

Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Les aspects sociaux du dogme [Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man]*.

I. Overview of de Lubac's life (1896 – 1991)¹

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| <p>1896 Feb. 20: de Lubac was born in Cambrai, in northern France.</p> <p>1913 Oct. 9: entered the Society of Jesus.</p> <p>1914 Drafted into military service.</p> <p>1919-1928 Studied humanities, philosophy, and theology.</p> <p>1927 Aug 22: Ordained a priest in Lyons</p> <p>1929 Instructor of fundamental theology at the Institut catholique de Lyon</p> <p>1938 Appointed professor of fundamental theology at Lyons-Fourvière; Published <i>Catholicisme</i>.</p> <p>1939 Appointed professor of the history of religion</p> <p>1941 Founded the series <i>Sources chrétiennes</i>.</p> <p>1944 Published <i>Corpus mysticum</i> and <i>Le Drame de l'humanisme athée</i></p> <p>1946 Published <i>Surnaturel</i>. De Lubac suspected of being an adherent of the <i>Nouvelle théologie</i>.</p> <p>1950 Published <i>L'intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène</i>. June : Forbidden by his religious superiors to teach or publish. Transferred from Lyons to the Jesuit house in Paris on the Rue de Sèvres.</p> <p>1950 Aug: Pope Pius XII published the encyclical <i>Humani generis</i>.</p> <p>1951-1955 de Lubac's writings on Buddhism.</p> <p>1953 Returned to Lyons; published <i>Méditation sur l'Église</i> (Eng. <i>Splendor of the Church</i>).</p> <p>1956 Began working on the study <i>Exégèse médievale</i>.</p> | <p>1958 Became a member of the Académie des sciences morales et politiques. Again permitted to teach and to publish theological works.</p> <p>1960 Returned to Lyons-Fourvière; Invited to serve on the theological preparatory commission for Vatican II.</p> <p>1962-1965 Named theological expert (<i>peritus</i>) at the Council; Defense of Teilhard de Chardin.</p> <p>1963 published commemorative three-volume collection of essays, <i>L'homme devant Dieu</i>.</p> <p>1969 Published <i>L'Église dans la crise actuelle</i>.</p> <p>1969-1974 Member of the International Theological Commission</p> <p>1974 Published <i>Pic de la Mirandole</i>; After closing of Lyons-Fourvière, moved to Paris.</p> <p>1976 Letter of thanks from Pope Paul VI on the occasion of de Lubac's 80th birthday.</p> <p>1979-1981 Published <i>La Postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Fiore</i>.</p> <p>1983 Feb 2: Made Cardinal by Pope John Paul II</p> <p>1985 Published <i>Entretien autour de Vatican II</i> (Eng : <i>De Lubac : A Theologian Speaks</i>).</p> <p>1988 Published <i>Résistance chrétienne à l'antisémitisme : Souvenirs 1940-1944</i> (Eng. <i>Theology in History</i>)</p> <p>1989 Published <i>Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits</i> (Eng. <i>At the Service of the Church</i>)</p> <p>1991 Henri de Lubac suffered a stroke that left him unable to speak; he died on Sept 4, after a difficult time of illness, in the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Paris.</p> |
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¹ Taken with minor modification from Rudolf Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac: His Life and Work*, tr. Michael J Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 11-13.

II. The context and formation of *Catholicisme*

In de Lubac's own reflections from 1989 (51 years later), his first book – *Catholicisme* – was “made up of bits and pieces that were first written independently, then stitched together, so to speak, into three parts, without any preconceived plan.”² “The first part,” writes de Lubac, “sums up the main outlines of something [he] taught at the Faculty. These were two lectures given at the offices of the *Chronique sociale*,” originally published as a pamphlet from Editions de la Chronique under the title: “Le Caractère social du Dogme chrétien.” The second part of the work, de Lubac recounts, was gathered from various lectures and minor publications. The third part of the book, which he deems “more spiritual and ‘personalist’ in nature,” was comprised for the occasion of the book, which he thought necessary for the work's “overall balance.” Although he admits that the work is assuredly responding to the “mood of the times,” he writes that the work in general “tries to show the simultaneously social, historical, and interior character of Christianity, this threefold mark conferring on it that character of universality and totality best expressed by the word ‘catholicism.’” Of the modern antecedents that de Lubac invokes, it is Gerbet's *Considérations sur le dogme générateur de la piété catholique* of 1829, with its thesis that “Everything is social in Catholicism,” that most closely resembles de Lubac's position in the text.

III. Its Structure, Content, and Method, as well as Key Questions and Comments about relation

Method: “His first major work, *Catholicisme*, which sets the style and orientation for all that will follow, reveals the fundamental decision as a decision for fullness, totality, and the widest possible horizon- it is precisely the power of inclusion that becomes the chief criterion of truth – that that, negatively, it becomes a major concern of his to point out where the entire tradition, and in particular the ecclesial and theological tradition, has become narrow or rigid, often with immensely destructive consequences.” (29).

[Oral Presentation on the issue of *Nouvelle théologie*, de Lubac's philosophy of history, and his understanding of the *Communion of Saints*].

[See appended Chart for Structure and Content]

IV. The Reception of the Text:

- a. Initial reception
- b. Subsequent reception (largely in the so-called *Communio* Group)

² Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances That Occasioned His Writings*, tr. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 27; Henceforth, *Serv.*

Ch	Balthasar's Reading	Additional Points	Relation to other themes and works in de Lubac's <i>corpus</i>	Key Questions
Intro	[Balthasar takes the formal introduction as provisional in order to set the stage for the tensions to be held throughout the work (a tension which, as opposed to <i>Surnaturel</i> and <i>Corpus mysticum</i> , who present their problem as a tension to be mastered, is held in its most extreme without dialectical (re-)mediation);	de Lubac finds the problem of individualism (which is connected with an underlying escapism) to be detrimental to the growth of the Church, to present an missiological and evangelical dilemma, and to be inauthentic to the Christian tradition. It seems that de Lubac identifies the source of this individualism <i>intra-murally</i> , which is related to his method in this text.	Methodologically, this introduction is monumental and brings into straight focus the question of <i>Nouvelle théologie</i> . “At the beginning stands the programmatic <i>Catholicisme</i> (1938), a work that was intended to be and actually became a major breakthrough. The major works that followed grew from its individual chapters much like branches from a trunk.” ³	☐ Where does de Lubac lay the blame for the development of individualism? ☐ What is the genre of this work? How does it differ methodologically, conceptually, structurally from treatises <i>de ecclesia</i> ? [Cf. with early reception]
Part I: The Social Characteristic (“the universal solidarity in what concerns the salvation of man,” THL, 35)				
1	“Since the God of creation and the God of redemption are one and the same, since mankind as created forms a unity as well, God's intention in the redemption of the world in Christ can once again intend mankind only as a whole. (This position stands against any Jansenistic restriction of redemption to the “elect,” as well as every form of individualism in the matter of	There is a tension in the text between the source of the unity of humanity. See questions column. Further, if we are to use the reading of Grillmeier, de Lubac's quotations come only from the Logos-<i>sarx</i> tradition,		☐ Is our unity/ solidarity anthropological or Christology (and thus, teleological)? Can these two be separated or resolved? ☐ Does de Lubac's early Christian Christology reflect the full range

³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview*, tr. Joseph Fessio, SJ and Michael M Waldstein (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991; originally published 1976), 35; henceforth, *THL*.

	salvation. If the Church had consistently avoided this stance, Marxism would probably have been superfluous.” ⁴ [THL, 36]	and he tends to skirt the figures who more robustly speak in the Logos-prosopon tradition		of early Christian positions? ☐ . Christ assumed human nature, but is that the equivalent of <i>humanitas</i> or <i>humanum</i> ?
2	The Church founded by Christ can be ordered only to this totality of redemption. She continues the work of unifying a mankind cut to pieces by sin and egoism; she touches the whole of man; she must be at the same time visible-corporeal and invisible-spiritual as he is; she is the “Sacrament of Christ in the world. [THD, 36]	Notice how de Lubac anticipates Schillebeeck's famous dictum. There is a sacramental chain of relations: Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is the sacrament of Christ. The logic of sacramentality redefines the parameters for the visible-invisibility issue in ecclesiology, as well as the issue of the logic of grace's extensiveness and offering in the world.		☐ How does his sacramental understanding condition the question of the Church in its different modes (historical and eschatological), as well as the question of grace, as considered in his other works?
3	“This ordination to solidarity is especially clear in her sacraments. Baptism is incorporation into the people of God; confession is always reconciliation with this holy people as well as with God; the Eucharist above all is the mystery of the deepest union with the brothers. Only after the accent had been displaced from the social aspect to that of the real presence did individualistic Eucharistic piety win a handhold. [THD, 36-7]	One important feature of de Lubac's sacramental theology is its dual-directionality: the Church makes the sacraments and the sacraments make the Church; this tension is explored at length with respect to the relation of Christ and his own members. De Lubac comments in a footnote that he would, if he were able, to explore the theme in more detail with regard to	This is the point of departure for the problematic of <i>Corpus mysticum</i> [1944]). Christ's body of flesh was called by the Fathers the “ <i>soma typicon</i> ,” which, through his “mystical body” (<i>corpus mysticum</i>), the Eucharist, built up his true body, the Church.	☐ How does his sacramental theology differ from that encountered in Scheeben? ☐ What is the potency in positing that the source of individualism is largely deviations in Eucharistic piety, for offering a remediation through the medium

		Mary, which we will consider later in the course.	Liturgical texts corroborate these expressions.” [THD, 37]	of Eucharistic theology?
4	The world's redemption and the earthly Church have as their goal eternal life, which is portrayed in Scripture and tradition as communion in the Trinitarian God: the heavenly Jerusalem. What is of lasting significance in Origen's conception – which found such a strong echo throughout history (and finally had to be repudiated – that Christ and the blessed attain their ultimate beatitude only when the entire “Bod of Christ,” the redeemed creation, is gathered together in the transfiguration, is given its due place.” [THD, 37]			☐ What is the relation between the world' redemption and the Church?
Part II: The Historical Characteristic (“the significance of time and history,” THL, 35): The second section unfolds the historical dimension in five steps. Insofar as God in Jesus Christ enters into the movement of history, the direction of this history's flow holds a meaning.”				
5	This is in contrast to all nonbiblical religions, which can extract no salvific meaning from history and can therefore essentially offer religion only as “an individualistic doctrine of evasion.” [THL, 37]	Notice his long consideration of Zoroastrianism: the main distinction is the <i>personal</i> aspect of God's engagement. God engages community historically.	Two series of works take their departure here: first, the dialogue with Buddhism; then the works in defense of Teilhard de Chardin, which demonstrate that his evolutionism and his turning towards the omega of history are essentially biblical and traditional. [THL, 37-8]	☐ What do we make of the de Lubac's emphasis on the thickness of history and the historical grounding of eschatological hope in the Triune God?
6	But God's entrance into history divides it also as salvation history into great periods; promise and fulfillment, Old Covenant-New Covenant. According to Paul, they are related to each other as “letter” and “spirit.” The	Notice that de Lubac reverses the commonly (mis-)conceived taxis between spiritual and historical readings: it is only because we have a meta-	This is the point of departure for all the works on theological exegesis: from the book on Origen, <i>Histoire et</i>	☐ How does our reading of Scripture reflect the historical character of the Church?

	transcendence of the latter over the former forms the central event of Christianity that remains continuously present at every moment. This transcendence therefore provides the key for the interpretation of Holy Scripture. [THL, 38]	narrative that is historically based that scripture can have a deeper meaning.	<i>esprit</i> , 1950 – the two words stand already as the heading of a subsection in <i>Catholicisme</i> – to the mammoth <i>Exégèse médiévale</i> , 1959-1964, and, as a sort of postlude, <i>Pic de al Mirandole</i> , 1974). [THL, 38]	☐ What is the role of the Holy Spirit?
7	In the following seventh chapter, the problematic of the second chapter returns: how can a circumscribed and limited historical form, the Catholic Church, be ordered to the salvation of the entire world? grace can also work outside of her; why not speak therefore of an “implicit Christianity” in “anonymity” (long before K. Rahner) for non-Christians? De Lubac's solution is both new and subtle, growing out of his principle of history's meaningful direction. as with the Old Covenant, so all the religious efforts of man have contributed in their own way and at their stage of development to provide the basis of the coming consummation. ... More profoundly: whatever contributes to the breakthrough of Christ is not mere “material” but human persons who participate in the success of their labors, even when this success remains transcendent to their efforts. Any mission to a given people intends and extends to that people's ancestors as well. This theory, supported as always by patristic texts, in no way makes the Church's mission superfluous but rather makes it more urgent.	This is one of the most important chapters. A few things that need discussion are: ☐ His sense of the thickness of history as the medium through which salvation is mediated. ☐ The relationship of the world to the communion of saints. I would go so far as to say that the key to understanding this chapter is understanding the unique function of the communion of saints, pneumatologically enabled, as the finality of a teologically-predestined history in Christ.	The brief study on <i>The Theological Foundation of Missions</i> [1946] would be published shortly after this. [THL, 40]	Lots to be discussed.

	Since the transition from the state of promise to that of fulfillment is obligatory, so too is the mission of the Church (as progressive radiation of salvation into the consciousness of mankind) and the Christian's responsibility for the world: the Christian has a duty of "collaboration" rather than "evasion." [THL, 39-40]			
8	But a question remains, arising from the insertion of Christ and the Church in time: Why did the fulfillment come so late? What is the purpose of the apparently endless prehistory? The answer (in Ch 8) is twofold. It points back to the already-mentioned idea of the historical maturation of humanity towards freedom, its "habitation" (Ireneaeus) to the law of the Logos, and exploits the value of the Pauline-patristic theme of the divine pedagogy, even giving it a universal-historical significance that anticipates Teilhard's vision. In this way the experience of mankind can be accented both positively and negatively (the experience of one's own weakness): all historical progress remains ambiguous. But a new theme arises from this: that of the infallible predestination of the Church throughout her entire prehistory and history. "The Church is predestined and, in her, all of man and the entire universe." ... In whatever way the destiny of the individual may remain in ultimate uncertainty, "one thing is certain: the Church will not enter into the kingdom of God mutilated on the last day." In a concluding remark, de Lubac protects himself against any identification of this			☐ Given the paradigm of the question of the pre-Incarnation world in relation to the incarnation, how then do we make sense of the world in its post-incarnate state? ☐ This chapter is very nuanced but has many tensions: how would we parse it out most clearly? ☐ In what ways does he differ from Irenaeus' or Origen's eschatological hope? In what way is he the same?

	doctrine with that of apocatastasis. But there is no doubt that this chapter anticipates Barth's famous doctrine of predestination (K.D. II, 2), in which he inserts a weighty chapter on the election of the Church between the election of Christ and the election of the individual. Again, it becomes clear (beginning from Romans 11) that the preliminary stage – recapitulated in Israel – will be taken up into the definitive stage: the concluding transcendence does not leave behind what has made it possible but brings it to its own conclusion, both preserving and “elevating” it. [THD, 41-2]			
9	This is brought into sharper focus in its application to the Church, which must, in her expanding movement, conform the world to herself – “transforming” it! For the “work of the Creator, however much it may be ruined by man, remains the natural and necessary preparation for the work of the Redeemer.” “Christianity has transformed the ancient world by absorbing it into itself ... These roots are all the more necessary as the transcendence is more elevated. ‘Supernatural’ does not at all mean ‘superficial.’ “ The “method of immanence is the one most deeply rooted in the tradition.” Therefore, every form of missiological pessimism – “Islam, India, Communism cannot be converted” – is really lack of faith. [THD, 42]	The issue of Christian responsibility, as intensified.		☐
PART III: de Lubac's Theology, freedom from delimiting constrictions				
10-12	[This chapter] is actually the introduction to the whole book, since it develops the program of a theology free from constrictions			The questions of the introduction are to be resumed here.

	and the self-limiting of every “anti”-theology, strong and bold enough to bear the “most extreme tension” without turning into Hegelianism. The third section turns, in two concluding chapters, to the perduring dialectics of person-community and immanence-transcendence. By maintaining these tensions, and even carrying them through to their ultimate consequences, Catholicism has a superior vantage point from which it can engage in the dialogue with Buddhism, on the one hand, and Communism on the other. “The most perfect and enjoyable existence from the social point of view would be the most inhuman if it did not serve the interior (personal) life; just as the latter would remain no more than mystification were it to turn back upon itself in refined egoism.” And so <i>Catholicisme</i> has led us, on the one hand, to this double dialogue with these world-historical partners and, on the other hand, to the task of constructing out of the origins (that always lie open to us), yet without historicism, a theology of true synthesis. [THD, 42-3]			[In what way does de Lubac's removal of the anti's from his method in this portion affect his treatment?]
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