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# MARY AS MOTHER OF COMMUNION AND THE SACRAMENT OF THE SACRAMENT OF SALVATION

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## Introduction

In *The Motherhood of the Church* (1971), Henri de Lubac, S.J. (1896–1991), studies the meaning of *Mater ecclesia*, quoting Matthias Scheeben who writes, “The motherhood of the Church is not an empty title; it is not a weak analogy of natural motherhood. It does not signify only that the Church acts like a tender mother toward us. . . . This motherhood is as real as the presence of Christ is real in the Eucharist, or as real as the supernatural life that exists in the children of God.”<sup>1</sup> This paper seeks to examine this and other insights from Henri de Lubac on the relationship of Mary and the Church to explore anew the Marian doctrine of *Lumen Gentium* and propose a new synthesis of the role of Mary in relation to the Church. Part I will trace the influence of Henri de Lubac on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Part II will survey his writings on the mystical identification of Mary and the Church. Together, these two sections serve to highlight the convergence of de Lubac’s Marian thought and the Council’s ecclesiological teaching, bringing to clearer relief the indirect but profound influence de Lubac exerted on the Council’s mariology. Furthermore, they also reveal how chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium* flows directly from the Council’s sacramental

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<sup>1</sup> Henri de Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, trans. Sergia Englund, O.C.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 39; from the French original: *Les églises particulières dans l’Église universelle* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1971).

ecclesiology which finds provenance in de Lubac's pre-conciliar writings. From this vantage point, Part III explores de Lubac's preference for the sacramental structure of theology and then applies the sacramental principle to the Council's Marian teaching. The justification for this enterprise lies in the threefold continuity of (a) the Council's sacramental ecclesiology, (b) the Council's mariology, and (c) de Lubac's contribution to both (a) and (b). By extending the sacramental ecclesiology found in the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* to the Constitution's final chapter on Mary, a new synthesis can be made of the Council's mariology: Our Lady emerges as "the Sacrament of the Church, as the Sacrament of Salvation."

### Part I: Henri de Lubac and Vatican II

Henri Marie-Joseph Sonier de Lubac, a French Jesuit of the *Resourcement* movement, exerted great influence at the Second Vatican Council in his role as an esteemed *peritus*. The Acts of the Council record numerous points of contact between the conciliar teachings and de Lubac's own theological work.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the constitutions *Dei Verbum* and *Gaudium et Spes* bear clear traces of de Lubac's influence. From the latter, de Lubac's input on the problem of atheism<sup>3</sup> and the topic of

<sup>2</sup> The *Acta Synodalia* records six occasions in which de Lubac was directly cited. The first consists of a sharp written critique of de Lubac's theology of revelation by Bishop Miguel Builes of Santa Rosa de Osos, Colombia. The other five are positive references enumerated as follows: In the first session, de Lubac's work *Le Fondement théologique des Missions* was cited in a footnote; *Acta Synodalia*, vol. I, pars IV, p. 79 no. 6. In the second session, Bishop Dominic Fukahori of Jukuoka, Japan, made reference to de Lubac's chapter in *Méditation sur l'Église* on Mary as the type of the Church; *Acta Synodalia*, vol. II, pars III, p. 715. In the third session, Maronite Patriarch Paul Meouchi referred to de Lubac among other theologians on the topic of the Church's missionary vocation; *Acta Synodalia*, vol. III, pars VI, p. 792. In the fourth session, Bishop Karl Weber of Ichow, China, referred to de Lubac's classic treatment on modern atheism in *Le Drame de l'Humanisme athée*; *Acta Synodalia*, vol. IV, pars II, pp. 868–870. Also in the fourth session, the doctrinal commission—in its discussion of number 21 of *Dei Verbum*—referenced de Lubac's *Exégèse médiévale*, vol. I, 523, for further evidence of the patristic witness of the Church's veneration of the divine Scriptures; *Acta Synodalia*, vol. IV, pars V, pp. 728–729.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Le Drame de l'Humanisme athée* (Paris: Éditions Spes, 1944), Eng. trans.: *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. Anne Englund Nash and Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).

Christian anthropology<sup>4</sup> are said to be indubitably evident "down to the formulation of individual sentences."<sup>5</sup> A case in point is paragraph number 22 of *Gaudium et Spes* which reads, "Christ, . . . in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to himself." This is almost identical to the words written by de Lubac in 1938: "By revealing the Father and by being revealed by him, Christ completes the revelation of man to himself."<sup>6</sup>

These and other allusions to convergences between the Council's teachings and de Lubac's theology suggest that de Lubac's influence goes beyond a direct collaboration in composing the actual conciliar texts to a formative influence on the Council fathers even prior to the Council's commencement.<sup>7</sup> The pre-conciliar works which stand out in prominence include: *Catholicisme: les aspects sociaux du dogme* (1938); *Corpus Mysticum: l'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge. Étude historique* (1944),<sup>8</sup> *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (1946); *Méditation sur l'Église* (1953)<sup>9</sup>; and *Exégèse médiévale*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1946); *Le Mystère du surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1965), Eng. trans.: *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad, 1998); *Petite catéchèse sur nature et grâce* (1980), Eng. trans.: *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Richard Armandez (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 85.

<sup>6</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1938), Eng. trans.: *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard and Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988); 399; hereafter cited as *Catholicism*.

<sup>7</sup> Voderholzer writes: "De Lubac influenced the Council through the voluminous theological studies that he published in the years leading up to the Council, through which he had contributed to a renewal of theology based on the sources." In Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: l'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge. Étude historique* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), Eng. trans.: *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds with Richard Price and Christopher Stephens (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Église* (Paris: Aubier, 1953), Eng. trans.: *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999); hereafter cited as *The Splendor*.

(1959–1964).<sup>10</sup> These writings had been available in printed form prior to the Council, and, through them, many of the Council Fathers had already become acquainted with de Lubac's ideas and his methodological emphasis on the sources of Tradition.

This study concentrates on *Méditation sur l'Église* in particular. It is a work comprised of conference talks, given to brother priests between 1946 and 1949, which de Lubac assembled for publication. He had envisioned the collection to be a meditative work on the mystery of the Church with the aim of aiding others "to a clearer sight of the Bride of the Lamb in all of her radiant motherhood."<sup>11</sup> Karl Neufeld states that "it was above all the *Méditation sur l'Église* with which the Council Fathers were familiar as a source of theological ideas and as the inspiration for the spiritual life." Archbishop Giovanni B. Montini of Milan (who later became Pope Paul VI) is known to have secured an Italian translation of the book and had it distributed to his priests in Milan.

The features which *Méditation sur l'Église* shares in common with *Lumen Gentium* suggest that *Méditation*, whether directly or indirectly, was a formative influence on the Council Fathers who worked on the texts of *Lumen Gentium*. *Méditation sur l'Église* notably anticipates *Lumen Gentium* in both structure and content. For example, both works take their starting point from the inner core of the Church as a mystery. The first two chapters of *Méditation sur l'Église* are entitled "The Church as Mystery" and "The Dimensions of Mystery." *Lumen Gentium* also begins with "The Mystery of the Church" (Chapter One) and goes on to describe this mystery as founded on the Trinitarian communion of God: "The Church has been seen as 'a people made one with the unity of

<sup>10</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959, 1961, 1964). N.b. The first two volumes appeared in 1959, and the latter two were completed during the period of the Council. Of these, only the first two volumes have been translated into English: *Medieval Exegesis* vol. 1, trans. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1988) and *Medieval exegesis* vol. 2, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> *The Splendor*, 10.

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the concluding chapters of both *Lumen Gentium* and *Méditation sur l'Église* are devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The last chapter of the Constitution is "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and in the Church," and that of *Méditation sur l'Église* is "The Church and Our Lady." Both works draw their respective discussions on the ecclesial mystery to a conclusion in the mystery of Mary.

These structural parallels point to a deep theological convergence as well. Beyond the common reference to the Church as a mystery, both *Lumen Gentium* and *Méditation sur l'Église* place principal importance on considering the Church as a sacrament. As the progenitor of a revival of patristic theology, de Lubac had undertaken studies of the Church Fathers and had come to understand the sacramentality of the Church a quarter of a century prior to the Council. In *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme*, his first major publication of 1938, de Lubac wrote, "If Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ."<sup>13</sup> In *Méditation sur l'Église*, published ten years before the Council, de Lubac again asserted: "The Church is a mystery; that is to say she is also a sacrament. . . . In this world she is the sacrament of Christ, as Christ himself, in his humanity, is for us the sacrament of God."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the first lines of *Lumen Gentium* describe the Church as, "in Christ, in the nature of sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men."<sup>15</sup> In other words, the twofold dynamic of "communion with God and unity among all men" constitutes the vertical and horizontal dimensions of communion, a communion which God effects through the sacramental nature of the Church.

Furthermore, this communion, according to both *Lumen Gentium* and *Méditation sur l'Église*, becomes concrete in the

<sup>12</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4, n. 10, quoting St. Cyprian, *De Orat Dom.* 23: PL 4, 553 (Hartel, III A, p. 285); St. Augustine, *Serm.* 71, 20, 33: PL 38, 463 f.; St. John of Damascus, *Adv. Iconocl.*, 12: PG 96, 1358 D.

<sup>13</sup> *Catholicism*, 76.

<sup>14</sup> *The Splendor*, 202.

<sup>15</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no. 1; hereafter cited as LG.

Eucharist. The middle chapter of *Méditation*, entitled "The Heart of the Church," explores the intrinsic link between the Eucharist and the Church and expounds de Lubac's celebrated principle, "the Eucharist makes the Church."<sup>16</sup> This same Eucharistic ecclesiology underlies *Lumen Gentium*, where numbers 11 and 26 affirm the Eucharist to be the fount and apex of ecclesial life.<sup>17</sup>

These theological parallels between de Lubac's *Méditation* and the teachings of the Council bespeak how formatively influential the Jesuit theologian was with reference to the Council's sacramental ecclesiology. In *The Principles of Catholic Theology*, Pope Benedict XVI—then, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger—asserts:

Vatican Council II, in all its comments about the Church, *was moving precisely in the direction of de Lubac's thought*. The Council was not primarily concerned with how the Church envisaged herself, with the view from within, but with the discovery of the Church as sacrament, as the sign and instrument of unity.<sup>18</sup>

To study the conciliar text from de Lubac's perspective is thus to take a privileged point of view into the inner workings of the Council and its teachings on the sacramental nature of the Church.

The sacramental dynamic characterizes both the Church and Our Lady and provides the context for a proper interpretation of the Council's Mariology. Johann Auer has asserted, "The chapter on Mary in *Lumen Gentium* proceeds from an understanding of the Church as the sacrament of salvation."<sup>19</sup> In this perspective, the final chapter of the Constitution, devoted to Our Lady, should not be read as a compromising resolution to the heated debates of the Council on whether to

<sup>16</sup> De Lubac coined this phrase in *Corpus Mysticum*, his study of the complex development of Eucharistic theology throughout the centuries.

<sup>17</sup> N.b. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 10 and 41 also exhibit a theology of the Church as built on the Eucharist.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 50; emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> Johann Auer, *The Church: The Universal Sacrament of Salvation* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1993), 480.

incorporate Mary into the treatise on the Church. Nor should it be interpreted as a mere addendum to appease the maximalist tendencies of certain Council Fathers. Rather, it should be studied with the complete trajectory of the Constitution in mind: the sacramental nature of the Church, in its consummate reality, is Marian. It is thus with reference to de Lubac's profound influence, specifically in the area of the Council's sacramental ecclesiology, that this essay seeks to interpret the Council's mariological teaching anew.

## **Part II: De Lubac on the Mystical Identification of the Virgin Mary and Mother Church**

Although de Lubac never produced a systematic ecclesiology nor provided any thorough treatment of Mariology, what he did write with regard to the Church and to Mary merits close attention. *Méditation sur l'Église* and *Paradoxe et mystère de l'Église* contain particular discussion of the relationship between Mary and the Church. This section will explore the insights of *Méditation sur l'Église* on the discussion. In particular, it will focus on two key aspects of the link between Our Lady and the Church: maternity and virginity.

In the final chapter of *Méditation sur l'Église*, de Lubac examines the link between Our Lady and the Church. Christian Tradition, he notes, has consistently associated the two realities very intimately: "The links between our Lady and the Church are not only numerous and close; they are essential and woven from within."<sup>20</sup> "We might say that they are 'one single and unique mystery.'"<sup>21</sup> Saint Clement of Alexandria, for instance, asserted that: "There is only one Virgin Mother, and I am glad to call her the Church."<sup>22</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria is known to have sung the praises of "Mary the ever-virgin, the Holy Church."<sup>23</sup> In particular, de Lubac considers the thoughtful comments of Karl Barth (1886-1968), an eminent Swiss theologian of the

<sup>20</sup> *The Splendor*, 316.

<sup>21</sup> *The Splendor*, 317.

<sup>22</sup> *Paedagogus*, bk. I, chap. 6 (PG 8, 300); as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 336.

<sup>23</sup> *Hom. Div.*, 4, *in fine* (PG 77, 996); as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 337.



Reformed tradition who had been invited to participate in the Second Vatican Council as a Protestant observer.<sup>24</sup> In his massive *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* (1938), Barth objects to the apparent unity espoused by Catholics on the doctrine of Mary and the Church:

It is in Marian doctrine and the Marian cult that the heresy of the Roman Catholic Church is apparent—that heresy which enables us to understand all the rest. The “Mother of God” of Roman Catholic dogma is, quite simply, the principle, prototype, and summing-up of the human creature cooperating in its own salvation by making use of prevenient grace; as such, she is also the principle, prototype, and summing up of the dogma of the Church.<sup>25</sup>

Barth’s fundamental criticism against the Catholic cult of our Lady serves to focus and underscore the key link between Our Lady and the Church. From his “outsider’s” perspective, Barth was able to recognize the quintessence of Marian doctrine as a “crucial dogma of Catholicism.”<sup>26</sup> He astutely observed that Marian doctrine enables one to understand all of Catholic doctrine, and as such, Our Lady is “the principle, prototype, and summing up of the Church.”<sup>27</sup> Yet what he calls the “heresy of the Roman Catholic Church” is indeed the hallmark of Catholicism: “Catholic faith regarding Our Lady symbolically sums up the doctrine of human cooperation in Redemption and thus provides the synthesis, or matrix concept, as it were, of the dogma of the Church.”<sup>28</sup> In contrast to the Reformed tradition which, in the words of Martin Luther, asserts salvation to be “by the grace of God alone and the sole working of the Holy

<sup>24</sup> Although Barth did not make it to the Council due to illness, he did visit Rome *post-festum* in 1966, after which he published *Ad Limina Apostolorum* which included an unedited facsimile of the discussions he had with leading Catholic theologians there. For more, see Philip J. Rosato, S.J., “*Ad Limina Apostolorum*, in Retrospect: The Reaction of Karl Barth to Vatican II,” in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 87–114.

<sup>25</sup> Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche dogmatik*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2 (Zollikon: Verl. d. Evang. Buchh., 1938), 157 and 160; as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 316.

<sup>26</sup> *The Splendor*, 315.

<sup>27</sup> Barth, *Die kirchliche*, 1/2:157 and 160; as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 316.

<sup>28</sup> *The Splendor*, 316.

Spirit, without any human action,"<sup>29</sup> Catholic doctrine holds that salvation is not *sola fide*, but, in the words of Augustine, "God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us."<sup>30</sup> The doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word of God in the womb of Mary reveals how God respects human freedom and welcomes human initiative in the work of salvation. Not only does Mary represent the perfection of human freedom, but she also epitomizes the perfection of nature elevated by grace and of human cooperation in redemption. As such, she prefigures the nature and destiny of the Church. The respective doctrines of Mary and the Church consequently stand and fall together.

De Lubac asserts: "But as long as we stop short at positing a functional analogy between the two, and a more or less exterior one at that, we have not fully grasped the reason of it."<sup>31</sup> In an attempt to go beyond a mere functional analogy, then, de Lubac seeks to examine the connectedness of Mary and the Church at the level of that which constitutes the essence of their existence. But first, he surveys the profusion of patristic and medieval images. We mention but a few of the rich imageries here: both Mary and the Church are the New Eve from the side of the New Adam; both are figures of Paradise as well as the Ark of the Covenant; both are described as the Temple of God, Jerusalem on high, the Bride arrayed for her husband, and the Woman clothed with the sun.<sup>32</sup> Yet this is not to say that Mary and the Church are identical realities. Rather, there is also a difference in the degree of eminence between the Virgin and the Church. "If the Church is the Temple of God, Mary is the Sanctuary of that Temple; if the Church is that sanctuary, Mary is within it as the Ark. And if the Church herself be compared to the Ark, then Our Lady is the Propitiatory, more precious than all else, which covers it. If the Church is paradise, our Lady is the spring from which flows the river that waters

<sup>29</sup> Martin Luther, *Dictata super Psalmos*, in "Psalm 71," *Opera*, ed. Weimar, 3:468.

<sup>30</sup> St. Augustine, *Sermo* 169, 11, 13: PL 38, 923; also quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* with reference to the recognition of one's own sins, CCC, no. 1847.

<sup>31</sup> *The Splendor*, 316.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *The Splendor*, 317-320.

it; the river that makes glad the City of God (Psalm 46:4)."<sup>33</sup> If the Church is the New Jerusalem, then Mary is "the glory of Jerusalem" (Judith 15:10), the consummation of all the glories God wills for humankind.<sup>34</sup>

De Lubac is emphatic, "There is in all this something much more than a case of parallelism or the alternating use of ambivalent symbols."<sup>35</sup> One must go beyond the external resemblances to find the "inner continuity" and "ontological bond"<sup>36</sup> which constitute Mary as "the 'ideal figure of the Church,' the 'sacrament' of her, and the mirror in which the whole Church is reflected."<sup>37</sup> Consequently, de Lubac's goal is to revive and flesh out, in all its meaning, the conceptualization of Our Lady as the type and model of the Church, the point of the Church's origin and perfection.

Saint Ambrose (340–397 A.D.) was the first to explicitly identify Mary as *Typus Ecclesiae*. She is the one who "shows forth in herself the figure of the holy Church."<sup>38</sup> De Lubac explains that, as the figure or type of the Church, "Our Lady speaks and acts in the name of the Church at every moment of her existence ... because she already carries the Church within her, so to speak, and contains her in her wholeness, in her own person."<sup>39</sup> Mary is the *Typus Ecclesiae* because she "comprises in an eminent degree all the graces and all the perfections of the Church."<sup>40</sup> The graces and perfections she possesses are not hers of her own accord, but are hers with reference to the Church. Namely, she possesses them for the sake of the work

<sup>33</sup> *The Splendor*, 352.

<sup>34</sup> *The Splendor*, 352–353.

<sup>35</sup> *The Splendor*, 320.

<sup>36</sup> De Lubac discusses the "inner bond" and the "ontological bond" between a figure and its type in *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 462.

<sup>37</sup> *The Splendor*, 320.

<sup>38</sup> Ambrose, *In Luc.*, bk. 2, no. 7 (PL 15, 1555a); as quoted in *The Splendor*, 320.

<sup>39</sup> *The Splendor*, 320; de Lubac is quoting from St. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, bk. 2, no. 7 (PL 15, 1555a), as quoted in de Lubac; see also LG, no. 63 and *De institutione virginis*, chap. 14, no. 89 (PL 16, 326).

<sup>40</sup> *The Splendor*, 341, emphasis added; de Lubac is quoting from Jean-Jacques Olier, *Vie intérieure de la Très-Sainte Vierge: Ouvrage recueilli des écrits de M. Olier*, ed. E. M. Faillon, 2 vols. (Rome: Salviucci, 1866), 2:75.

of salvation which has been entrusted to the Church. Thus, to better grasp the meaning of the typological relationship of Mary and the Church, de Lubac focuses on two fundamental aspects of ecclesial existence wherein these perfections are found: "that under which she appears as sanctifying and that under which she appears as sanctified."<sup>41</sup> In each of these dimensions of ecclesial being, there is a confluence of Mary and the Church.

The first aspect of "sanctifying" refers to the maternal nature of the Church. The motherhood of the Church was a reality very dear to de Lubac. He expounds it in his book, *Les églises particulières dans l'Église universelle* (1971),<sup>42</sup> and he also devotes an entire chapter (Chapter VII) to the topic in *Méditation sur l'Église*.<sup>43</sup> It was, for him, the fundamental principle by which one becomes a Christian and through which one perseveres as a *homo ecclesiasticus*.<sup>44</sup> In the final chapter of *Méditation sur l'Église*, de Lubac returns to the idea of ecclesial motherhood, situating it in relation to Mary. Again, he draws from the rich testimony of Tradition: "The Church brings forth daily him whom the Virgin Mary brought forth."<sup>45</sup> "The glorious Virgin Mary stands for the Church, who is both virgin and mother. She is mother because every day she presents God with new sons in baptism, being made fruitful by the Holy Spirit."<sup>46</sup> In view of Mary's divine maternity, the patristic Fathers often referred to the baptismal font as the womb through which the faithful are reborn in the Spirit, and the sacraments as the milk of sanctifying nourishment.<sup>47</sup> In

<sup>41</sup> *The Splendor*, 321.

<sup>42</sup> *Les églises particulières dans l'Église universelle: Suivi de la maternité de l'Église* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1971).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. chap. VII of *The Splendor*, 236-278.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *The Splendor*, chap. VI: "Ecclesia Mater," and chap. VII: "Our Temptations concerning the Church," in which de Lubac expounds on what it means to be a true son of holy Mother Church. He writes, e.g., "Love should, of course, be our only response to our Mother, the Church" (279).

<sup>45</sup> Berengard, *In Apoc.*, 12, 3-5; Pseudo-Augustine, *In Apoc.* (PL 100, 1152d); as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 321-322.

<sup>46</sup> *Sigillum beatae Mariae* (PL 172, 499d); as quoted by de Lubac, *The Splendor*, 322.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Cyprian, Epistle 44.3; *De Ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, 4, Epistle 74.7.

the Scholastic era, this theology of ecclesial motherhood continued to receive robust development in conjunction with Mary's divine motherhood. In the words of Isaac of Stella, for example, "Mary, sinless, gave the body its Head; the Church, in the remission of all sins, gives the Head its body. Both are thus Mother of Christ, but neither of the two bears him wholly, without the other."<sup>48</sup>

It is thus the maternity of *Mary* that informs the Church's understanding of her own motherhood, the dimension of her being through which she generates new Christians in baptism and nourishes them with the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. In this way, Mary's divine motherhood is fundamental for ecclesial motherhood; the latter "acts on the basis and by virtue of that of Mary, and that of Mary continues to act in and by that of the Church."<sup>49</sup> If "the motherhood [of the Church] is as real as the presence of Christ is real in the Eucharist," as quoted at the opening of this essay, it is precisely because the same dynamic that makes the Eucharist the sacramental presence of Christ also characterizes the maternity of Mary as the sacramental reality of the Church's motherhood.

De Lubac proceeds to describe this intersection of Mary's divine motherhood with the Church's ecclesial motherhood as the fruit of a certain perichoresis or mystical participation.<sup>50</sup> Perichoresis, or the Latin alternative "circumincession," is the theological term which describes the mutual indwelling and intimate interpenetration of the three Persons of the Trinity. Following Matthias Scheeben, de Lubac suggests that Mary and the Church share a similar co-inherence. One concrete implication resulting from this perichoretic relationship is the correlation of Mary's Immaculate Conception and the doctrine of Infallibility. Writing in 1870, Scheeben noted "a fertile and striking analogy between the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the absolute purity of the *Sedes Sapientiae*, and the dogma of the Infallibility of the Holy See, the absolute purity of

<sup>48</sup> Isaac of Stella, *Sermo* 61 (PL 194, 1683); as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 327.

<sup>49</sup> Matthias Scheeben, *Dogmatik*, bk. 5, no. 1819; as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 333.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *The Splendor*, 328 and 336.

the *Cathedra sapientiae*.”<sup>51</sup> Mary’s Immaculate Conception is ontologically mirrored in the Church’s own purity of faith and teaching.

The second aspect of the Church—the sanctified aspect—is that through which the Church exists as a community of saints. This aspect is pre-eminently Marian. In Our Lady, “the whole Church is outlined, and at the same time already completed; she is simultaneously the ‘seed’ and the ‘pleroma’ of it. She is the perfect form of the Church.”<sup>52</sup>

This sanctified and perfect form is evidenced throughout the mysteries of Mary’s life, but with particular prominence at the event of the Annunciation whence Mary’s virginity came to fruition. Our Lady’s unadulterated faith enabled her to hear and receive the Word of God so perfectly that the Word became incarnate in her womb. Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) taught that Mary spoke her consent on behalf of the entire human race when she uttered her “yes” to the Angel Gabriel. De Lubac makes reference to question thirty in the *Tertia pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* in which St. Thomas asks whether it was fitting for the announcement to be made to Mary that she would conceive. The Angelic Doctor’s fourth and culminating reason for responding positively is that the Virgin’s consent to the Annunciation was necessary “to show that there is a certain spiritual wedlock between the Son of God and human nature; wherefore in the Annunciation the Virgin’s consent was besought in lieu of that of the entire human nature.”<sup>53</sup> In this way, Our Lady’s *fiat* was uttered not only on her own account, but also for the entire human race. She is thus intimately united to humankind, not only by virtue of her divine maternity, but also by that faith wherein “a certain spiritual wedlock between the Son of God and human nature” is forged. Mary has inaugurated a new era of human existence—an era of the Church.

To expound more fully the significance of this virgin faith which brought forth the Savior of the world, we turn to the

<sup>51</sup> Matthias Scheeben, *Periodische Blätter* (1870), 508–509; as quoted by de Lubac in footnote 72, *The Splendor*, 328; N.B.: *Cathedra sapientiae* refers to the chair of Peter as the magisterial Seat of Wisdom.

<sup>52</sup> *The Splendor*, 342.

<sup>53</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III.30.1.

comments of Pope Benedict XVI, then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, on Mary's Immaculate Conception in his short but rich treatment of Mariology, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief* (1983). In this work, Ratzinger discusses the early ecclesiology which developed from Saint Paul's description of the New Israel as the bride, "holy . . . immaculate . . . luminously beautiful . . . without spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27). The significance of this doctrine of the *Ecclesia immaculata*<sup>54</sup> of Ephesians 5:27 lies in the consequent development of a typological ecclesiology which would eventually find fulfillment in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Ratzinger writes:

[T]he doctrine about the *Immaculata*, like the whole of Mariology, is first anticipated as ecclesiology. The image of the Church, virgin and mother, is *secondarily* transferred to Mary, not vice versa. So if the dogma of the Immaculate Conception transferred to the concrete figure of Mary those assertions which primarily belong to the antithesis new-old Israel, and are in this sense a typologically developed ecclesiology, this means that Mary is presented as the beginning and the personal concreteness of the Church.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, the rebirth of the Old Israel into the New Israel, an idea in the consciousness of the earliest Christians, found its concrete achievement in Mary: "Mary is presented as the beginning and the personal concreteness of the Church."<sup>56</sup> The New Israel is not a mere abstraction, but a living person. The Immaculate Conception signifies that, from the very depths of her being, Mary is pure "yes" to God: "It signifies that Mary reserves no area of being, life, and will for herself as a private possession; instead, precisely in the total dispossession of self, in giving herself to God, she comes to the true possession of self."<sup>57</sup> This is the mystery of virginity in which renunciation and fulfillment

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Hugo Rahner, *Maria und die Kirche* (Innsbruck: Marianischer Verlag, 1951); A. Müller, *Ecclesia-Maria*, 2nd ed. (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1955).

<sup>55</sup> Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 67-68.

<sup>56</sup> Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 68.

<sup>57</sup> Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 70.

are paradoxically one; Mary is fruitful because she is virgin. In her, God's initiative has awakened a free and perfect human response which embraces the depth and breadth of human existence. It is this perfect receptivity in faith and love which constitutes the Church as the *Ecclesia immaculata*. Mary is thus the exemplar of consummate, fiducial existence. She is the fullness of the Church as "sanctified."

Ratzinger's account of the theological weight and personal significance of Mary's Immaculate Conception exemplifies the ontological bond de Lubac recognized in Mary's "fiat" and the Church's faith, a bond he described as "perichoretic." Moreover, the testimony of Scripture substantiates how Mary's *fiat* is renewed throughout her life and becomes universalized for all the faithful. She who is mother to Jesus becomes Mother to all Christians at the very climax of salvation history, on Calvary. Her mission does not terminate with Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, but rather extends from the foot of the cross to the Upper Room where the power of the Spirit overshadowed the apostles; the Mother of Christ becomes the Mother of the Church and sustains the Church in being Mother to all Christians.<sup>58</sup>

Mary's ever-abiding presence to Christ and her union with the Church are revisited at every celebration of the Mass which constitutes the community of believers as the Church by its partaking in the mystery of communion. The body Mary cradled on earth is made sacramentally present by and for the Church. Hence, the celebrant's prayer: "Look not on our sins, but on the faith of *your Church*"<sup>59</sup> should bring our attention to Our Lady, who first embodied that perfect faith and who first lived that aspect of the Church as "sanctified." It is in taking on her disposition of faith that the Church is most completely united to Christ, and the "Amen" of the members of Christ's Body bears the same fruitfulness of Mary's "*fiat*."<sup>60</sup>

Finally, this ontological interpenetration of Mary and the Church as "sanctified" peaks in the consummate reality of Mary's Assumption into heaven as "the complete and definitive

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *The Splendor*, 332.

<sup>59</sup> *The Sacramentary*. These are the words preceding the Sign of Peace.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2002), final chapter on "Mary, Woman of the Eucharist."



triumph of the divine action upon [Mary], right up to its consequences in the bodily order."<sup>61</sup> The Blessed Virgin precedes the Church in the journey of faith, arriving first at the consummate glory so as to attest to the triumph of grace and to serve as the archetype of ecclesial existence. In this way, she helps to bring forth the Church sanctified. De Lubac quotes Jean Daniélou, "The mystery of the Assumption teaches us that in Mary the transfiguration of the cosmos, the principle of which lies in the Resurrection of Christ, has already begun to produce its effects. The Assumption is the dawn of the new creation whose first rays filter through into the darkness of this world."<sup>62</sup> This "new creation" is the reality of the Church as wholly sanctified. Hence, "if it is true that the Church ... reconstitutes bit by bit the first paradise, then our Lady is the first cell of the organism of that restored paradise which is more glorious than the original one."<sup>63</sup> Our Lady embodies the fulfillment of the promise of redemption and is thus the mother and model of the Church's own journey to the eternal banquet of the Lamb.<sup>64</sup>

The perichoresis of Mary and the Church bespeaks an ontological bond steeped in eschatological fullness. The maternal and virginal dimensions of the Church are rooted in and tend toward the consummate fullness found in Mary. Her divine motherhood informs the Church's motherhood; her perfect virginal faith is the seed and summit of the Church's own faith. Mary's Assumption establishes her as the eschatological icon of the Church's own consummate reality. She stands for the definitive state of salvation and is, therefore, the sign and instrument of the Church as communion with God and with all humankind. Her personal cooperation with grace becomes the icon of salvation. Herein lies the essential link: Our Lady is the concrete, personal realization of the mystery of the Church in its final glory; she is the sacramental sign of the Church as the Sacrament of Salvation.

<sup>61</sup> *The Splendor*, 345.

<sup>62</sup> Jean Daniélou, "Le Dogme de l'Assomption," *Études* (Dec. 1950): 301-302; as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 346, n. 168.

<sup>63</sup> *The Splendor*, 338.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *The Splendor*, 320.

### Part III: Paradox and Sacrament

For de Lubac, the mysteries which theological discourse seeks to explore are best evoked, not by analytical systems of thinking, but by symbols and images which embody the structure of paradox. This final section will examine de Lubac's predilection for the structures of paradox and sacramentality and employ these structures to substantiate the proposed synthesis on Mary and the Church.

De Lubac was the master of paradoxes.<sup>65</sup> He employed paradoxes to describe the richness of human experience and of the Christian mysteries. The supreme paradox, says de Lubac, is the Incarnation.<sup>66</sup> In the Word Incarnate, one finds the Hypostatic union of the divine nature and the human nature of Christ, without confusion or change, without division or separation.<sup>67</sup> De Lubac describes the complex structure of a paradox thus:

Paradoxes are paradoxical: they make sport of the usual and reasonable rule of not being allowed to be *against* as well as *for*. Yet, unlike dialectics, they do not involve the clever turning of *for* into *against*. Neither are they only a conditioning of the one by the other. They are the simultaneity of the one and the other. . . . They are the *for* fed by the *against*, the *against* going so far as to identify itself with the *for*, each of them moving into the other, without letting itself be abolished by it and continuing to oppose the other, but so as to give it vigor.<sup>68</sup>

One finds this complex dynamic in the Incarnation, the lofty paradigm of all paradoxes of faith. Jesus is the primordial sacrament of God because He is fully human and yet fully divine. As God-man, moreover, He reveals to humankind the face and the heart of the Father (cf. John 14:9). Similarly, the paradoxical coalescence of the Church's visible and invisible realities makes sacramentally present to the world the presence of Christ, her head. The Church is, therefore, the Sacrament of

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987) and *Further Paradoxes*, trans. Ernest Beaumont (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1958).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Paradoxes of Faith*, 8; hereafter cited as PF.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Chalcedonian creed (451 AD).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. PF, 11-12.

Christ and of salvation—the sign and instrument of communion with God and unity with all humankind (cf. LG, no. 1).

Mary, who, as we have seen, is mystically identified with the Church, also exhibits the structure of paradox. In the words of Dante Alighieri, she is “Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son; high above all others, lowlier is none.”<sup>69</sup> The paradox of a virgin who is a mother, of a mother who is the daughter of her own son, and of the lowliest who is most exalted, are paradoxes which point to the perfect reality of grace. The Virgin Mother embodies the graciousness of Divine action, the perfection of human freedom in receiving that graciousness, and the achievement of salvation which results therein.

Finally, the paradoxes of Christ, the Church, and Mary coincide with the structure and dynamic of sacramentality. The paradox of Christ as God-man constitutes him as the sacrament of God. So too, the paradox of the Church contributes to the dynamic of the Church as the sacrament of Christ. The same can be said of the paradox of Mary. Our Lady’s sublime role as Virgin and Mother fittingly constitute her a sacrament of the Church with whom she is mystically identified.

Sacraments are efficacious signs of grace. They point beyond themselves to the reality they signify. St. Thomas sums up the various aspects of sacramental signs in *Summa Theologiae* III, 60, 3, stating:

A sacrament is that which is ordained to signify our sanctification. . . . Consequently, a sacrament is a sign that commemorates what precedes it—Christ’s Passion; demonstrates what is accomplished in us through Christ’s Passion—grace; and prefigures what that Passion pledges to us—future glory.<sup>70</sup>

These sacramental signs are discernible in the life of Mary, possessed by her to the highest degree. No creature has so intimately participated in and reminds us of the Passion of Christ as His sorrowful Mother; no one possesses the degree of perfection in grace and virtue as the Maiden who was hailed “full

<sup>69</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso* XIII, in *The Divine Comedy*, lines 1–2.

<sup>70</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, 60, 3, *respondeo*; see also the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1130.

of grace"; and no one foretells the future glory of the New Heavens and New Earth as the Woman (cf. Rev. 12:12) whose very being prefigures it. Our Lady effectively points beyond herself to the consummate reality of the New Jerusalem. She exists as the Immaculate Mother of God, not of her own accord, but for the sake of God's plan of salvation.

Moreover, sacraments are *efficacious* signs in that they confer the very grace they signify. Just as the efficacy of the seven sacraments is derived from Christ alone, so too, the efficacy of Mary considered as a sacrament is derived from her perfect union with Him. This is the essential benefit of referring to Mary as a "Sacrament" of the Church. Such an attribution highlights both her unparalleled union with her Son and her indispensable role in the economy of salvation. Mary is no mere static image of the Church; nor does she prefigure the Church's final glory from a distance. Rather, Mary is ever-present to the Church as its mother and exemplary realization. Mary exists *for* the Church, and her dignity as Mother of Christ is an intrinsic function of her union with Christ and her relatedness to the Church.

Finally, the provenance of this Marian-sacramental dimension is founded in Tradition. In *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), Pope John Paul II drew an explicit connection between the Council's sacramental ecclesiology and the Church's maternal nature and function, associating the latter to Mary:

It is said that from Mary the Church also learns her own motherhood: she recognizes the maternal dimension of her vocation, which is *essentially bound to her sacramental nature*, in "contemplating Mary's mysterious sanctity, imitating her charity and faithfully fulfilling the Father's will" (LG 64). If the Church is the sign and instrument of intimate union with God, *she is so by reason of her motherhood*, because, receiving life from the Spirit, she "generates" sons and daughters of the human race to a new life in Christ. For, just as Mary is at the service of the mystery of the Incarnation, so the Church is always at the service of the mystery of adoption to sonship through grace.<sup>71</sup>

De Lubac, himself, alludes to two references to Mary as a sacrament in *Méditation sur l'Église*. The first is a thirteenth-century

<sup>71</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), no. 43; emphasis added.

hymn, *Mariae praeconio*.<sup>72</sup> The second is Jean-Jacques Olier (1608–1657) who writes of Mary as a “Sacrament of Jesus Christ.”<sup>73</sup> Although de Lubac does not directly develop the sacramental dynamic of Mary’s relationship to the Church in his own work, his theological and methodological principles move in this direction and are consonant with Tradition.

In the final analysis, the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* comes to a point in the Constitution’s final chapter on Mary.<sup>74</sup> This chapter, entitled “The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church,” was the result of much contentious debate and deliberation which concluded with the integration of Marian doctrine within the Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Although it is not apparent that de Lubac had a hand in the drafting of the final chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, it is quite certain that he exerted a profound influence on the text through the impact of his writings prior to the Council. The subtle yet significant impact of *Méditation sur l’Église*, in particular, was examined in this study.

De Lubac’s writings, in which he favored a sacramental understanding of the Church, help to explain why the final chapter on Mary is actually the apex and culmination of the Church’s self-understanding. In Mary, the Church is concrete and personal. In Mary, the Church encounters a Virgin Mother in whom the depth and meaning of her own faith and maternity are realized. In Mary, the Church finds an efficacious sacrament of her consummate glory.

<sup>72</sup> *Analecta hymn.*, 54: 391, as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 320.

<sup>73</sup> Olier, *Recueil de la Sainte Vierge*, 134–138 (Flachaire, *Dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, 117) ; as quoted by de Lubac in *The Splendor*, 340.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Marian Principle,” in *Elucidations* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 101. A similar assertion can also be found in Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005): “Yet from within, this decision [to treat Mariology under the heading of ecclesiology] entirely corresponds to the style of the Constitution as a whole: only when you have grasped this connection will you have correctly understood the picture of the Church that the Council was trying to portray” (p. 150), and “Thus it is only with the chapter on Mary that the Council’s ecclesiology is rounded out and brought back to its Christological and Trinitarian starting point” (p. 152).

### Conclusion

In summary, this study of de Lubac's thought has led us through some of the most profound riches of Tradition for a deeper appreciation of the teachings of the Council. Following a survey of the traces of de Lubac's influence at the Council, particularly with regard to the Council's sacramental ecclesiology, we explored, in *Méditation sur l'Église*, de Lubac's rich retrieval of the patristic and medieval tradition on the intimate relationship of the Church and Mary. In particular, we have seen how de Lubac expounds the inner aspects of the Church as "sanctifying" and as "sanctified." Through these lenses, the confluence of the Church and of Mary as Mother and Virgin bespeak a mystical identification at the level of their very essence. Under the aspect of "sanctifying," the Church's motherhood is seen to be sacramentally rooted in Mary's divine maternity. Under the aspect of "sanctified," Mary is perceived as the perfect figure of the Church; she embodies the final glory promised to the Church. Finally, by noting de Lubac's methodology employing the paradigm of paradox and sacramentality, a final synthesis was proposed. Mary's relationship to the Church can be conceived as sacramental; she is the Sacrament of the Sacrament of Salvation. She "carries within her[self] the whole mystery of the Church"<sup>75</sup> and makes concrete the words of *Lumen Gentium*, originally written in reference to the Church as the "sacrament, a sign and instrument, of communion with God and of unity among all men" (LG, no. 1).

De Lubac once described the task of evangelization as "the work of clearing away the misunderstandings that hide [Christ] and letting a glimpse of his glory break through; ... And in all this there is no surer help than contemplation of our Lady."<sup>76</sup> As we raise high the torch of faith in the impulse to new evangelization, may we be reminded that Mary is the sacrament of the Church; she teaches us how to enter into communion with Christ and how to offer that communion to others. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: "Only by being Marian can we become the Church. At its very beginning the

<sup>75</sup> Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 151.

<sup>76</sup> *The Splendor*, 376.

Church was not made, but given birth. She existed in the soul of Mary from the moment she uttered her *fiat*. This is the most profound will of the Council: that the Church should be awakened in our souls. Mary shows us the way."<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "The Ecclesiology of Vatican II," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 January 2002, weekly English edition, no. 4, p. 7.