

The Integrative Role of Sacrifice in the Theology of Henri de Lubac

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Abstract: At key junctures in his theologies of spiritual exegesis, the Eucharist and the church, Henri de Lubac appeals to the notion of Christ's sacrifice as providing the pivotal content for the topic at hand. Despite this, de Lubac scholarship has devoted scant attention to the role of sacrifice in his thought. Using the fourfold sense of Scripture and the scholastic categories of *res* and *sacramentum* to establish a formal structure for de Lubac's thought, I demonstrate that sacrifice provides an integrative motif for these disparate areas of de Lubac's thought, better accounting for the 'organic unity' of his theology.

Introduction

Decades after his death, Henri de Lubac remains an important fixture of theological scholarship. Despite this continued attention, a serious lacuna exists regarding the role of sacrifice in his thought.¹ This dearth of attention is all the more significant because Christ's sacrifice plays a central role in multiple areas of his thought, particularly his theology of the Eucharist, and his theologies of spiritual exegesis and of history. Because of the crucial place sacrifice holds in each of these discourses, it has the potential to serve as an integrative feature of his

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1 So far as I have discovered, sacrifice receives considered attention (apart from being acknowledged or mentioned), only in Eugene R. Schlesinger, 'The Threefold Body in Eschatological Perspective: With and Beyond Henri de Lubac on the Church', *Ecclesiology* 10 (2014), pp. 201–4; Daniel Hauser, 'The Eucharist and the Historicity of the Faith', *Saint Anselm Journal* 8 (2013), pp. 1–33; and Noel O'Sullivan, *Christ and Creation: Christology as the Key to Interpreting the Theology of Creation in the Works of Henri de Lubac* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 378–91.

thought, providing a greater systematic coherence to an oeuvre that Hans Urs von Balthasar characterized as having an ‘organic unity’.²

In what follows, I demonstrate how sacrifice contributes to the organic unity of de Lubac’s theology. By providing an account of its role in his theologies of spiritual exegesis, the Eucharist and the church, and correlating this account with his theology of history, I demonstrate that, for de Lubac, the sacrifice of Christ is the pivot upon which history turns, and the goal toward which it strives. The one sacrifice of Christ is the content of the meaning of history, and of history’s eschatological consummation.

By recognizing the role of sacrifice in de Lubac’s thought, we are able to articulate a coherent soteriology according to which salvation occurs as humanity’s passage, through Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension, into God. This soteriology is fully integrated with de Lubac’s theologies of spiritual exegesis, the sacraments and the church. In all these areas of thought, de Lubac is not focused upon methodological questions, nor metaphysical quandaries and ontological principles, but upon the mystery of redemption through Christ. It is well documented that de Lubac’s theology was Christocentric. Recognizing the centrality of sacrifice to his thought clarifies that de Lubac’s christological vision turns upon the saving act accomplished by Christ at Calvary. His theological vision’s unity is a soteriological unity.

Sacrifice as passage into God

In a programmatic statement, de Lubac contends that the

Cross of Christ [is] at the center of everything . . . Time and space, heaven and earth, angels and men, the Old Testament and the New, the physical universe and the moral universe, nature and grace: everything is encompassed, bound together, formed, ‘structured,’ and unified by this Cross, even as everything is dominated by it.³

With these words, de Lubac signals that, to his mind, all things find their meaning in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

If all things find their meaning in the cross, we must first understand the cross in order to know what meaning it gives them. De Lubac’s clearest articulation of the cross’s meaning is found in *Catholicism*, a work in which he consistently refers

2 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview*, trans. Joseph Fessio and Michael M. Waldstein (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p. 10.

3 Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. Mark Sebanc, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), p. 111. Cf. the very similar sentiments in Henri de Lubac, *Aspects of Buddhism*, trans. George Lamb (London: Sheed & Ward, 1953), pp. 58–69, where the cross is at once Christ himself, the tree of life, the tree of good and evil, a cosmic hinge, encompassing the earth’s four corners, and the ladder by which we reach God.

to the cross as a sacrifice, and where he explains that salvation occurs ‘as the recovery of lost unity – the recovery of supernatural unity of man with God, but equally the unity of men among themselves’.⁴ Christ effects this restored unity by first becoming incarnate, and thereby ‘incorporat[ing] himself in our humanity, and incorporat[ing] it in himself’,⁵ and then bringing that humanity to the cross. ‘Whole and entire he will bear it . . . to Calvary, whole and entire he will raise it from the dead, whole and entire he will save it’.⁶ Christ goes to the cross so that he can emerge into the newness of resurrected life, and all of this so that we, too, can make this passage.

In this way, Christ effects humanity’s death to itself so that it may be converted and so ‘live transfigured in God’.⁷ For de Lubac, salvation consists in a radical conversion to God. This conversion takes place within each individual, but also, and more crucially, on the cross. Salvation is paschal for de Lubac because it is the result of and occurs by participation in Christ’s Pasch: his passing over to the Father through the cross, resurrection and ascension. This paschal perspective informs de Lubac’s reflection upon the Easter Vigil, where he notes a shift in soteriological perspective from God indwelling believers through sanctifying grace to their being assembled into one body so that, in union with him, they may make their own offering to God.⁸

This account of de Lubac’s soteriology affords us the opportunity to clarify what we mean by ‘sacrifice’. Following what seems to have been de Lubac’s own usage, I treat sacrifice as a shorthand for Christ’s saving work in the paschal mystery of his death, resurrection, ascension and bestowal of the Holy Spirit. By this saving work, he bears us with him as he makes his passover to the Father. Through these events, humanity is borne into the trinitarian life of God. Hence, sacrifice does not refer exclusively to Jesus’s death, but to his total act. Of course, Christ’s redeeming work involves multiple dimensions and is not exhausted by the trope of ‘sacrifice’. While a systematic theology of the cross would need to sift through the numerous biblical motifs and historical models of atonement, of which sacrifice is but one, our purpose here is more narrow: to gain an insight into de Lubac’s theology. De Lubac’s frequent references to the sacrifice of the cross display little interest in differentiating it from other staurological images, but rather

4 Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard and Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), p. 35.

5 de Lubac, *Catholicism*, pp. 37–8.

6 de Lubac, *Catholicism*, p. 39. See the important discussion of the cross as the key to understanding de Lubac’s theology of creation in O’Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, pp. 378–91.

7 de Lubac, *Catholicism*, p. 368.

8 Henri de Lubac, ‘Vigile de Pâques (1940)’, in *Corpus mysticum: L’eucharistie et l’église au Moyen Âge: Étude historique*, ed. Éric de Moulins-Beaufort, Œuvres Complètes 15 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2009), pp. 376–7. De Lubac sees this offering effectively symbolized by the eucharistic sacrifice. I defer consideration of the Eucharist until later. This idea of passing to God by the sacrifice of Christ seems also to be the logic behind the cross-as-ladder imagery noted in note 3 above.

take it for granted that the cross is a sacrificial act, and seem content to leave it at that. In this regard, de Lubac's notion of sacrifice is deeply Augustinian, for Augustine likewise understood sacrifice to refer to our passage to God in Christ, a passage that occurred on the cross, and in our own interior renewal, both of which were considered the one sacrifice of Christ.⁹ I shall bear out these contentions over the course of the argument. For now, though, I note that, recognizing that this tends to be how de Lubac speaks of sacrifice, and recognizing its patristic pedigree, I shall likewise understand sacrifice in this comprehensively soteriological sense.

Spiritual exegesis and the theology of history

As I shall demonstrate, sacrifice provides the key content for de Lubac's theology of spiritual exegesis. It is the key content because Christ's work on the cross accounts for the transition from the Old Covenant to the New, and because, for de Lubac, spiritual exegesis was isomorphic with conversion,¹⁰ which, as we have seen, is an aspect of what he means by 'sacrifice'. For this to be clear, we must first consider the nature of spiritual exegesis, which is far more than simply a method for biblical interpretation. It provides a heuristic structure for a theology of history, which can serve as a scaffolding for understanding his thought as a whole.¹¹ This theology of history is centered upon the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, understood less as the collections of books bearing those designations and more as economies for God's covenants.¹² Hence, the theology of spiritual exegesis also turns upon the peoples generated and placed into relationship with God through those economies, and so also impinges upon ecclesiology.¹³ Detailed treatments of de Lubac's understanding of spiritual exegesis are widely

9 See, for example, Augustine, *City of God*, 10.6; *De Trinitate* 4.10.13–15.20. For an account of Augustine's theology of sacrifice, see Eugene R. Schlesinger, 'The Sacrificial Ecclesiology of *City of God* 10', *Augustinian Studies* 47 (2016), pp. 137–55.

10 Henri de Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, trans. Luke O'Neill (New York: Crossroad, 2012), p. 21.

11 Susan Wood demonstrates this in *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church in the Theology of Henri de Lubac* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), pp. 25–51. Her thesis is further extended by Joseph Flipper, who contends that this theology of history, and especially the relationship between eschatology and history, is the driving force of de Lubac's thought. Joseph S. Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton: History and Eternity in Henri de Lubac* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

12 See especially de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 227 and 241–51; Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. E.M. Macierowski, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 50–8; vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 98–116. See further the discussion in Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 47–9; Schlesinger, 'The Threefold Body in Eschatological Perspective', p. 189.

13 On this see de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 54.

available,¹⁴ so my treatment of the four senses will be somewhat cursory, aimed at providing enough of a framework to demonstrate the centrality of sacrifice to de Lubac's understanding of spiritual exegesis, and by extension to his theology of history and his ecclesiology.

The four senses of Scripture

Understandings of the multiple senses of Scripture were never uniform in either the patristic or the medieval eras.¹⁵ Some authors spoke of three senses, others of four.¹⁶ Some related the senses to each other differently than others. De Lubac's distillation of the 'four senses' of Scripture (literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical) thus represents something of an abstraction that sought to demonstrate the doctrinally oriented motivations that underlay patristic exegesis.¹⁷ This in itself is significant. The four volumes of *Medieval Exegesis* are not an apologia for returning to pre-critical approaches to biblical interpretation.¹⁸ De Lubac understood and welcomed the gains of historical critical perspectives, and would never suggest reneging on them.¹⁹ It would, frankly, be impossible to make such a return because there never was any *one* form of patristic exegesis. Instead, a common doctrinal structure is discernible in the senses of Scripture. It is this doctrine that interests de Lubac.²⁰

In its doctrinal form, the fourfold sense of Scripture can really be reduced to two members: the literal sense and the spiritual or allegorical sense, which

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- 14 Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 25–51; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 91–150; Bryan C. Hollon, *Everything Is Sacred: Spiritual Exegesis in the Political Theology of Henri de Lubac* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), pp. 165–79; and Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 150–7.
 - 15 See discussion in Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, p. 28; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, p. 94.
 - 16 See, for example, de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 90–115.
 - 17 See de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 258–9; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 33–9; and Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de L'écriture*, vol. 2/2 (Paris: Aubier, 1964), pp. 40 and 138–9.
 - 18 So Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, p. 51; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 98–9; and Kevin L. Hughes, 'The "Fourfold Sense": De Lubac, Blondel and Contemporary Theology', *Heythrop Journal* 42 (2001), p. 457. Contra Hollon, *Everything Is Sacred*. Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology*, p. 105, recognizes that de Lubac does not call for a return to spiritual exegesis as such. Lewis Ayres, 'The Soul and the Reading of Scripture: A Note on Henri De Lubac', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61 (2008), pp. 173–90, believes that de Lubac regrets the loss of a spirituality, rather than a methodology.
 - 19 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. xix–xxi; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, p. 98; *Scripture in Tradition*, pp. 64–5. See discussion in Marcellino D'Ambrosio, 'Henri de Lubac and the Critique of Scientific Exegesis', *Communio* 19 (1992), pp. 367–72.
 - 20 See note 17 above. In these passages de Lubac consistently differentiates between the methodology of the four senses of Scripture and the underlying doctrine.

correspond to the Old and New Testaments, respectively.²¹ The 'letter' refers not to the biblical text, but to the historical events recorded in the Old Testament, while the 'spirit' refers to the letter's fulfillment by Christ in the New Testament.²² The spiritual sense of Scripture, then, is the new meaning bestowed upon the Old Testament by Christ. This is significant because Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament is not in the mode of predictions coming to pass, but is rather a transformative act on Christ's part.²³

With the coming of Christ, all of the signs of the Old Testament are made new, reinterpreted in Christ, who constitutes a new meaning for them. The spiritual and literal senses are not in a competitive or adversarial relationship.²⁴ No violence is done to the letter by the spirit's transformation of it. Instead, the letter is upheld in all its historical particularity even as a new meaning is given to it.²⁵ Flipper characterizes this christological transformation of the Old Testament as a 'retroactive causality'.²⁶ There is a genuine novelty that results from Christ's action, but this novelty is itself intrinsic to the letter. It remains what it was, but is made something new all the same. In other words, had Christ not come, the allegorical sense would never have been discovered in the Old Testament's figures, it would have been an unnatural imposition with no foundation in the letter.²⁷ However, Christ has indeed come, and by his decisive act of exegesis, the Old Testament has always, in fact, been about him.²⁸

With this transformation in Christ, we have the pith of the doctrine de Lubac excavates from his patristic and medieval interlocutors: the Old Testament (history) testifies to and finds its meaning in Christ (spirit), who is its Lord and directs it in accordance with the newness of his salvation. The other two senses add

21 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, p. 225; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 25–34.

22 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 44 and 86. This is borne out by the fact that non-historical texts, such as Proverbs, and particularly those that employ figurative language 'have no literal sense' (p. 41). See also Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 25 and 31; and Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 107–20.

23 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 228–41 and 260; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 98–107; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 109–11 and 140–4; *Exégèse médiévale*, 2/2, pp. 109–11. See further, Flipper's excellent discussion in *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 144–7, and especially his language of 'the retroactive causality of Christ' (p. 147).

24 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 226–8 and 247; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 26 and 97; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 143–5.

25 See especially de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 41–69 and 201; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 110–11, 140–6, 211–6 and 248; as well as *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 226 and 247. See further Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 35–37; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 100–15.

26 Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 144–9. See also Donath Hercsik, *Jesus Christus als Mitte der Theologie von Henri de Lubac* (Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 2001), p. 92.

27 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 105 and 162.

28 de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, p. 94; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 1237–9; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 107 and 123; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 97 and 106.

depth, but not content, to this doctrinal structure.²⁹ In addition to the binary of letter and spirit, the senses of tropology and anagogy unfold as dimensions of the spiritual sense. The literal sense is a historical sense, and the allegorical sense is its christological fulfillment. Tropology is the moral sense of Scripture, and anagogy is its eschatological sense. The movement from history to allegory involves a genuine novelty, a radical conversion, a leap across a caesura. ‘The passage from allegory to tropology [and also to anagogy] involves no such jump. After the historical sense, all those that can still be counted belong to one and the same spiritual sense.’³⁰ Tropology and anagogy are not new senses of Scripture, but rather the clarification and flowering of allegory. They are themselves interior to the allegorical sense.³¹

Significantly, this marks out both the moral progress of one’s Christian life and the eschatological consummation of all things as interior to Christ. Growth in holiness does not take one beyond Christ, but is rather a journey within Christ.³² The alternative would be an implicit Pelagianism, where one’s own virtues (themselves ingredient to the conversion, which constitutes our passage into God, and hence, salvation) derive from a source other than Christ and his grace. The future hope is not a hope beyond Christ’s fulfillment of history, but is the consummation of a fulfillment that has already occurred within history.³³ The alternative would be a Joachimite surpassing of Christ by some further development: whether of an age of the Spirit (such as Joachim imagined) or by the realization of Absolute *Geist*, or a worker’s paradise, or a thousand-year *Reich* (the aspirations of his spiritual/intellectual progeny).³⁴ In either case, the arrangement

29 de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, p. 111; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1 p. 225; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 34. Below I give an account of why this is the case.

30 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 127.

31 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 127–9, 132–4, 179, 183, 186–7 and 201–4; *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, pp. 109–13. See further, Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 197–9 and 231–2.

32 This lies behind de Lubac’s preference for the fourfold sense of Scripture (history, allegory, tropology, anagogy) to another, also common threefold sense (history, tropology, allegory). See de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 114 and 147; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 27. On this, see also the discussion in Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 93–6.

33 de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, pp. 111–12; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 186–7 and 201–2. See also Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 160–9; Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 44–6.

34 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 327–419; *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, pp. 109–11. For his fullest statement on Joachim see Henri de Lubac, *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore: de Joachim à nos jours*, ed. Michael Sutton (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2014), pp. 27–8. See also the discussion in Balthasar, *Theology of de Lubac*, pp. 123–7; Hercsik, *Theologie von de Lubac*, pp. 121–7, esp. pp. 126–7; Cyril O’Regan, *Theology and the Spaces of Apocalyptic* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), pp. 12–29; and Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 163–9 and 189–203.

would be a displacing of Christ as the definitive and constitutive source of salvation and content of revelation.

Sacrifice in the spiritual senses

De Lubac's theology of spiritual exegesis provides us with a coherent theology of history, centered upon Christ. In this theology of history, Christ constitutes the meaning of history, and this meaning, established by Christ, is unsurpassable within history's bounds. Moreover, this christological meaning is unsurpassable eschatologically as well, for the anagogical sense is not any new meaning, additional to the christological fulfillment that is allegory, but is interior to the allegorical sense. Eschatology is the full flowering of the allegorical sense, which is to say the full flowering of the Christ event. All of this is fairly well established in de Lubac scholarship.

What remains largely unexplored, though, is the fact that it is Christ's sacrifice in particular that constitutes the meaning of history, a perspective that runs throughout the four volumes of *Medieval Exegesis*.³⁵ Of particular significance is his identification of the cross with the great act of exegesis by which Christ bestows his meaning upon the Old Testament:

We can, however, speak in less general terms. Jesus is a scriptural exegete par excellence in the act by which he fulfills his mission, at that solemn hour for which he has come: in his sacrificial action, at the hour of his death on the cross . . . In pronouncing the words 'it is finished' on that gibbet which is a symbolic representation of the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Jesus imparts to all of Scripture its fulfillment . . . His Cross is the sole and universal key. By this sacrament of the Cross, he unites the two Testaments into a single body of doctrine, intermingling the ancient precepts with the grace of the Gospel . . . Just as 'universal recapitulation' has been accomplished by the sacrifice of Jesus, so, similarly, we find that the ancient Scriptures have been definitively opened and condensed.³⁶

Indeed, the 'substance' of the New Testament, that is to say, the allegorical sense, which is also to say the meaning of history, is the 'mystery of Christ' and his redemption, including his life, death, resurrection and ascension.³⁷ Because de

35 See, for example, de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. xix, 111 and 239–40; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 53, 92, 101, 134, 179 and 183; *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 111 and 143–4; *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, pp. 50–52, 64, 122 and 272.

36 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 239–40. This passage, as it appears in de Lubac, *Scripture in Tradition*, is also noted by Hauser, 'Eucharist and Historicity', p. 8. See also de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, vol. 111; *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, p. 272. Hercsik, *Theologie von de Lubac*, p. 243, identifies Christ himself as the *Schlüssel* to the two testaments. He goes on, though, pp. 245–7, to clarify that it is particularly Christ's act in the paschal mystery that holds this position.

37 de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, pp. 111–13, 119–20 and 122–3. My translation.

Lubac's preoccupation in his theology of spiritual exegesis was the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, this establishes Christ's sacrifice as the key content for this area of his thought.

Recalling that the Old and New Testaments refer not so much to canonical texts which bear those names as to the two economies that they represent lends further support for the idea that it is by Christ's sacrifice that the transition from the Old to the New has been accomplished. De Lubac explains that the events of Christ's life recorded in the Gospels up to the events of his passion are 'anterior' to the New Testament and belong to the Old:

For if the New Testament can be dated from the moment of the incarnation, this is only inasmuch as that moment is seen as preparing for the redemptive Act . . . The new Covenant was established by him at the Last Supper; the veil which still concealed its true nature was not completely removed until his death, followed by his resurrection and ascension.³⁸

Even in those writings which belong to the New Testament canon, the events which precede Christ's sacrifice are part of the Old Testament economy.³⁹

It is particularly by 'the unique Sacrifice, and the unique Priest, and the unique Victim . . . the perfect holocaust . . . the holocaust that God will never disdain, the one who remains always before his face', that 'the great passage has been accomplished', which facilitates both the transition from the Old Testament to the New, and the passage of humanity in the life of the Holy Trinity.⁴⁰ The trinitarian dimension is significant here, for it appears in a section in which de Lubac writes about Christ as the '*verbum abbreviatum*'. His argument concerning Christ as the abbreviated word turns upon the affirmation that there is but one Word of God, the one eternally uttered by the Father: the Divine Word who was in the beginning with God (Jn 1:1).⁴¹ It is precisely 'in him [that] the "many words" of the biblical writers become "one Word" forever. Without him . . . the bond is undone: once again the Word [Parole] of God is fragmented into "human words"; words that are multiple, not merely numerous, but essentially multiple, and without any possible

38 de Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, p. 211. This clarifies the passages where de Lubac speaks as if the incarnation is the content of the allegorical sense (e.g. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, p. 260; *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, p. 511). These should be understood in light of the position that the cross is the purpose for which the incarnation took place.

39 Significantly, de Lubac identifies the beginning of the New Covenant with the Last Supper, which, as the institution of the Eucharist, is a sacrificial act. Indeed, according to the Council of Trent the sacrifice of the Eucharist is identical in content to the sacrifice of the cross (Session 22, 'Teaching and Canons on the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass' [17 September 1562], Chapters 1–2).

40 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 143–4. Similarly, de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, pp. 45–6. See further Hauser, 'Eucharist and Historicity', p. 8.

41 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, p. 140. See also Hercsik, *Theologie von de Lubac*, pp. 91–3.

unity'.⁴² And so it is that the Word made flesh is the temporal expression of the 'eternally uttered Word [Parole]'.⁴³

Hence, the incarnate Christ, especially in his act of sacrifice, is an expression, within the confines of history, of the eternal relationship of the Son to the Father. He gathers up the figures of the Old Testament, making them his figures, making them expressive of the Word that he eternally is, and which he now temporally enacts. A good many of these figures, of course, were the temple/tabernacle sacrifices performed according to the Levitical law. This will be particularly significant in the next section. For now, though, we see that what Christ does in time, which is concentrated, so to speak, in his sacrifice on the cross, he does as an expression of his eternal relationship with God as his Son and Word. Moreover, within the course of this discussion, de Lubac binds together the trinitarian life, the sacrifice of Christ and the coming of humanity to dwell with God.⁴⁴

De Lubac's understanding of Christ's sacrifice as the constitutive meaning of the allegorical sense (and, hence, of history) takes on a particularly interesting flavor when we recognize that allegory refers not just to the historical Jesus, but also to the mystery of Christ and the church, who together 'are just one great mystery'.⁴⁵ Indeed, according to de Lubac, 'The whole mystery of Scripture, the whole object of *allegoria*, resides in this [the unity of Christ and the church]'.⁴⁶ The *totus Christus*, head and members, is the content of Scripture's spiritual meaning.⁴⁷ The architectural symbols of spiritual exegesis turn largely upon the body of Christ, which is also the new temple in which God dwells.⁴⁸ We must recall that the temple was not merely a dwelling place for God, but also the place where sacrifices were offered to God. This is a cultic and sacrificial image. The Johannine Jesus identifies the temple with his (historical) body, while the Pauline and Petrine epistles mark out the church (ecclesial body) as the new temple. The principle that the content of allegory is the mystery of Christ and the church allows

42 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, p. 140. Similarly, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, pp. 241–7.

43 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 141–2.

44 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 143–4. Recall the recognition that spiritual exegesis, at its heart, is this moral conversion resulting in entry into the divine life, and which we have also identified with our participation in Christ's sacrifice. See the important discussion of the trinitarian dimensions of de Lubac's theology, and especially his theology of the cross, in O'Sullivan, *Christ and Creation*, pp. 391–412.

45 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 92.

46 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 92.

47 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 93; *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, pp. 50–2, 111–12 and 149. See discussion in Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 38, 46, 54–68 and 144–52; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 227–34; and Schlesinger, 'The Threefold Body in Eschatological Perspective', pp. 189–97.

48 de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, p. 45. Note the collocation of the body of Christ and the cross in this passage. Moreover, the building eventually reaches up into the trinitarian life, 'all of the Christian's faith comes from the Trinity goes to the Trinity. Finally, at the summit of it all, shines the cross' (*Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, p. 47, my translation). Once more, we see the cross, sacrifice and the Trinity bound together.

us to affirm both of these temple images without positing a tension between them. These two bodies of Christ are, indeed, one.

Similarly,

the tropological sense . . . does not only presuppose the Mystery of the Christ, but also that of the Church, which is, as we have seen, inseparable from it. The tropological sense presupposes, or rather, expresses the mystery: for if the souls are Christian only within the Church, the reverse holds.⁴⁹

For this reason, the moral purification depicted in the tropological sense occurs within the body of Christ.⁵⁰ Indeed, this ecclesially located purification shares an identity with the mystery of Christ's passion, which is the chief content of the church's liturgy. The historical event of the passion, its 'external face', is 'in the past, as are all things which belong to time – Christ, having entered into his glory suffers no more, dies no more – but its internal face remains . . . We are here at the heart of Pauline morality.'⁵¹ In other words, the Christian moral life and Christ's death on the cross have their inmost reality in common. The moral life reproduces in the individual Christian the reality of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. This is the meaning of tropology.

The further spiritual senses, which intensify and develop allegory, also have Christ's sacrifice as their most basic content.

Every allegory is concentrated within the paschal mystery; but we must still say, with St. Ambrose: 'Every year the pasch of Jesus Christ, i.e., the crossing of souls, is celebrated.' In other words, if it is true that nothing is superior to the Mystery of Christ, one ought not forget that this Mystery, which was prefigured in the Old Testament, is realized again, is being actualized, is being completed within the Christian soul.⁵²

While allegory 'consist[s] entirely in the Mystery of Christ, this mystery finds itself interiorized within tropology . . . in virtue of the cross of Christ'.⁵³ Similarly, anagogy considers the church:

The first and the second coming of Christ are included within the last . . . For it is in each of the members of his mystical body that Christ, at the end of time, completes the work of the Father . . . Thus the goal and the path to it are interwoven, so to speak, with the same material . . . The eschatological reality

49 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 135. See also Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, p. 173; Hollon, *Everything Is Sacred*, pp. 172–6; and Ayres, 'The Soul and the Reading of Scripture', pp. 185–202.

50 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, p. 135.

51 de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, p. 122. My translation.

52 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, p. 134. See the discussion above on the Easter Vigil, and sacrifice as enacting the passage into God.

53 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, p. 134.

attained by anagogy is the eternal reality within which every other has its consummation . . . It constitutes the ‘fullness of Christ’.⁵⁴

This realization accounts for why ‘Christ signifies himself’, or is said to be ‘transferred to the church’, for ‘the church will be the plenitude of Christ’.⁵⁵ Christ, who *is* the fulfillment, is also a figure of a greater fulfillment, the whole Christ. And yet, he is this figure in such a way as to share a genuine identity with that greater reality. He is the head of the body, and the body is his own fullness. With this turn to the notion of the body of Christ, we are quite naturally brought to the arena of de Lubac’s ecclesiology and sacramental theology, for it is in this area of his thought that the language of Christ’s body is most explicitly dealt with.

Corpus Christi and sacrifice

Considerations of de Lubac’s contribution to eucharistic theology rightly tend to focus upon his recovery of the threefold body of Christ, and especially the ecclesial character of the Eucharist, particularly in *Corpus Mysticum*.⁵⁶ This study notes that the term ‘body of Christ’ has a threefold referent: to the body born of the Virgin, hung on the cross, buried in the tomb, raised from the dead, and now seated at the Father’s right hand (the historical body); the body present on Christian altars under the species of bread and wine (the sacramental body); and the body of the redeemed, united by their head (the ecclesial body).⁵⁷ Significantly, these are not three bodies of Christ, for there is but one Christ.⁵⁸ Rather, they are three modes of Christ’s body, all of which are truly the body of the one Christ.

54 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 3, pp. 186–7.

55 Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de L’Écriture*, vol. 1/2 (Paris: Aubier, 1959), p. 650 (my translation); *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, p. 112.

56 See, for example, Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (London: T&T Clark, 1996); Lisa Wang, ‘Sacramentum Unitatis Ecclesisticae: The Eucharistic Ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac’, *Anglican Theological Review* 85 (2003), pp. 143–58; Raymond Moloney, ‘Henri de Lubac on Church and Eucharist’, *Irish Theological Quarterly* 70 (2005), pp. 331–42; Dennis M. Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Visions and Versions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), pp. 56–71; and Laurence Paul Hemming, ‘Henri de Lubac: Reading *Corpus Mysticum*’, *New Blackfriars* 90 (2009), pp. 519–34.

57 Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, trans. Gemma Simmonds, Richard Price and Christopher Stephens (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 14–36 and 75–100.

58 Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason, 2nd edn (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), pp. 156–7.

The Eucharist as memorial of Christ's sacrifice

More significantly, de Lubac's survey of patristic and medieval sources demonstrates that over time the referents of the terms 'mystical body' and 'true body' were reversed.⁵⁹ Originally, the 'mystical body' was the sacramental body, the body present in mystery, while the 'true body' of Christ was the church, which gathered around and fed on this mystical body.⁶⁰ Eventually, controversies surrounding the real presence of Christ in the sacrament shifted the emphasis: now 'true body' referred to the sacramental body in an effort to avoid the notion that Christ's eucharistic presence was a mere fancy or an empty signifier, while the church came to be seen as the mystical body.⁶¹ Now, of course, *mysticum* had come to lose its association with the mysteries of the church's cult, and so suggested something more along the lines of the ethereal. The result was a downgrading of the centrality of the church in eucharistic doctrine. While the notion of the church as the body of Christ never fully disappeared, and while the Eucharist's *res ultima* remained the union of head and members in the whole Christ, the relationship between the church as the body of Christ and the Eucharist as body of Christ lost its intrinsic relationship.⁶²

In addition to these well-worn, well-documented paths, though, sacrifice plays a crucial yet largely unexplored role in the argument of *Corpus Mysticum*.⁶³ De Lubac urges his readers that 'we will need to forget the separation inserted in so many modern treatises between "the Eucharist as sacrifice" and the "Eucharist as sacrament."' Because the sacrament cannot be understood apart from the sacrifice.⁶⁴ Clearly, in de Lubac's estimation, a proper understanding of the Eucharist depends upon continued attention to its sacrificial character.

The statement that we cannot understand the sacrament without understanding the sacrifice occurs within a discussion of the Eucharist as 'Memorial, Anticipation, [and] Presence',⁶⁵ and it is specifically because the sacrament is a memorial of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary that it cannot be understood apart from a

59 See de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, especially pp. 3–9 and 248–62. See discussion in McPartlan, *Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 76–85.

60 Flipper, *Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 13–100. Note, though, Hemming's insistence that the ecclesial body should not be reduced to the concretely gathered congregation, but rather be seen as an eschatological reality of which the gathered community is the effective sign. Hemming, 'Reading *Corpus Mysticum*', pp. 524–8.

61 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 100–19 and 187–247.

62 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 95–119.

63 Sacrifice's role in *Corpus Mysticum* is mentioned, but not really developed by Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, p. 63; McPartlan, *Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 62–4 and 76–7; or Wang, 'Eucharistic Ecclesiology of de Lubac', p. 149. It is discussed in more detail by Hauser, 'Eucharist and Historicity'; and Schlesinger, 'The Threefold Body in Eschatological Perspective'.

64 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 58. See also Hauser, 'Eucharist and Historicity', p. 10.

65 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 55–74.

consideration of sacrifice.⁶⁶ This lends greater specificity to the identity of the mystical (sacramental) body of Christ:

It will no longer simply be . . . ‘*the body in the mystery*’ but ‘*the body in the mystery of the passion*’. It will be the body as the object of a mystical sacrifice [*oblation*], itself entirely relative to that sacrifice [*oblation*] which Christ made of himself at the end of his earthly life; the body engaged in a mystical action, a ritual echo, endlessly reverberating in time and space, of the unique action from which it takes its sense.⁶⁷

Hence, the sacramental body’s identity fully derives from its relationship to the sacrifice of the cross. The *mystery* that gives it its character as a *corpus mysticum* is the paschal mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Indeed, despite the subsequent centuries’ hand-wringing about real presence, ‘the essential perspective of these [patristic] texts is not that of a presence or of an object, but that of an *action and of a sacrifice*’.⁶⁸ Given the narrative traced in *Corpus Mysticum*, this is a particularly salient point. After all, de Lubac is concerned with showing how an undue preoccupation with the real presence (which, of course, he would never deny!) led to an occlusion of an original insight into the relationship between the sacrament and the church. And here he notes that the patristic accent was upon sacrifice more so than presence qua presence. In other words, a recovery of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist is not ancillary but essential to the retrieval to which de Lubac invites us.

The Eucharist as anticipation of Christ’s sacrifice

In leaving behind the memorial dimension of the Eucharist, we do not leave behind the notion of sacrifice. The sacrament is not simply backward looking. ‘It is a sacrament of memory but also a sacrament of hope’,⁶⁹ anticipating a future consummation. These two perspectives underlie the Pauline ‘when you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death [memorial] until he comes again [anticipation]’ (1 Cor. 1:26). Wood clarifies that

within the dynamic of memorial, presence, and anticipation, there is a double sacramentality. In the first, the bread and wine become the sacrament of

66 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 58–62.

67 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 62 (emphasis added).

68 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 65 and 73 (emphasis added). This point is stressed by Hemming, ‘Reading *Corpus Mysticum*’, pp. 524–6. It is also noted by Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, p. 63; McPartlan, *Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 63–4; Schlesinger, ‘The Threefold Body in Eschatological Perspective’, pp. 191–2; and Hauser, ‘Eucharist and Historicity’, pp. 10–11.

69 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 66. See the important discussions in Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 59–68; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 234–46; and Hemming, ‘Reading *Corpus Mysticum*’, pp. 524–8.

Christ's sacramental eucharistic presence. In the second, Christ's sacramental presence under the species of bread and wine becomes the sacrament of final completion of all in Christ.⁷⁰

What, though, is this anticipated consummation prefigured in the sacrament? De Lubac provides several interlocking answers to this question. Because the Eucharist is a sacrament of the ecclesial body of Christ, 'it is the effective sign of the fraternal charity which binds its members . . . it is the effective sign of the peace and unity for which Christ died and towards which we are reaching, moved by his Spirit. It therefore signifies us to ourselves – *our own mystery, a figure of ourselves* – in what we have already begun to be through baptism . . . but above all in what we ought to become: this is the sacrament of unity'.⁷¹

The Eucharist's aspects of memorial and anticipation are intertwined. The same action memorializes and prefigures. Indeed, as I shall demonstrate, the reality it memorializes is the same that it prefigures.

Wood argues that the structure of memorial, presence and anticipation bears a formal similarity to the spiritual senses of Scripture in their doctrinal form.⁷² Christ's sacrifice on the cross (of which the Eucharist is the memorial) is the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices.⁷³ Hence, as in *Medieval Exegesis*, the cross occupies the position of allegory vis-à-vis the letter: the christological fulfillment of the Old Testament. The Eucharist also stands in this position, because of its identity with Calvary,⁷⁴ and its identity with the New Covenant (see Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25).⁷⁵ Indeed, it is because of this relationship that the terminology of *truth* was applied to the Eucharist. Though eventually the language of 'truth' came to be applied to a theology of real presence, the true body and blood of Christ, it was initially expressive of a theology of sacrifice. The sacrifice of the altar was the truth/fulfillment prefigured by the Old Testament's sacrifices.⁷⁶ As we have seen, though, the Eucharist is also itself a figure of a greater consummation still to come. It is so in a way analogous to how Christ is a figure of the eschatological *totus Christus*. In fact, the sacramental body of Christ is itself also a figure of the *totus Christus*.

70 Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, p. 67.

71 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 66–7 (emphasis original).

72 Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 61–2. Hence, the same basic hermeneutic of the two testaments that preoccupied de Lubac in *Medieval Exegesis* from 1959 to 1964 was already operative and in place, articulated using different terminology, as early as 1939, when *Corpus Mysticum* was first completed (the original French edition was not published until 1944).

73 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 65 and 201–4. See also Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 66–7; and Hauser, 'Eucharist and Historicity', p. 10.

74 Affirmed by de Lubac in *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 58–62.

75 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 63 and 193–4; Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 61–2.

76 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 188–206.

Because the Eucharist belongs to the economy of the New Testament, it stands in the position of 'fulfillment', but like other aspects of this economy, it also stands in a position of anticipating the eschaton.⁷⁷ Even Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and of history itself, is considered a sacrament.⁷⁸ Both the Old and New Testaments are sacramental economies, involving symbolic mediations.⁷⁹ The crucial difference is that the New Testament is an unsurpassable fulfillment, and so its sacraments also share in the realities they signify.⁸⁰

Wood appeals to the scholastic category of *res et sacramentum* to explain the dynamic in question.⁸¹ In the sacrament of the Eucharist, the eucharistic species are the *sacramentum tantum*, or sign. The real presence of Christ is the *res et sacramentum*, or reality and sign. In other words, Christ's body is the reality signified by the sacramental species, but also a sign of a greater reality: the *res tantum*, which is the whole Christ. The real presence of Jesus's body and blood in the Eucharist signifies this ultimate eschatological union of Christ and the church.⁸² In an analogous way, Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the content of the allegorical sense, is a figure of a greater, final sacrifice of the *totus Christus*, which is, nevertheless, the *same* sacrifice.⁸³ This terminology corresponds analogously to the spiritual senses. As Wood writes:

The *res tantum* [*sic* – read *sacramentum tantum*], considered as the eucharistic rite, corresponds to the idea of memorial and its association with the literal sense of Scripture. The *res et sacramentum*, considered as the actualization of the New Covenant which makes present both Christ and the Church, corresponds to the allegorical sense of Scripture. The *res tantum*, the ecclesial

77 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 193–208; *The Splendor of the Church*, pp. 68–77 and 156–7.

78 From his first book, de Lubac spoke of Christ as a sacrament. See *Catholicism*, p. 76. See also de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 71, 194–6 and 198–200, as well as the documentation of this theme as it appears in *Medieval Exegesis* in note 35 above.

79 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 64–5.

80 On this point see Hubert Schnackers, *Kirche als Sakrament und Mutter: Zur Ekklesiologie von Henri de Lubac* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1979), pp. 164–9; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 210–13. For a concerted effort to tease out this dynamic of provisionality and unsurpassability see Schlesinger, 'The Threefold Body in Eschatological Perspective'.

81 Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 61–3. See the development of this insight in Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 213–27; Schlesinger, 'The Threefold Body in Eschatological Perspective', pp. 194–200. McPartlan, *Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 77–9, adverts to *res-sacramentum* language, but without applying it to de Lubac's theology of history. For de Lubac's own use of the terminology see, e.g., *Catholicism*, pp. 96–7; *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 168–75 and 246; *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 133.

82 Here it is significant to note that the ecclesial body in view is an eschatological reality, rather than the immanent and historical gathered community. So Hemming, 'Reading *Corpus Mysticum*', p. 528; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 238–40.

83 de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, pp. 116, 132–4, 186–7 and 201–4; *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. 2/2, pp. 50–3, 109–13 and 122.

unity effected by the Eucharist, corresponds to the notion of anticipation and the anagogical sense of Scripture.⁸⁴

As Wood notes, the ‘correlations . . . are only analogous’ because the scholastic terminology is focused upon the real presence, rather than the historical dynamic of Old Testament, New Testament and the eschaton.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the formal parallels are striking.

The unity of content between memorial and anticipation (as well as allegory and anagogy) becomes clearer when de Lubac, immediately after describing the future fulfillment as unity and charity, also defines it as sacrifice. Just as the sacrament of the altar memorializes Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary, so it prefigures ‘the “true” sacrifice, of that interior and spiritual sacrifice by which the holy society of all those who belong to God is brought into being’.⁸⁶ De Lubac credits the true sacrifice with bringing about the church. Indeed, in *Catholicism*, he speaks of the eucharistic sacrifice being offered for the sake of the church’s unity. This final, perfect unity of the church is ‘the sacrifice for which the sacrifice of the altar is a preparation’,⁸⁷ which places the sacrifice of the Mass in the position of *res et sacramentum* and the final unity of the church in the position of *res tantum*. By his sacrifice Christ binds the church together as his members. This sacrifice is memorialized at the eucharistic altar. In fact, the charity binding together the church is (1) a sacrifice, and (2) signified by the Eucharist.⁸⁸ Here we find substantial warrant for my earlier contention that de Lubac’s account of sacrifice is Augustinian and involves passage into God by Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension, as well as through interior renewal.

The sacrifice of the church

The idea that sacrifice is a particularly interior and spiritual reality allows us to see how the eschatological fulfillment is at once the unity in peace and charity of the church and a great sacrifice: the great sacrifice *is* the charity that binds the church together. Here the notion of the threefold body of Christ provides coherence to de Lubac’s conception. The historical sacrifice of Christ on the cross was for the sake of this great, final sacrifice of the whole Christ in eternity. For this reason, even Jesus of Nazareth may be said to prefigure a greater reality: the *totus Christus*.⁸⁹ The sacramental body of Christ memorializes the historical sacrifice and anticipates the eschatological one. That these three forms of Christ’s body are not

84 Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 61–2.

85 Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, p. 62.

86 de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 67.

87 de Lubac, *Catholicism*, pp. 102–11, quotation from p. 109.

88 In his discussion of sacrifice as the charity binding together the church, de Lubac draws explicitly from Augustine of Hippo. See *Corpus Mysticum*, p. 67.

89 I have documented this above in discussion of the theology of spiritual exegesis. See de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 70–2.

three bodies, but one, establishes that these sacrifices are not three, but one. The formal coherence of this formulation with de Lubac's theology of spiritual exegesis is unmistakable.

Turning to de Lubac's more explicitly ecclesiological writings, we see the same basic dynamic in play. Throughout *The Splendor of the Church*, de Lubac belabors the fact that the church in its historical existence is provisional. Like all sacramental realities it will pass away at the coming of the eschaton, absorbed into its inmost reality: the *totus Christus*.⁹⁰ At the same time, the earthly church and the heavenly church are by no means separate, but rather form one church, which is identical across its successive states.⁹¹ As de Lubac notes, the church is a mysterious reality shot through with paradoxes. It is of God (*de Trinitate*) and of humanity (*ex hominibus*), visible and invisible, earthly-temporal and heavenly-eschatological.⁹² It is entirely provisional, and must be entirely passed through, and yet is identical with its own eschatological completion, and can never be surpassed.⁹³

And in his consideration of ecclesiology, just as in his considerations of spiritual exegesis and of the Eucharist, de Lubac envisions both the church's peregrination and its final *dénouement* in sacrificial terms. In a discussion of the general and ministerial priesthoods, de Lubac notes that 'every Christian participates in the one and only sacrifice [*Sacerdoce*] of Christ'.⁹⁴ Their participation in Christ's sacrifice is not, strictly speaking, liturgical. Instead, he suggests that 'this priesthood of the Christian people is not concerned with the liturgical life of the Church, and it has no direct connection with the production [*confection*] of the Eucharist'.⁹⁵ The general priesthood offers spiritual sacrifices (i.e. the Christian life), while the ministerial priesthood, 'the "hierarchic" Church . . . produces [*fait*] the Eucharist'.⁹⁶ At the same time, the hierarchy is ordered to serving the laity. First, because it is precisely by this sacrifice that the church is

90 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, pp. 68–77, 90–108 and 202–14.

91 Such an understanding of the church's identity across the successive stages of its existence: the pilgrim church militant, the purgatorial church suffering and the heavenly church triumphant was a career-long preoccupation. See de Lubac, *Catholicism*, pp. 67–76 and 133; *Corpus Mysticum*, pp. 66–8 and 204; *The Splendor of the Church*, pp. 64–8, 77–82 and 202–14; and Henri de Lubac, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, trans. James R. Dunne (Shannon, Ireland: Ecclesia Press, 1969), pp. 23–9.

92 de Lubac, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, p. 23.

93 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 202–3.

94 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 133. Bracketed French is mine, taken from Henri de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'église*, ed. Georges Chantraine, Fabienne Clinquart and Thierry Thomas, 6th edn (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2003), p. 114. The English translation of 'sacrifice' rather than 'priesthood' for *Sacerdoce* is valid on account of the fact that the function of priests is to offer sacrifice. Hence, to participate in Christ's priesthood is to participate in his sacrifice.

95 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 137.

96 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, pp. 137–8.

effected as Christ's body.⁹⁷ Second, because the ministerial priesthood's cultic sacrifice 'would be of no value if it did not bring about [*suscitait*] interior sacrifice in all those who take part in it [*chaque assistant*] . . . our unity is the fruit of Calvary, and results from the Mass' application to us of the merits of the Passion, with a view to our final redemption [*libération finale*]',⁹⁸

This distinction between the ministerial priesthood's cultic function and the general priesthood's non-cultic vocation for sacrifice provides an important insight into de Lubac's thought at this point. Without it one might think of the sacrificial aspects of the church's life as relegated to the cultic sphere. Of course, the cultic dimension is important, essential even: it brings about the congregation's own interior sacrifice. But this interior sacrifice, which is the mode in which 'every Christian participates in the one and only sacrifice of Christ',⁹⁹ extends beyond the liturgical cult, meaning that the sacrifice of Christ is a far more pervasive component of ecclesial existence.

All Christians participate in Christ's sacrifice. This occurs both liturgically and extra-liturgically. It is by Christ's sacrifice that we make our passage into God. He offered himself 'so that we might be one in that unity of the divine persons'.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, 'we are not fully personal except as interior to the person of the Son, by whom and in whom, we partake in the exchanges of the trinitarian life'.¹⁰¹ This theme – the connection between Christ's sacrifice and humanity's inclusion in the trinitarian life – recurred in the discussion of spiritual exegesis above. Moreover, this final integration into the life of God is itself a sacrifice.¹⁰² In the eschaton, when all sacramental mediation shall have passed over into a 'regime of perfect inwardness', the redeemed city will be a great temple:

And the only temple will be God himself, and its only lamp the Lamb. The altar will be an altar of incense and not of holocausts, and the whole Church will be one single sacrifice of praise in Christ. At the Day of the Lord when the *catholica societas* will be realized in its perfection, everything will be at once unified, interiorized, and made eternal in God, because 'God will be all in all' (1 Corinthians 15:28).¹⁰³

97 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 152.

98 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 155.

99 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 133. See note 94 above, on the translation here.

100 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 237.

101 Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme*, ed. Michel Sales and Marie-Béatrice Mesnet, 7th edn (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2003), p. 298 (my translation). See also Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church*, pp. 151–2; Flipper, *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton*, pp. 229–30; and Eugene R. Schlesinger, *Missa Est! A Missional Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), pp. 183–99.

102 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 77.

103 de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, p. 78.

The theology of the threefold body, especially within a theology of history, allows us to bind this together into a coherent statement: the fulfillment of history is the sacrifice of Christ (historical body), a sacrifice in which he includes his people, and by which he invites them into the life of the Trinity.¹⁰⁴ Humanity shares in the triune life specifically as members of Christ's body (ecclesial body). This membership in Christ is signified and effected in the Eucharist, and lived out in the life of the church, which the eucharistic sacrifice brings about (sacramental body). The life of the church's members is itself a spiritual sacrifice participating in Christ's own unique sacrifice. It is as the *totus Christus* that both Christ and his people dwell in the eschatological bliss of the one God, humanity enfolded by the eternal Son who has always shared this life with his Father and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

The same sacrifice that inaugurates humanity's participation in God's life constitutes humanity's eternal destiny within the trinitarian joy. This is the *res tantum*, which forms the inmost reality of Christ's earthly life and sacrifice, of the Eucharist, and the church. Christ, the church and the Eucharist all belong to the fulfillment of all things (allegory), but are not yet the consummation. Hence, they are analogous to the *res et sacramentum*: reality, but still the sign of an ultimate reality. Nevertheless, there is an identity of content between them and the *res ultima*, which they all figure, for there is but one body of Christ and one sacrifice of that body, just as analogy introduces no new content to allegory, but is rather its full fruition.

In each of these key junctures of de Lubac's thought, sacrifice provides the pivotal content. It is the act by which Christ constitutes the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament. It explains why the Eucharist stands in the position of 'truth' over against the Old Testament's sacrifices. It forms the inner reality of the church, and will be the form taken by the church in the eschatological consummation. In each of these discourses, Christ's sacrifice is the act by which he binds the church to himself. And because his sacrifice binds the church to himself, in each of these discourses, his sacrifice prefigures the eschatological union of head and members in the *totus Christus*. In other words, it effects our passage into God. This passage occurred definitively at the cross and resurrection (allegory), and is reproduced in the faithful, as they die to themselves and are converted to God (tropology). This conversion is identical to the process of spiritual exegesis, and is among the effects of the Eucharist, which is offered in union with Christ so that the church might be united in charity. Our conversion will reach its culmination when the church, in its

104 Hemming, 'Reading *Corpus Mysticum*', p. 532, approaches this understanding when he speaks of being inserted into 'the prayer of Christ', and thereby included in God's 'utterance of his Word'. However, he casts this dynamic in terms of prayer, rather than explicitly as sacrifice (a more specific member of the genus, prayer).

entirety, passes over into the life of God as a great sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving in Christ (anagogy).

Hence, sacrifice is not merely a passing concern for de Lubac. Instead, it is a concept capable of providing integration to the major areas of his thought. It pertains to the warp and woof of his theological vision, which turns not simply around theoretical abstractions, or ontology, or even history as such, but upon the mystery of humanity's redemption in Christ.