral duty, forgets that its pastoral ministry must be fashioned after the model of the ‘good shepherd’”

This ‘model of the good shepherd,’ for MacKinnon, is the attitude towards ecclesial power and ministry that lies at the heart of his kenōtic ecclesiology. It is the attitude that leaves the multitude and is prepared to lay down its life in search of the one lost sheep. The opposite and opposing view, MacKinnon writes, is that of Caiaphas in which “is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.” Through juxtaposing the attitudes of the kenōtic Christ and the ‘establishing’ Caiaphas, MacKinnon criticises all forms of ecclesiastical authority that seek to secure their position through coercion, abuse and victimisation.

While MacKinnon admits that within the wider church the Anglican Communion is one of the least authoritarian, he still noted the attitude of Caiaphas, ‘that the end justifies the means,’ within many of its leaders. For MacKinnon, the attitude of Caiaphas and Constantinianism are considered one and the same. In their spiritual direction of the church, MacKinnon believes, many of the bishops

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280 Ibid.
281 Ibid.
282 Ibid.
and senior clergy allow policies which allow individuals to be crushed for the sake of the wider institution. He notes that this attitude of Caiaphas was unfortunately more clearly and visibly expressed in the Roman Catholic Church, using Teilhard de Chardin and Charles E. Raven as examples. However, is the unity or doctrine of the church more precious than following the example of Christ no matter what the cost? The enemy of this type of kenōtic ecclesiology MacKinnon theorises is fundamentalism in any form; be it biblical, ecclesial, liturgical or any other. He also questions the type of ecclesiology in which an “English bishop… graduates to the Episcopal bench from the headmastership of an English public school” and all decisions are made in the ‘corridors of power.’ This aloof, managerial system, MacKinnon believes, is far from the lifestyle of the Rabbi of Nazareth.

The best service MacKinnon believes he can provide for his own Anglican tradition is to be critical of it and to call those within the tradition to be self-critical. This will involve a perpetual honesty within themselves as well. Similarly, Lash insists that the dynamic of Christian love itself, in order to be responsible, demands “continual submission to a process of verification, of the correlative purification of illusion.” As the life of the church is given by Christ, the church should continually strive to imitate His utmost integrity. Like Christ in the Temptation narratives, the church should not be seduced to wield a power that is not in accord with its nature. Instead, MacKinnon calls for the church to return to the “exposed life” of Christ made visible in his humility and self-sacrifice on the cross.

The kind of obedience Christians, MacKinnon argues, should conform to is that which is seen in the kenōtic narrative of Philippians 2:5-11. Paul uses kenōsis in

286 Ibid.
287 Ibid., 52-53.
288 MacKinnon, “Kenōsis and Establishment,” 19
289 Ibid., 17
290 Ibid., 30
291 Ibid., 25
293 Ibid., 34.
Philippians as part of an ethical exhortation and encourages members of the church to conform to the pattern of complete obedience of Christ to his Father in the incarnation.\textsuperscript{294} Paul juxtaposes the selfish ambition and vanity of some within the Philippian church, with the selflessness of Christ displayed as the very nature of God.\textsuperscript{295} MacKinnon also uses \textit{kenōsis} as reparative language as the focal point of his ecclesiological critique. He writes that he believes the church must accept “the law of \textit{kenōsis vis-à-vis} the world in which it is set.”\textsuperscript{296} MacKinnon believes that obedience in the church is usually counselled as obeying members of the institutional hierarchy or complying to tradition without criticism.\textsuperscript{297} In “the name of humility” an attitude of submission within the hierarchy is misconstrued, simultaneously, to be submission to God.\textsuperscript{298} However, the false sense of humility, that MacKinnon criticises, is undertaken irrespective of the historical and social factors out of which these developments or the theological and ideological implications which they manifest.\textsuperscript{299} However, the kind of \textit{kenōtīc} obedience encouraged by both Paul and MacKinnon, is not blind submission but a dependence on God for everything it is. This is obedience modelled on Christ rather than the sort of obedience that might be paid to a divine Caesar.

It is in their desire to establish a false sense of security that divorces itself from continual attentiveness to Christ’s person and nature that all such members of the church make themselves, as John of the Cross describes, “enemies of the Cross of Christ.”\textsuperscript{300} For John, this is due to the unwillingness of apparently faithful members of the church to be with Christ in the tragedy of Golgotha and participate in the divine mystery manifested there.\textsuperscript{301} Dispossession should become a key attitude within members of the Body if the church is to let go of all that prevents it from being faithful to the example in the incarnation. This disposessing attitude will not reject ecclesial practice and forms out of hand but

\textsuperscript{294}Rf. Philippians 2:1-11.
\textsuperscript{296} MacKinnon, “Kenosis and Establishment”, 36.
\textsuperscript{297} MacKinnon, “Authority and Freedom in the Church,” 55.
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{299} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{301} Ibid.
promote theologically rigorous self-criticism within the structures of the church. Participating in the life they have from Christ and being faithful to his example, Christians should empty themselves and let go of everything, “stripping themselves of all things, and denying themselves all things, for God’s sake.”

This is not simply to give up material possessions but to let go of spiritual and ideological attachment as well. This is opposed to Constantinian model which seeks to establish itself in this world and by doing so direct society’s spiritual life. Instead, kenōtic ecclesiology understands that the church is caught up within the movement of the Trinity and follows the trajectory of Christ’s kenōsis.

The dispossessive quality of tragedy for MacKinnon becomes “a source of resistance” in the face of societal indifference and moral insensibility. He writes that there can be no renewal within the church “except by the smashing of its idealism” The church must not fall into a “fearful self-protection” which would only fuel a fantasy that it can arbitrate truth. MacKinnon argues that the church cannot and should not escape from the necessity of ‘tragedy’ within its understanding of Christ and its own self-understanding. The church cannot ignore the tragic in its own life because its life is bound up within the tragedy of his. However, this tragic narrative can only attempt to begin to skim the surface of the deep reality and complexity of Christ’s kenōsis. All the same, kenōsis should be contemplated and recognised as that which provides the church’s gratuitous vitality, because its life lies within the movement of gift and receptivity in the Trinity. If the church is truly the Body of Christ, as Paul, de Lubac and MacKinnon all describe it as, then it is to participate in this nature. This is what forms a kenōtic ecclesiology.

302 Ibid.
303 Ibid.
304 Williams, On Christian Theology, 165.
306 Williams, On Christian Theology, 155.
308 According to Devanny, MacKinnon believes that the greatest damaging legacy of Plato upon Christianity was his flight from the tragic – Christopher Devanny, “Truth, Tragedy and Compassion: some reflections on the theology of Donald MacKinnon” in New Blackfriars, Vol. 78, Issue 911 (1997), 33.
Conclusion:
The Holy Insecurity of the Exposed Life

This thesis has attempted to indicate the Christological basis of an authentically Christian ecclesiology. It asked whether theological uses of *kenōsis* can be inauthentically *kenōtic*. To this point, the ecclesiological *œuvre* of both de Lubac and MacKinnon were presented as two differing accounts of a Christocentric understanding of the nature of the Christian community. Both do this through particular, and quite different, kinds of appeal to *kenōsis*. As such, in the first chapter, the manner in which de Lubac constructs his sacramental ecclesiology through a critique of Neo-Scholasticism was discussed. This critique is founded upon de Lubac’s own understanding of *kenōsis* and the location of Christ in the Eucharist. As such, the second chapter presented MacKinnon’s understanding of the *kenōtic* nature of Christ through the intertwining themes of theological honesty, tragedy and the incomprehensibility of the Trinity. It is on this basis that he forms his own ecclesiological critique.

MacKinnon’s iconoclastic ontology of the Trinitarian life disclosed in *kenōsis* challenges forms of ecclesiology that are insufficiently shaped by an appropriate Christology and consider the church as autonomous from the life of Christ. It is in the midst of the perpetual mutuality of the divine *processio*, he argues, that the Body of Christ is constituted.\(^{309}\) MacKinnon’s critique is formed, as was shown in the third chapter, as a repair to a broad ecclesiological type labelled as ‘Constantinianism.’ This type has presented itself in many forms throughout church history. The Eusebian model presented is only one of them, as much as Augustine’s repair is only one form of repair. MacKinnon’s own uses of the language of *kenōsis*, to encourage his own repair Constantinianism, were presented in the previous chapter. A dialectical repair of the Constantinian type, involves for MacKinnon not only a return to the evangelical presentation of *kenōsis* by the catholic church but also a movement forward in an informed recognition of the ontological giftedness of the church’s identity.

Considerations of how the Christic identity of the church might shape its life and practice in the contemporary struggles it faces are complex. This thesis has made only a brief start at coming to terms with these in and through reflection on MacKinnon’s theological work. Nonetheless, there may be fruitful avenues for further explorations into the *nouvelle theologie* and the ecclesiological accounts of the likes of John Milbank. Additionally, only the briefest of hints have been provided on how MacKinnon’s understanding of the Eucharist, within his Anglican tradition, may further reveal reparative reasoning around de Lubac’s own sacramental ontology and the place of *kenōsis* therein.

The ecclesiology examined in this thesis encourages Christians to reflect on the identity that they believe they have as a member of Christ’s Body. In the work of both de Lubac and MacKinnon there is a persistent call to theological reflection and how the life of the church must be shaped by Christ, and him alone. However, through their differing Christological emphases they diverge. A *theologia crucis* guides MacKinnon’s theological mood in a way that it does not with de Lubac. Within the depths of his Christology, MacKinnon’s readers are compelled to embrace the kind of “holy insecurity” that Lash speaks of as a guiding critique of all ecclesiological attitudes that do not witness to the *kenōtic* nature of its founder.310 MacKinnon could never escape the darkness of Gethsemane and Golgotha and how the church is caught up within the movement that leads to and beyond the crucifixion. However, it is not just the moment of the Passion and resurrection but the entirety of Christ’s life and ministry that he believes promote a particular ethic within the church.

This thesis proposes that as the Body of Christ, the church should continually dispossess itself of all understandings of its life and mission which believe that it is somehow separate from the work of God in Christ. In so dispossessing, the church, with its nature and identity *ἐν Χριστῷ* through *χαρίς*, participates in the *kenōtic* movement of the Trinity and is faithful to the “image of the invisible God”311 in the incarnation, “who for our sake became poor so that we might

311 Col. 1:15; Cf. Heb. 1:3.
become rich.” Like Adolfs, MacKinnon believes that in spite of the errors of the past, the church in the post-Constantinian age is capable of recognising its Christic identity and moving forward in maturity with regards to ecclesial structure. He goes as far as to say that the church is presented currently with an opportunity for change “which may not come again for centuries.” MacKinnon’s call to “the exposed life” is not to return to some fantastical, golden age of the church before everything apparently went wrong. Rather it is a call for the church to move forward, self-critically. The Christian body should undertake this movement in full awareness of its shortcomings and with rigorous, theological honesty in witness to what it is and is called to be in and through the self-dispossessing life of the divine gift, kenōtically realised in Christ. While MacKinnon believes that the church is about to learn more about its nature than it has been able to in the past, the lessons to be learned through radical self-criticism are not new, but principally Christocentric. If the church is willing to embrace the liberating, albeit dangerous, notion of kenōsis it will be able to let go of all that stops it from flourishing and understands its very existence as dependent solely on God.

In conclusion, an appreciation of kenōtic ecclesiology may allow the theological imagination to be freed from “a kind of hesitation that comes from our archaism and our unyielding confinement within the categories and images of the past” because it is dependent on receiving all that is in the present moment from God. In that witnessing to the kenōtic nature of God, the church must take upon itself the via dolorosa and follow the road which is made perfect in its Christic telos. It is, as MacKinnon writes, “necessarily to live an exposed life; it is to be stripped of the kind of security that tradition, whether ecclesiological or institutional, easily bestows.” The church is encouraged to live in a state of

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312 2 Cor. 8:9.
314 Ibid., 29.
315 Ibid., 40.
316 Ibid., 29.
317 Ibid., 34.
318 Ibid., 40.
holy insecurity caught up in the loving movement of the self-giving Son. Accordingly, MacKinnon argues:

“Jesus, in the reality of his self-giving, in the mystery of God’s selfgiving in him, in his movement from Galilee to Jerusalem to Galilee, in his life, death, and resurrection, remains the only valid raison d’être of his Church… But we crave security: we flee from the reality of crucifixion-resurrection, impatient of the indirection of Christ’s resurrection, wishing that he had come down from the Cross that so we might have believed by a faith finally corrupted by its object’s betrayal of his mission… (but) it is to Jesus, author and finisher of our faith, that we must look and look again.”

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