

The Eucharist and the Historicity of the Faith

Daniel Hauser
University of St. Francis, Joliet, IL

This essay argues that the Eucharistic worship of the Church, as the representation of the One Sacrifice of Christ, the New Covenant, is the historical locus of the continued sacramental presence of Christ in history, and therefore ought to be the starting point of any systematic theology. It is precisely in the one sacrifice of the New Covenant offered in the Mass that the Church participates in the very events that form the foundation of her life. In this work, the theologies of Henri de Lubac and Donald Keefe will be examined in order to demonstrate why the Eucharist should be the foundation of systematic theology and what the significance of a Eucharistic theology might be.

One of the perennial efforts of systematic theology is the attempt to find the foundation, the *a priori*, upon which the edifice of a systematic theology might be built. In the history of theology, numerous different foundations have been offered and there are still more being recommended today. Historically, the Roman Catholic theology has been dominated by two great theological traditions: the Thomistic and Augustinian traditions. Building upon the doctrinal tradition of the Church, each of these theological methods attempts to articulate the faith of the Church: i.e., each beginning with a fundamentally different approach to the *quaerens* that constitutes the theological enterprise.¹ One of the central issues in this perennial quest of theology to find a foundation upon which to do theology is the question of the relationship of the faith to the historical revelation of Christ and the manner in which that historical revelation informs the faith today. This question of the historicity of the faith is one of the fundamental questions in theology. Fr. Donald Keefe, when considering the relationship of the faith and history, describes this task of theology best when he says that the permanent task of theology is to struggle against those “gnostic illusions,” the product of the “immanentism of fallen rationalities,” in order to grasp the freedom of the historical revelation.² It is the question of the relationship of theology and history that is subject of this article.

In this essay it will be argued that the Eucharistic worship of the Church, as the representation of the One Sacrifice of Christ, the New Covenant, is the historical locus of the continued sacramental presence of Christ in history, and therefore ought to be the starting point of any systematic theology. It is precisely in the one sacrifice of the New Covenant offered in the Mass that the Church participates in the very events that form the foundation of her life. In this work, the theologies of Henri de Lubac and Donald Keefe will be examined in order to demonstrate why the Eucharist should be the foundation of systematic theology and what the significance of a Eucharistic theology might be.

¹ See Donald Keefe, S.J., *Covenantal Theology* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1996). This work offers an extensive analysis of the Thomistic and Augustinian approaches to theology.

² Donald Keefe, S.J., unpublished appendix to *Covenantal Theology*, *Appendix II: The Substantial Unity of the Covenantal One Flesh* (hereafter, *Appendix II*), 133. Also, see Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 153ff.

De Lubac on the Eucharist and History

The Christian faith lives by its worship whereby it participates in the divine, the source of its life. In her worship the Church is brought into communion with Christ, the one through whom all things came to be and the one through whom all things are saved. The Christian claim is that the divine, the fullness of being, is given in Christ, the Son of God, who became man, suffered, died and rose from the dead. In his person the perfect unity of the divine and the human, *Creator* and creation, takes place. One of the central tenets of the Christian claim is that this unity of God and man in Christ takes place in history. The revelation given in Christ is an historical event. Since this is the complete and definitive revelation of God, the faith of the Church is ordered to the historical events that are the source of her life. “What is essential for the existence of the Church is that its proclamation and faith have constant reference to the historical event which constitutes the origin of the Church not only in the historical sense but, simultaneously, in the sense that is the basis of the Church’s existence today.”³ The worship of the Church is the means by which that historical “contact” with or participation in those events that are the source of her life is achieved. Consequently, the worship of the Church has a primary role in the life of faith. It is from this worship that the Church draws her life and by this worship that the faith is ordered.

Yet, today, despite the fact that Christians agree to the significance of the worship in the life of the Church, that it possesses an intelligibility and order that informs the faith of the Church,⁴ they are not united in their understanding of the Christian liturgical symbols. As a result different interpretations of the meaning of the liturgical symbols have resulted in different understandings of the faith. Since the Reformation, the Eucharistic symbols have been interpreted two ways: the liturgy of the sacrament and the liturgy of the word. Each understanding of the liturgical symbols holds a fundamentally different interpretation of the significance of the historicity of the faith.⁵ And even within these two traditions there continue to

³ Gerhard Ebeling, *The Problem of Historicity*, trans. Grover Foley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 84.

⁴ *Lumen Gentium* describes the Eucharist as the source and summit of the life of the Church. See *Lumen Gentium* 11. In effect it is the worship of the Church that causes the Church and informs the life of the faith. De Lubac likewise describes the Church as the Eucharistic community founded at the Last Supper. The Church was from the beginning “an association of worship.” See the *Motherhood of the Church*, trans. Sr. Sergis Englund, O.C.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 351.

⁵ Gerhard Ebeling, *The Word of God and Tradition*, trans. S.H. Hooke (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 39. Ebeling argues that “Its (the church’s) connection with history is an essential element in the nature of the Church” (38-39). He states that the Church stands or falls by its relationship to the revelation of Christ. The Church continues to exist in history “in virtue of this once-and-for-all revelation event.” Since it is over the actual participation in the events of salvation that the churches are divided, he argues that the Eucharist should be the “central feature of the discussion between churches” (39). Ebeling also recognizes that there are two primary modes of interpreting the Eucharistic symbols, the liturgy of the sacrament and the liturgy of the word; and, as a Protestant, he defends the latter (211-212). Also, see Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 34ff.

It should be noted that within the Protestant tradition there is also some dispute as to the proper interpretation of the liturgical symbols. Contrast the theology of Bultmann, whose dehistoricization of the faith leads to an interpretation of the liturgy that is not rooted in the historical events of Christ’s life, with Oscar Cullmann’s theology, who, on the other hand, sees faith as an act linked to salvation history. Bultmann shifts the emphasis of the act of faith away from the historical revelation to the existential decision for faith. It is the decision to believe that is the decisive means through which man determines his historical existence. In his theology the historicity of the act of faith is separated from the historical revelation of Christ and now rests on the act of decision. According to Bultmann, it is the act of deciding that makes faith concrete. See Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (New

be different theological interpretations of the liturgical symbols and therefore different understandings of the historicity of the faith.

From the very beginning the Roman Catholic tradition has understood the Eucharist to be the center of the life of the Church, ordering and uniting the Church.⁶ In continuity with the doctrinal tradition, Vatican II taught the central importance of the Eucharist in *Lumen Gentium*, stating that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”⁷ Recently, Pope John Paul II, in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, reaffirmed the central importance of the Eucharist. He stated that, “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates *the heart of the mystery of the Church*.”⁸ The core of the faith that is “recapitulated” in the Eucharist is the passion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pope John Paul II pointed out that in the Church’s tradition the paschal mystery is at the center of the life of faith, and that mystery is represented in the sacrifice of the Mass. “The Church was born of the paschal mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is in an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, *stands at the center of the Church’s life*.”⁹ “The sacramental representation of Christ’s sacrifice, crowned by the resurrection, in the Mass involved a most special presence which—in the words of Paul VI—‘is called “real” not as a way of excluding all other types of presence as if they were “not real”, but because it is a presence in the fullest sense: a substantial presence whereby Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely

York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957), 44, 140ff, and *Existence and Faith*, trans. Shubert Ogden (New York: Meridian Books, 1960). For an analysis of this view of history, see Austin Van Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), 120, 168ff. Cullmann rejected this existential interpretation of faith because it dehistoricizes the faith. Instead, he argues that the basis of the faith is the revelation given in the Christ. He understands worship as a proclamation by which the believer is brought more completely into salvation history. The goal of the worship of the Church is the proclamation of the unfolding of God’s plan in history, and the believer is called to align himself with that history. See *Salvation in History* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 330. Despite their differences, both Cullmann and Bultmann share the belief that the present mediation of the faith is given during the time of the Church as proclamation, *sola scriptura, sola fide*.

⁶ From this perspective, the Eucharist is not only established at the Last Supper, but literally becomes the central worship of the Church at that point. There has been some dispute about the significance of the Eucharist in the worship of the early Church. See Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 220ff. In this work Jeremias argues that from the very beginning the Eucharist was the central worship of the Church. The Church precedes the writing of the scriptures, and scripture reflects the influence of a community whose central worship is the one sacrifice of the cross. As an example of this influence one need only note the Eucharistic references that pervade the gospel of John. Jeremias also argues that the Church has always understood the Eucharist as a sacrifice. He defends the sacrificial nature of the words of consecration. In a like manner, Durrwell argues that the Eucharist is essential to any understanding of the parousia in the early Church. See Francois-Xavier Durrwell, “Eucharist and Parousia: The Fundamental Basis of the Interpretation of the Real Presence,” *Lumen Fidei* 26 (June 1971), 273-315.

⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* (April 17, 2003), 1.

⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*. 3. What is interesting in this encyclical is the extensive emphasis placed on the relationship of the Eucharist to the passion of Christ. The pope emphatically reaffirms the Catholic doctrinal teaching that the Mass is a sacrifice, the representation of the one perfect sacrifice of Christ. He teaches that the faith lives by its unity with the paschal event, and that the sacraments are instituted to mediate those salvific events. Pope John Paul II explains that “This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus offered it and returned to the Father only *after he had left us a means of sharing in it* as if we had been present there” (11).

present.”¹⁰ The passion and resurrection as the source of the faith are “re-presented” in the Mass wherein the believers participate in the actions of Christ, the particular and unique historical events by which they are saved. This “sacrificial re-presentation” is here described as a “substantial presence,” the most complete form of sacramental expression, and one that defines “Catholic” sacramentality. In the sacrifice of the Mass, the *totus Christus* is offered for our salvation because, in the Mass, the believers participate in that redemptive act of the Christ, the One Sacrifice of the Cross, the One Flesh Union of Christ and his Church, the New Covenant.

De Lubac, consistent with the Roman Catholic interpretation of the Eucharistic symbols, understands the Eucharist to be the center of the life of the Church and, therefore, the source of its life and meaning. Like Pope John Paul II, he describes the Eucharist in terms of the passion of the Lord, the event by which the salvation of the fallen creation is accomplished. Describing the Mass as a sacrifice, de Lubac’s sacramental theology presupposes a theology of history in which the historical events of the passion and resurrection of Christ are the foundation of the faith. Consequently, the historicity of the faith of the Church reflects the historicity of the event in which she participates in her worship. It is the particular historical nature of this worship that defines the faith of the Church. One can see this historical realism in de Lubac’s description of the sacraments, his understanding of the revelation given in Christ, and in the way in which he understands the relationship between Word and sacrament.

In his sacramental theology, de Lubac is aware that the word *sacramentum* was used in a variety of ways in the early Church. Quoting Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, he observes: “In the primitive Church the word ‘sacrament’ was used to indicate historical events, the words of Scripture and those elements of religious worship that make known the saving action of Christ and which therefore allow the Eternal to manifest himself in time and even to become present in it, as constituting its true inner reality.”¹¹ De Lubac recognizes the broad usage of the term sacrament in the tradition, but this definition in particular points to the essential relationship between the sacrament and the historical event to which it bears witness. According to this definition, the sacraments “indicate historical events,” united with the saving actions of Christ, which allow the “Eternal to manifest himself in time.” Furthermore, this sacramental presence is not a mere episodic appearance in time, some sort of aberration, but this presence constitutes “its (the temporal order’s) true inner reality.” It is in the context of God’s presence in history that de Lubac works out in his sacramental theology.

In *The Splendor of the Church*, de Lubac describes the sacraments as “the sensible bond between two worlds.”¹² Here the sacramental mediation is described in more traditional terms as that which is locked in the tension between “figure” and “fullness.” This “bond” has two characteristics. First, “it is the sign of something else, it must be passed through, and this not in

¹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* 15. Here Pope John Paul II quotes Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei* (September 3, 1965): AAS 57 (1965), 764. This is seemingly less directed at the *sole fide* rejection of the sacrifice of the Mass, than at the many Catholic theologians who have downplayed or rejected the sacrifice of the Mass.

¹¹ Henri de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Br. Richard Arnandez, F.S.C. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 208. The source of these remarks is Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, quoted by Msgr. Robert Coffy and Roger Varro, in “Eglise signe de salut au milieu de Hommes” (Report presented to the plenary Assembly of the French Episcopate at Lourdes, 1971), 32.

¹² Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 203. De Lubac is quoting Joseph de Maistre, *Letter of a Dame Russe* (Works, vol. viii, p.74).

part but wholly.”¹³ The signs are not ends in themselves, but by definition “a sign is something translucent which dissolves before the face of what it manifests.”¹⁴ At the same time the sign is not something intermediate in the sense of something that isolates the two terms, but something that is mediatory, “it unites them by making present that which it evokes.”¹⁵ The second characteristic of the sacrament is that it is not just an empty sign but one that is “essentially related to our present condition.”¹⁶ He describes this condition as one that is neither the “epoch of figures pure and simple” nor the one which has the “full possession of ‘the truth.’”¹⁷ It is within the dynamic tension between “figures” and the “fullness of truth” that the sacraments function. And since this tension remains as constitutive dimension of the faith, the sacrament can never be discarded as something no longer useful. The sacraments are essential to the life of faith. “It is always through it that we reach what it signifies; it can never be superseded, and its bounds cannot be broken.”¹⁸

De Lubac further describes this tension between figure and fullness in terms of the unfolding of salvation history. Just as the Old Covenant is the figure of the New, the sacramental sign is figure of the presence of the fullness which it signs. Just as it is impossible to isolate the revelation of Christ from the context of the Old Covenant, so too the fullness signified in the sacraments cannot be isolated from the sign. Sacramental unity presupposes a historical unity not imposed by any autonomous rationalism, but a unity given in the event of the New Covenant, the One Flesh union of Christ and his Church which has its historical locus in the sacrifice of the Cross.¹⁹ In traditional sacramental language, the Eucharistic union is the *res et sacramentum*, the historical locus of the One Flesh union of Christ and his Church, the fundamental event in history. This historical revelation is the New Covenant, the full revelation of God, the free covenantal revelation of the Father sending the Son to give the Spirit. The unity of history as ordered to and by that event then is sacramental, reflecting the medieval sacramental paradigm: *sacramentum tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, and *res tantum*, which corresponds to the Old Covenant, the New Covenant and the Kingdom of God. This sacramental/historical unity is mediated by the Eucharistic worship of the Church, which is the one sacrifice of the New Covenant. The sacramental sign should be understood in terms of this historical unity.

As historical beings humans cannot simply abstract from the sign to some direct experience of the divine, some direct mystical intuition. The sign cannot be by-passed. If unity with the divine was only achieved through a direct, non-historical experience of the divine, history and the created order would be void of significance. But the Christian experience is precisely the opposite. It affirms the value of the historical mediation of the covenant, and the sacraments reflect that historical mediation and the continued presence of Christ in history. It is from that presence that history takes its meaning and shapes the unique historical nature of the Christian faith.

¹³ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 203.

¹⁴ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 203.

¹⁵ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 204.

¹⁶ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 204.

¹⁷ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 204.

¹⁸ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 204.

¹⁹ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 23. Keefe argues that de Lubac’s theology is “entirely consistent with that post-Berengarian apologetic interest whose programmatic statement is the tripartite medieval paradigm of sacramental realism: *sacramentum tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, *res tantum*.”

Since the faith is ordered to history, it is not surprising that the sacraments can only be understood in the light of the historical revelation of Christ. According to de Lubac, the tension that is found in the sacraments has its origin in Christology. He says that the two characteristic tensions of the sacraments, “figure” and “fullness,” are also constitutive of the revelation given in Christ. From this Christological foundation, he argues that the sacraments are in continuity with this definitive revelation, not only in content, but also in form.²⁰ The fullness of Christ is given historically in the unity of Christ and his Church in the New Covenant. There is no other Christ than the incarnate Christ, whose sacrifice on the Cross is the one perfect sacrifice, the full revelation of the God in history. It is only in and through the historical revelation of Christ that one can know who he is. So, just as one cannot abstract from the incarnate Christ who acts in history to some “non-historical Christ,” one cannot transcend the sacramental mediation of the historical event by which God acts in history. The events of the historical revelation are foundational events. And just as there is no prior revelation apart from the historical covenantal presence of the triune God in history, so too the sacraments cannot be understood apart from their historical origin and reference. The sacraments mediate the events of salvation history and mediate this historical unity.

Today, the event character of the sacrament is challenged by those who see the liturgical symbols of word and sacrament in tension with one another. In response to the post-Reformation division between the liturgy of the sacrament and the liturgy of the word, de Lubac claims that there need be no opposition or “duality” between these two means by which the Church exercises her mission in the world. De Lubac describes that mission in terms of the preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments. These two aspects of this mission complement one another. “In fact—as anyone with any religious instruction knows—the sacrament is never without the gift of the Word, and the Word itself is sacramental.”²¹ He warns against those who “tend to loosen the bond between word and sacrament, or even at times to break it.”²² In this last instance he describes those who think that by minimizing the significance of the sacraments they will increase the importance of the Word. He argues that, in fact, such a view only shows a failure to understand the relationship between the Word and sacrament.

²⁰ Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 204. See also Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 477ff. Keefe argues that de Lubac stands in the Augustinian tradition whose theological method begins with the experience of the world as paradoxical. In the tradition, this “paradox” is expressed in a variety of ways, e.g., *simul iustus et peccator*, flesh and spirit, etc. This experience of existence in fallen creation is “radically paradoxical, apparently contradictory, it is obviously incapable of literal, viz., empirical statement” (479). Underlying this phenomenological approach to the faith is the Augustinian insight that theology is informed by “illumination, or intellectual intuition of unfallen reality” (480). This intuition, given sacramentally in the Church, reveals the disunity of fallen creation by revealing the unity of creation in Christ, a historical unity. Contrary to Platonism, whose intellectual insight locates the unity of being as transcendent to history, Augustine understood the foundation of all grace as an historical event, appropriated in the free worship of the Church. In this worship the truth given in the revelation of Christ, the New Covenant, is appropriated. To follow such a method requires that one resist attempts to rationalize the faith, reducing it to one “pole” of the paradox, thereby abandoning the historical free truth of the Christian faith for some cosmological, non-historical, alternative. Hans Urs von Balthasar describes the significance of paradox in the theology of de Lubac in *The Theology of Henri de Lubac* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 91ff.

²¹ Henri de Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, trans. Sr. Sergia Englund, O.C.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 60.

²² De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 65. See also 345ff where he describes those who interpret Vatican II as placing greater emphasis on the Word to the detriment of the sacraments. He notes that such interpretations are inaccurate.

As noted, de Lubac is careful not to isolate the Word and sacrament into isolated entities, but rather to understand them in terms of their interplay in the mission of the Church. For example, in the pastoral functions of the priest, the Word, worship and governance cannot be separated from each other. The proclamation of the Word is integral to preparations for the sacraments. In a like manner, after the sacraments the Word is continued in pastoral preaching.²³ At the same time, the proclamation cannot be separated from the sacrament and finds its fullest expression in the sacrifice of the Mass. De Lubac contends that the priest fulfills his role as the “messenger of the Gospel . . . in the highest way in which the Word is realized, that of the Eucharistic celebration, anamnesis of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”²⁴

De Lubac points out that Vatican II reinforces this unity of Word and sacraments, but remains insistent upon the primacy of the Eucharistic sacrifice. He says the “Council describes for us the sacramental functions, and particularly that of the Eucharist; it tells us that the source and summit of all evangelization is there. Thus, very far from opposing these two functions or from neglecting one in favor of the other, it unites them perfectly. Further on, it says that the Eucharist is the root, the center of the Christian community.”²⁵ In the Eucharist, it is not the worship of the believers, the *sacrificium laudis*, that is the cause of the Church, but the one sacrifice of the cross. It is the one sacrifice of Christ that is the event in which the New Covenant is established. The *sacrificium laudis* is the Church’s free response to that offer of grace, a freedom given to the Church by the one sacrifice of the cross. And since that event—the sacrifice of the cross—continues to be mediated in the sacrifice of the Mass, de Lubac understands the Church as the community founded upon and ordered to and by her Eucharistic worship from her very beginning.²⁶ It is precisely this Eucharistic community that writes the New Testament. And since the Eucharist is the source of the Church’s life, it remains the center of all evangelization, but “the twofold ministry of the Word and the Eucharist has always been bound together and entrusted to the same ministry.”²⁷

Thus de Lubac understands the relationship between the Word and sacrament to be complementary, but with the priority given to the Eucharist as the norm for understanding the scriptures. As noted, the Eucharist is the “source” and “summit” of all evangelization. But, the exact reason for this becomes clear when one examines the nature of the Eucharist, since the normative nature of the Eucharist arises out of its historicity; i.e., its sacramental nature having the character of “historical events.”²⁸

²³ De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 66-67.

²⁴ De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 67. Here de Lubac is quoting Karl Rahner, “*L’essence du sacerdoce ministerial*,” *Concilium*, 43:81.

²⁵ De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 348.

²⁶ It is precisely this relationship that Fr. Donald Keefe works out in *Appendix II* to his *Covenantal Theology*.

²⁷ De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 348.

²⁸ In *The Splendor of the Church*, de Lubac states that just as the “spiritual” sense of the Eucharist does not undermine the literal or historical sense, the spiritual sense of scripture does not undermine or eliminate the “literal sense or add something else to it, but rather rounds it out and gives it fullness, revealing its depths and bringing out its objective extension” (159). Note that the Eucharist is not only normative in terms of its reference to definitive event in history, but is here the “methodological norm” for interpreting Scripture. Because of its unique character, the New Covenant has no “*a priori*.” It is the metaphysical foundation and center of the Christian understanding of reality. See Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 470ff.

According to de Lubac the historical nature of the faith, as that of the sacraments, needs to be understood in terms of the revelation given in Christ. He holds that the revelation of Christ includes and completes the whole of salvation history, including that of the Old Covenant. He describes the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments as at the same time one of continuity and one of “radical breach.”²⁹ Yet both the Old Testament and the New Testament find their meaning and fullness in Christ.³⁰ In fact de Lubac says that the Jews who did not recognize Jesus “lost their understanding of Scripture itself.”³¹ The Christ event becomes the norm for understanding the whole of salvation history, and apart from that unifying truth one cannot understand the meaning of Scripture.

De Lubac states that the difference between the two testaments is that in the New Testament Christ offers something new, a newness of life, a new grace that transcends the Old Covenant. He notes that there is as a lack of “proportion” between Old Testament and the new creation that fulfills it.³² The New Covenant is on a radically different plane from the Old in a variety of ways. But despite the differences between the covenants, de Lubac says that the death and resurrection of Christ unifies the two Testaments. “The Cross of Jesus is the key, unique and universal. By the sacrament of the Cross, he unites the two Testaments into a single body of doctrine, blending the ancient precepts with the grace of the Gospel.”³³ Christ is able to unite the two Testaments because he is the definitive revelation of God. “Thus Jesus effects the unity of Scripture because he is its end and its fullness. Everything in Scripture is related to him. And he is its unique Object.”³⁴ As the full revelation of God, Christ completes the Old Covenant, standing above the revelation of the Old Testament fulfilling it in a new and definitive way.

On account of the definitive nature of the revelation given in Christ, Christ himself is understood to be the center of salvation history and therefore the key to the exegesis of scripture. As the Word of God, Jesus Christ is the exegete of Scripture. “*Christus, qui solus intelligentiam Scripturarum aperit.*”³⁵ What is significant here is that de Lubac does not describe this “exegesis” on the part of Jesus in terms of his words but in terms of his acts. “Jesus is Exegete of Scripture pre-eminently in the act in which he fills his mission, at the solemn hour for which he came: in the act of sacrifice, at the hour of his death on the Cross.”³⁶ “The point is that the exegesis of Christ, in all its essential and decisive aspects, is not principally a matter of words: it is something in act. It is Act itself. ‘*Omnis enim dubietas tollitur et veritas declaratur, ubi non verbis sed rebus ipsis Veritas probatur.*’”³⁷ The actions of Christ are the full revelation of the triune God, as the Father sends the Son, to give the Spirit. In the passion of Christ, the mission of the Son achieves the full complete revelation of the triune life in the one perfect offering of the one perfect sacrifice. This free gift of the Son in the One Flesh union with the Church is the New

²⁹ Henri de Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, trans. Luke O’Neill (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 101.

³⁰ De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, 85ff.

³¹ De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, 91.

³² De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, 102.

³³ Henri de Lubac, *The Sources of the Revelation*, trans. Luke O’Neill (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 109. See also *Corpus Mysticum*, 233ff.

³⁴ De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, 105.

³⁵ De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, 106. He quotes Herve, *In Is.*, (Pl, 181, 557D).

³⁶ De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, 109.

³⁷ De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, He quotes Peter of Corn, *Disp. Adv. Sim jud.* (R. W. Hunt, in *Studies in Medieval History*, 1948, 154).

Covenant. As historical events, these acts themselves are the fullness of revelation of the triune God, and the words of scripture bear witness to those events. It is precisely the acts that define the words and bring them to their full meaning.³⁸

Contrary to the historical claims made here, there are many other religions and certain interpretations of Christianity that understand time and space as antithetical to unity, truth, goodness, and therefore as unable to mediate the divine. From this perspective, temporality is only viewed as the source of decay and death. The events of space and time are ephemeral, mere phenomena, without intrinsic significance. According to such a view of history, to find ultimate meaning, unity, truth and beauty, one needs to escape from the temporal realm to enter into what is real. This way of understanding the world has certainly influenced thinking in Eastern religions, and at times this thinking has also come to affect the way in which Christianity has been understood. But de Lubac rejects any view of Christianity that undermines the historical mediation of the faith. According to de Lubac, in Christianity events are understood to possess their own intrinsic intelligibility in relations to the New Covenant. The historical revelation is not understood to be isolated phenomena, but historical events capable of mediating the fullness of the divine.³⁹ In the Christ-event, the incarnation, death and resurrection, the New Covenant not only reveals God in the temporal order, but testifies to the fundamental historical unity of all reality. De Lubac argues that “there are not two different orders of reality, but only one, that of the Covenant which had creation for its first act; and Christ is its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and end; and this order is supernatural.”⁴⁰ One cannot separate any dimension of reality from the central event of Christ, a historical event.⁴¹

³⁸ De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition* 194. De Lubac says that Christianity is not a religion of the Word in its written form, but an incarnate and living Word, a “living and effective Word” (194). This word is unique and personal. In his description of the use of allegory he distinguishes between Christian allegory and the cosmological use of allegory. They differ as to their “term.” The cosmological use of allegory tended to abstract from the particular. The myths gave way to some timeless truth. “In other words, they were abstract truths outside of time; they were ideas about the world, about the soul, about the divinity; they were speculations of the moral and metaphysical order” (*Scripture in the Tradition*, 162). In the Christian use of allegory, on the other hand, there is no myth or philosophical abstraction. “What is proposed here is to ‘introduce through figures’—the events and the laws of the Old Covenant—‘to the view of the Truth,’ which is nothing other than the ‘fullness of Christ.’ In this way we are really going, at least taking a first step, from history to history—although certainly not to history alone, or at least not to the mere exterior of history. We are led through a series of individual facts up to another individual Fact; a series of divine interventions, whose very reality is pregnant with meaning, leading up to another kind of divine intervention, no less real, but more profound and more decisive. Everything culminates in a Great Fact, which in its unique individuality has multiple repercussions; which dominates history and is the bearer of all light as of all spiritual fecundity: the *Fact of Christ*” (163-164). (Here de Lubac cites Origen, *In Jo.1. 6, c. 3, nn.14-15* [109].) Later in *Scripture in the Tradition*, de Lubac again argues, in the context of his discussion of Origen, that “Once again it was a Fact: the *Fact of Christ*. He showed this unique Fact, this wondrous reality, for which no analogue exists, with all that it presupposed and all that it entailed; and he everywhere discerned their foretelling in the Scriptures and their flowering in the Church. The Summit of history, the fact of Christ, presupposed history, and its radiance transfigured history” (170). As Christian exegesis develops, what prevents it from falling into gnosticism is its relationship to historical facts, to events.

³⁹ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1950), 80.

⁴⁰ De Lubac, *Nature and Grace*, 190. Here he is quoting Jean Mouroux, “*Sur la dignité de la personne humaine*” in *L’Eglise dans le monde de ce temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1967) 232.

⁴¹ In his *Covenantal Theology*, Fr. Keefe argues that the unity of being is historical, not structural. Contrary to all other competing metaphysics which posit an opposition between the fullness of truth, beauty, the divine, and material reality, Keefe contends that the unity of the order of being is historical, the free unity of the New Covenant.

The word, then, culminates in the Eucharist as the summit of evangelization, the one sacrifice of the New Covenant. In the same manner that the word is interpreted in the light of the events or acts of Christ, the word is now understood in terms of the Eucharist which, as the sacrament of the New Covenant, is also an event.⁴² What this means is that Scripture waits upon some prior or subsequent event for completion or interpretation, while the Eucharist does not, since it has the character of an event for which there is no prior possibility. In the Eucharist the event is the New Covenant, the full revelation of the Son, who reveals the meaning of all things, both the orders of creation and redemption. According to de Lubac, the Eucharist is the representation of the one sacrifice that fulfills salvation history. In it, the sacrifices of the Old Law that prefigure the one perfect sacrifice of Christ are brought to completion.⁴³ And, as noted, the unique and universal nature of the cross that is represented in the sacrifice of the Mass unites the Old Testament and the New. It is the sacrificial aspect, the sacrifice of the Mass, the one perfect sacrifice of the cross of Christ that is the event represented in the Eucharistic sacrifice that informs the sacrament.

The essential unity of the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the cross is affirmed by de Lubac in *Corpus Mysticum*. He argues that the Eucharist is a sacrifice and that one cannot understand the Eucharist apart from the sacrifice of Christ. He criticizes those who separate the sacrifice and the sacrament when describing the Eucharist.

Because the sacrament cannot be understood apart from the sacrifice during which it comes into being and to which in its permanent state, it must retain a reference: '*In the sacrament of the Body of Christ his death is announced*'; and for its part, the sacrifice is itself a sacrament: '*For the sacrifice is a sacrament.*' Ritual sacrifice and sacramental sacrifice, they are one in the same. There is nothing contained within it that is not essentially related to the Passion of our Savior: '*What is performed in the celebration of the Mass is performed in the sacrament of the Lord's passion.*' It is the daily sacrament whose 'substance' is the unique Sacrifice accomplished by Christ in the days of the flesh: 'Of this reality he wished the sacrifice of the Church to be a daily sacrament.'⁴⁴

This Eucharistic sacrifice is not another sacrifice, but is the unique sacrifice of Christ's passion: sacrifice and the sacrament are one. In the sacramental action, the Eucharist signifies a past action and the mystery of the passion is "commemorated" and "reproduced."⁴⁵ It should be

Keefe claims that this same Augustinian understanding of the historical foundation of the faith can be found in de Lubac.

⁴² De Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, 112.

⁴³ Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds, CJ, Richard Price, and Christopher Stephens, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 202ff.

⁴⁴ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 58. De Lubac cites: Lanfranc, *In I Cor.* (P.L., 150, 194B); Deudeduit, *Libellus contra invasores et simoniacos (Libelli de lite*, t. II, p. 325); Amalaire, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, praefatio (P.L., 105, 989A); Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, l. 10, c. 20 (P.L., 41, 298).

⁴⁵ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 59ff. In this particular text de Lubac describes the reality signified as *une chose*, then he goes on to describe the sacramental presence as *ou plutôt une action*. He understands that the sacramental presence cannot be separated from the action of Christ's passion. The Eucharist commemorates and reproduces the passion.

emphasized that the sacramental realism depicted here is not only that of local presence, although de Lubac certainly does not deny such a presence, but the objective, sacramental presence is that of an event: i.e., in the Eucharist one participates in the passion of Christ. The *corpus mysticum* of the Eucharistic sacrifice is the body mystically immolated and offered, and it symbolizes the body really immolated and offered.⁴⁶ The sacramental unity of the one sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Mass is not a “transhistorical” unity through which one overcomes history to find Christ, but it is an historical unity, a participation in the mystery of the event of the passion of Christ. The Mass “is the one and only sacrifice of the Head and His members.”⁴⁷ Again, the one historic sacrifice of Christ is the event represented in the sacrifice of the Mass. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the passion, the sacrament of redemption.⁴⁸

What is of interest for the question of the historicity of the faith and of the Church is that de Lubac, in recovering the richness of the event character of the Eucharist, avoids the rationalisms that reduce the Eucharistic presence to a mere subjective event or a mere passive presence. His theology of the Eucharist is based on the realization that the participation in the event of the passion of the Lord, the pre-eminent event in history, makes the Eucharist the center of the life of faith. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the sacrifice of the New Covenant, and therefore the fullness of the faith is given in the Eucharist. As the participation in the fullness of the revelation of God, the Eucharist is the norm for understanding the faith, for determining the historicity of the faith and for the study of theology.⁴⁹

The influence of Lubac’s understanding of the theology of the Eucharist is also reflected in his writings pertaining to the nature of the Church. According to him, the Church is the continued presence of the Body of Christ in history. In *Corpus Mysticum*, he develops this ecclesiology out of his study of patristic and medieval writings. In particular, he studies the use of terms *corpus mysticum* which were first used to designate the Church and later came to be

⁴⁶ De Lubac *Corpus Mysticum*, 59ff. De Lubac is retrieving an interpretation of the Eucharist that has been missing from theological debate since the eleventh century. In that century, Berengarius, archdeacon of Angers, challenged the prevailing Eucharistic realism. His criticism “centered upon a denial of the occurrence of any real change in the Eucharistic elements by reason of their consecration” (Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 512). Keefe contends that Berengarius introduces a new way of thinking about the Eucharist. And his empiricism did not permit a real historical presence. No longer able to accept the change in elements, he “goes on to discover that the only possible alternative explanation is the reduction of the presence of Christ to subjectivity” (214- 215). This rationalism results in a shift in the discussion of the Eucharist that has influenced subsequent theological discussion of the sacrament. One result is the use of language associated with impanation or “indwelling” as employed by Berengarius. In reaction to his position, the language that came to be used overemphasized the Eucharistic presence, while separating it from the One Sacrifice of the Cross. Keefe argues that if the Mass is not a sacrifice, the tendency is to reduce the reality of the Eucharist to a subjective experience, *sola fide*. Against the dehistoricizing tendencies of the *sola fide* interpretation of the Eucharistic symbols, Keefe sees de Lubac as recovering the richness of the theology of the Eucharistic lost under the influence of Berengarius by recovering the historical character of the Eucharist. Keefe examines this at length *Appendix II* to *Covenantal Theology*, 94ff.

⁴⁷ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 143. Here de Lubac is quoting Eugène Masure, *Le Sacrifice du Corps Mystique*, 1950, 191-200.

⁴⁸ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 73. Here he quotes Augustine, “*mysterium corporis est mysterium passionis*.”

⁴⁹ Durwell, “Eucharist and Parousia,” 303ff. According to Durwell, the fullness of the eschaton is found in the Eucharist. De Lubac, contrary to Durwell, stresses the fullness given in the historical sacrifice of the New Covenant. Durwell does admit that the parousia is present in the pasch and that one cannot separate the Eucharistic presence from the sacrifice of the Mass (291). The two emphases are not incompatible.

commonly applied to the Eucharist. He argues that in the thought of Christian antiquity the Eucharist is related to the Church as cause to effect.⁵⁰ Following Augustine, he develops an ecclesiology on this Eucharistic foundation.

Thus everything points to a study of the salvation between the Church and the Eucharist, which we may describe as standing as cause to each other. Each has been entrusted to the other, so to speak, by Christ; the Church produces the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also produces the Church. In the first instance the Church is involved in her active aspect—in the exercise of her sanctifying power; in the second case she is involved in her passive aspect, as the Church of the sanctified. But in their last analysis it is the one Body which builds itself up through this mysterious interaction in and through the conditions of our present existence up to the day of its consummation.⁵¹

The historical locus of this interaction of Christ and the Church is found in the Eucharist. The mystical body, the *corpus in mysterio*, is “signified and realized by the Eucharist—in other words the unity of the Christian community which is made real by the ‘holy mysteries’ in an effective symbol (in the strict sense of the word ‘effective’).”⁵²

Again, the Eucharist is not only the cause of the Church, as a past event, but the source of her continued existence and unity. Being fed by the same body of our Lord, the Church becomes the Body of Christ. To describe the unity between the Eucharist and the Church, de Lubac makes reference to St. Leo’s insight. “The participation in the body and blood of Christ effect nothing short of this, that we pass over unto that which we receive.”⁵³ Commenting on the Eucharistic unity of Christ and his Church, Lubac states that “The Head and the members make one single body: Bridegroom and Bride are ‘one flesh’. There are not two Christs one personal and the other ‘mystical’. And there is certainly no confusion of Head with members; Christians are not the ‘physical’ (or Eucharistic) body of Christ, and the Bride is not the Bridegroom. The distinctions between the Church as the Body of Christ and the Eucharistic Body of Christ remain, but distinctions are not the same as discontinuity; the Church is not just a body, but the Body of Christ; man must not separate what God has united—therefore ‘let him not separate the Church from the Lord.’”⁵⁴ De Lubac adds, “If the Church is the fullness of Christ, Christ in His Eucharist is truly the heart of the Church.”⁵⁵ The source of this unity, the locus of the covenantal unity of Christ and the Church, is the Eucharist.⁵⁶

Since the historicity of the Church, as that of the Eucharist, has its source in the event of the passion, it is not surprising that in describing the concrete nature of the Church, de Lubac likens it to the Eucharistic sacrifice. This relationship is not an identity but a unity. Again, the

⁵⁰ *Corpus Mysticum*, 14ff. On this aspect of de Lubac’s theology see Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*. Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in *Dialogue* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993).

⁵¹ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 134.

⁵² De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 133.

⁵³ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 158. Here he is quoting Sixteenth Catechetical Homily, no. 24: cf. Sermo LXIII, ch vii (PL, 54, 357c).

⁵⁴ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 159-160.

⁵⁵ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 160-161.

⁵⁶ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 148, 154.

Church is not the Eucharistic Body, although the appellation “the Body of Christ” is ascribed to both. The source of their unity is their participation in the same mystery. “The Church, like the Eucharist, is a mystery of unity—the same mystery, and one with inexhaustible riches. Both are the body of Christ—the same body.”⁵⁷

Following the hypothesis of this article, if the Eucharist is the source of the life of the Church, whose historicity is determined by its representation of the sacrifice of the cross in the Mass, then the historicity of the Church will reflect its historical source in the one sacrifice of the New Covenant. For de Lubac this means that the Church is where the mystery of the living passion of Christ is offered, so that to receive communion is to be nourished by the cross of the Lord.⁵⁸ The Catholic liturgy is “the sacrament of His sacrifice, and the memorial of His death.”⁵⁹ The Eucharistic sacrifice is the continual reference to the cross of Christ which informs the life of the Church. Again, every Christian is called to unity with Christ through his or her participation in the one sacrifice of Christ. In the sacrifice of the Mass, one is free to participate in that one sacrifice.

In discussing the Church, de Lubac warns of the misuse of terms such as mystery and mystical when referring to the Body of Christ. He says that people often understand such terms to mean spiritual or “less real” than what is meant by a reference to a “natural Body.” In other instances, people equate “mystical” with “invisible.” He also notes that others often see the relationship between the Body of Christ and the Church as the Body of Christ as only moral or metaphorical.⁶⁰ In these instances, the true historical unity and relationship between the Church and the Eucharist has been lost or neglected so that an adequate understanding of the “Body of Christ” is no longer possible.

In contrast to these usages, de Lubac argues that *corpus mysticum* “refers rather to the sensible sign of a reality which is divine and hidden, pointing in no uncertain fashion to that Church which is, according to St. Paul, ‘the body of Christ.’”⁶¹ Again, the key to understanding the meaning of the term “mystical” body and its application to the Church is the Eucharist. In fact, he states that those who might try to understand the Church apart from the Eucharist cannot see the Church in her full historical reality.

It would therefore be wrong to do no more than talk of a “physical” body of Christ present in the Eucharist and then of another body which is “mystical”, merely linking the two more or less closely. “That is certainly not how St. Paul saw it. For him, there is only one body of Christ—Christ’s resurrected humanity. But the Church who exists only by participation in this humanity of Christ, the life-giving Spirit, who is offered to her in the Eucharist, is herself simply the ‘fullness of him who fulfills himself wholly in all things’.” Thus it was “at the Last Supper that the formula ‘body of Christ’ received the stamp which gave the

⁵⁷ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 156.

⁵⁸ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 74. Also, “The ‘unanimous life of the Church’ is not a natural growth; it is lived through faith; our unity is the fruit of Calvary, and the results from the Mass’s application to us of the merits of the Passion, with a view to our final redemption” (156).

⁵⁹ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 155-156.

⁶⁰ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*. 127ff.

⁶¹ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*. 132.

expression its character”. According to St. Paul there is a “mystical identification” between Christ and His Church, and the reality of the Eucharistic presence is a guarantee for us of the “mystical” reality of the Church.⁶²

It is the same body of Christ found in both, concretely present in the Eucharist and in the Church. Yet, as the sacrament of the passion of Christ, the Eucharist is given priority in that in the Eucharist the one sacrifice of Christ continues to be present in history.

Eucharistic realism and ecclesial realism are the guarantee one of the other. Today it is above all our faith in Real Presence, made precise and explicit as a consequence of centuries of controversy and analysis, which leads us to faith in the ecclesial body; the mystery of the Church, effectively signified as it is by the mystery of the altar, should have the same kind of nature and the same kind of depth. With the early Fathers and particularly among the school of St. Augustine, the approach was often the inverse of this; emphasis was on the effect rather than the cause. They went straight to the *virtus unitatis* of the sacrament. Yet the ecclesial realism to which they bear us witness everywhere in the most explicit fashion is also the guarantee of their Eucharistic realism should this ever be in question, for the cause must be adequate to the effect.⁶³

The “nature” and “depth” of the Church reflects that of its cause, the Eucharist. The historicity of the Church is the historicity of the Eucharist.

The concrete sacramental realism of the Church is further evidenced in de Lubac’s description of the Church as a sacrament. Of course, by this he means not only that the Church is the locus of the sacraments, but that “she is herself the great sacrament which contains and vitalizes all others.”⁶⁴ She is the sacrament of Christ, the same body—the Body of Christ. As the Body of Christ, she stands in perfect unity with Christ her Head whom she mediates to the believer. Moreover, her role in the mediation of Christ is essential to the process of salvation. “Her whole end is to show us Christ, lead us to Him, and communicate His grace to us; to put it in a nutshell, she exists solely to put us into relation with Him. She alone can do that, and it is the task which she never completes; there will never be a moment, either in the life of the individual or in the life of the race, in which her role ought to come to an end or even could come to an end. If the world lost the Church, it would lose redemption too.”⁶⁵ Following Church tradition, de Lubac asserts that, since the fullness of the New Covenant is present in the Church, salvation is an ecclesial event. The Church, then, is not simply a collection of believers whose coming to faith is prior to their unity with the Church, but each believer comes to faith only in the Church. The Church is the “sacrament” of Christ and alone mediates the fullness of the grace of her Head, Christ. “He who is not, one way or another, a member of the body does not receive the influx from the Head: He who does not cling to the one Bride is not loved by the Bridegroom.”⁶⁶

⁶² De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 157. De Lubac quotes Louis Bouyer, *Vie Monastique*, 148-149 and L. Cerfaux, *Théologies de l’Eglise*, 201-215.

⁶³ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 158, note 134.

⁶⁴ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 203.

⁶⁵ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 204.

⁶⁶ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 211.

Christ's presence in history is mediated by the Church. One cannot dismiss or supersede the Church in the order of salvation. "Practically speaking, for each one of us Christ is his Church."⁶⁷

The richness of the covenantal and historical unity of Christ and the Church can be further understood in terms of Mary and her participation in the New Covenant. De Lubac, speaking of the Church and Mary, says that "These two mysteries of the faith are not just solitary: we might say that they are the 'one single and unique mystery.'"⁶⁸ He notes that throughout the tradition the same biblical symbols are applied to both. "As far as the Christian mind is concerned, Mary is the 'ideal figure of the Church,' the 'sacrament' of it and the 'mirror in which the whole Church is reflected.'"⁶⁹ Mary is both the mother of the Church and she represents the Church in its totality. The complete virtues and holiness of the Church are already present in her. Therefore, it is helpful for understanding the nature of the Church to look at the terms that are used to describe Mary. For example, the attribution to the Church of the motherhood of Mary is not simply a dispensable metaphor, but refers to the relationship of Mary and the Church to the New Covenant.

In order to understand what de Lubac means when he says that Mary represents the fullness of the Church, two points are helpful for the present discussion. First, he sees Mary as the "perfect Church, the final communion of all the faithful."⁷⁰ In one way she is the type of the Church. Just as she gives herself completely and sinlessly over to the mission of the Son, in a like manner the Church, the Bride of Christ washed in the blood of the Lamb, mediates the grace of Christ in history. In her life Mary "contains" all that the Church really is. He says:

Our Lady speaks and acts in the name of the Church at every moment of her existence—"she shows forth in herself the figure of the Holy Church"—not, of course, in virtue of some decision which is an afterthought nor, obviously, because of an explicit intention on her part, but because she already carries the Church within her, so to speak, and contains it, in its wholeness, in her own person.⁷¹

There is no dimension of the Church that is not already prefigured in Mary. In Mary all the perfections of the Church are present. In fact, de Lubac, when speaking of the relationship of

⁶⁷ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 211. Just as de Lubac warns against attempts to separate the Eucharist from any understanding of the Church, he also states that one must not try to separate faith from the Church. One cannot "go beyond" or separate the spiritual life from the Church (205). "Today we have reality in our signs, and this state of affairs cannot be superseded as long as this world lasts. Insofar as we misinterpret the situation, we will lapse from our condition of hope into mythology" (207).

⁶⁸ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 317. De Lubac cites Ruperto Maria of Manresa, quoted by R. Laurentin in the conclusion of his *Marie, l'Eglise et le Sacerdoce*.

⁶⁹ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 321. In this text de Lubac makes reference to Dillenschneider, *Le Mystère de la Corédemption Mariale*, 1951, 79; Hymn *Marie Praeconio*, 13th cent. (Analecta Hymn., vol. liv, 391); and Pierre Ganne, S.J., "La Vierge Marie dans le Vie de l'Eglise," in *Dialogue sur la Vierge*, 1950, 152.

⁷⁰ Henri de Lubac, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, trans. James R. Dunne (Staten Island: Abba House, 1969), 58-59.

⁷¹ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 321.

Mary and the Church, speaks of the “exchange of idioms.”⁷² What is said of Mary can be said of the Church. So that just as Christ is given life through Mary’s free response to the offer of grace, the Church gives life to new Christians. One and the same fullness of the New Covenant is present in both Mary and the Church.

Second, if creation is in Christ, the New Covenant, which is the primordial source of all life and grace, and Mary’s response is essential to that covenant, then Mary must have a role in the order of creation and so must the Church. The role that the Church plays in the order of creation is already prefigured by Mary, the Second Eve. This of course points to the pre-existent Church, whose unity with Christ in the New Covenant is Marian. “For it was in her—that is, in her womb—that the whole Church was betrothed to the Word (Jesus Christ) and united to God by an eternal alliance”; *Partus Mariae, fructus Ecclesiae*.⁷³ In the New Covenant, then, the Church, like Mary, has its source and life in the one flesh union of Christ with his Bride. It is this nuptial unity, which has its origin in the historical sacrifice of Christ that constitutes the New Covenant. The “one flesh” union of the New Covenant, requires the free response of the free creature, whether Mary or the Church. It is this covenantal unity that forms the foundation of the free created order.⁷⁴

The free response of Mary to the offer of grace is not cosmological, but historical. In her “fiat,” the grace of Christ enters the created order and becomes concrete in her free response, a decision in the life of a particular human being. Yet her case is special. She is the “genuine universal concrete,” since it is in her that Christ enters concretely into history.⁷⁵ The Church, whose life mirrors the historicity of Mary, has the same historical presence. “The one carried Life in her womb, while the other carries Him in the wellspring of the Sacrament. What was once granted in the flesh to Mary is now granted spiritually to the Church; she conceives the Word in her unfaltering faith, bears Him in a spirit freed from all corruption and contains Him in a soul overshadowed by the power of the most High.”⁷⁶ What was once present in Mary remains present in the Church. Again, in the same way that Mary bore the earthly Christ, “the Church bears the Eucharistic Christ.”⁷⁷ De Lubac identifies the presence of Christ in Mary with the presence of the Eucharistic Christ in the worship of the Church. This covenantal unity is primordial, the source of all life and grace.

⁷² De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 329. To this point one might argue that there is a parallel between the *fiat* of Mary and the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist.

⁷³ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 336. He is citing the *Akathistos Hymn*, v.230 (in the ninth –century Latin translation): “*Ave princeps redemptae plasmationis!*” and Pseudo-Ildephonsus, *Sermo II de Assumptione* B. M. V. (PL, 96, 252).

⁷⁴ This idea of a free created order is at the center of Keefe’s *Covenantal Theology*. As far as I can tell, de Lubac accepts the essential role of Mary and the Church in the New Covenant but does not speculate on it. What is at issue here is a notion of the primordially of the New Covenant and the Church’s relationship to that event. It sounds odd to say that the Church, the Bride of Christ, is the “effect” of the One Flesh union with Christ, and at the same time the free historical response to the sacrifice of the cross, a response made possible because the Church is made holy, washed in the blood of the cross. To understand this better, one needs to look at the meaning of pre-existence as it applies to Christ and the Church. See Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 655ff.

⁷⁵ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 351.

⁷⁶ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 323.

⁷⁷ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 330. De Lubac is citing Carl Feckes, “*Maria als Vorbild, Mutter and Herze der Kirche*,” in *Das Mysterium des hl.Kirche*, Paderborn, 1935, pp. 270-271.

The role of Mary and the Church in the order of creation is illuminated further by the belief that all of creation is created for them. Despite the fact that both have life and grace by the blood of the cross and that Mary is a member of the Church, the whole of creation is ordered by and to the New Covenant, which is the primordial source of the whole created order.⁷⁸ Mary and the Church represent the free response to the offer of grace, which as the grace of Christ is the sole source of truth and life. The reason why this is so important is that this understanding of the faith unites history and reality; the revelation and creation are united in Christ. The New Covenant is the source of redemption and creation; so there is nothing in history and creation that is foreign to what is given in the revelation of Christ. Mary and Church are the free historical response to this primordial offer of grace.

De Lubac so emphasizes the unity of Christ and the Church that it appears at times that de Lubac speaks of the Church and Christ as if they were identical, yet it is clear that their relationship is not monadic, but nuptial.⁷⁹ It is a unity that has its source in the nuptial relationship of the New Covenant; i.e., the offer of the fullness of life by Christ to the Church washed and made holy by the blood of the cross. The Church, in union with its Head, is the Body of Christ, the extension of the life of Christ. The nuptial, sacramental, covenantal nature of the Church is the essence of her life. She exists in her free historical response to the Father's sending of the Son which culminates in the New Testament. She is the continued historical presence of that covenantal unity. "The Church is not simply the *res tantum* of the sacraments; rather, she is also the *res et sacramentum*: the sacrament of Christ in the present age, as well as the *res tantum sacramenti*: the eschatological fulfillment of her sacramental historicity, and the *res et sacramentum* of the Eucharist: the utterly reliable and unambiguous effective sign."⁸⁰ As both sign and the effect, the Church's historicity mirrors the historicity of its cause, the Eucharist. As *res et sacramentum* she reflects the full historicity of the faith.⁸¹ This historicity is the free nuptial unity of the One Flesh union of Christ and his Church.

⁷⁸ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 339.

⁷⁹ In some theologies the relationship of Christ to the Church is simply identified as "one body." This can result in a monadic reduction of the Church to Christ. This union is nuptial, the unity of the Christ and the Church. The Church as the Body of Christ is understood in terms of the marital imagery of the New Covenant, the nuptial "One Flesh" union of Christ and his Bride, the Church. This nuptial order is consistent with the covenantal order of creation and redemption. See Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 238ff.

⁸⁰ Daniel Hauser, *Church, Worship and History: Catholic Systematic Theology* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1997), 272.

⁸¹ Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 630-631. Keefe, commenting on de Lubac's *Corpus Mysticum*, 274ff, says that de Lubac argues that "the concept of sacramental efficacy as that of a sign causing was already giving way in the twelfth century with Peter Lombard (SUMMA SENTENTIARUM IV. DIST. 8,4), to a notion of the sign containing the reality, rather than causing it by signifying it The result as de Lubac has lucidly observed is that the classic language of *res non significans, sed significata tantum* (commonly abbreviated to *res tantum*) now suggest the equation: *res tantum* = *res non contenta*, so what for Augustine was the supreme reality of the sacraments, the ultimate goal, the free solidarity with the second Adam, which is the ultimate *gratia Christi*, thereby risks expulsion from the sacrament, as without sacramental content, thus without sacramental interest, and consequently without relation to sacramental worship." Keefe goes on to argue that such a view of the sacraments reduces them to "a private response *ex opere operantis*," wherein the sacrament has no sign causality. The result is a "spiritualization" and dehistoricization of the sacraments that leads one to believe that the sacraments are not essential to the faith, since grace is found apart from them. Keefe argues that this misinterpretation of Augustine needs to be refuted.

Instead Keefe argues that for Augustine "the Church is indeed the *res et sacramentum* of the Eucharist, not as the Body referred to in the words of consecration, but rather as One Flesh with the Body. In this free covenantal union with her Eucharistic Lord the Church as the Second Eve is the ultimate and ineluctably correlative effect of

What is evident is that de Lubac understands the sacraments, and thereby the historicity of the faith, to be shaped by Eucharistic worship of the Church, whose essential character is understood to be that of an event. This event is that of the New Covenant, the one event to which and by which history is ordered. Yet many theologians argue against such a view of the Church, sacraments and the historicity of the faith. By affirming this, de Lubac implicitly stands against those theologians who reject such a view of history.⁸² This is especially an important point today where the holiness and authority of the Church are often challenged or rejected by numerous theologians.

I have been arguing that in his theology Henri de Lubac insists upon the essentially historical nature of the faith, understood in terms of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the New Covenant. As the central worship of the Church, this is the unique means by which the Church participates

the Eucharistic sacramental-sacrificial presence of Christ under the signs of bread and wine: the Eucharistic representation of the union of the second Adam and the second Eve represents it as free, as the New Covenant instituted by Christ's blood. In the *Una Caro* of the Eucharistic *res et sacramentum*, Christ and his bridal Church compose *mia sarx . . .*" (631). The Church, then, has the full historicity of the Eucharist. The "Church is caused by the Eucharistic presence of Christ that is signed by the consecrated bread and wine, and not vice versa, quite as the New Covenant is caused by his sacrifice not hers." Like de Lubac, Keefe argues that the consecration, what Augustine calls *feri*, has the character of an event and reflects the event character of the Eucharistic presence. According to Augustine, the *feri* refers to the bread and wine becoming the body and blood of Christ. See Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 535ff, 485-486, 489-495.

⁸² Cf. note 36 supra. Within Protestant theology this debate had one of its modern foci in the Bultmannian existential interpretation of the faith. His critics claim that he severs the faith from its historical roots. As noted, the Lutheran scholar Oscar Cullmann defended the historical nature of the faith in his theological works. Many of his criticisms are aimed at Bultmann's theology. Bultmann's theology also drew criticisms from theologians in almost every denomination. See Georges Florovsky, "The Predicament of the Christian Historian," in *God, History and Historians*, ed. C.T. McIntire (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). He claims that Bultmann reduces the faith to a non-historical abstract idea.

Parallel debates have taken place within the Roman Catholic tradition since Vatican II concerning sacraments and ecclesiology that are essentially debates about the historicity of the faith. The debate is about the historical nature of the Church, as it is located with a sacramentally ordered theology. See Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 153ff. In this text Ratzinger raises the issue of historicity of the faith, the relationship of the universal and particular as a key issue in Catholic theology. This discussion takes a different form than the discussion among the Protestant theologians, but touches upon the same issues. Another example of this is found in *A Brief Catechism on Nature and Grace*, in which de Lubac criticizes Edward Schillebeeckx's book *Approaches théologiques* (Brussels and Paris: Editions du C.E.P., 1967), vol. 3, chap. 2 sec.1, pt.3: "*L'Eglise sacrement du monde.*" According to de Lubac, the source of the problem is Schillebeeckx's interpretation of references to the Church as sacrament in *Lumen Gentium*. He notes that Schillebeeckx reduces the "ordinary meaning of 'sacrament'—that the role of this Church of Christ is only to 'manifest' a 'progressive sanctification of the world (as a profane reality), a sanctification which seems to take place without her. She only needs to 'name' and 'herald' what grace 'is accomplishing in the profane world'" (*Nature and Grace*, 194). In another instance, Schillebeeckx defines the Church as the sacrament of the world "as the pregnant visibility, the manifest presence of a communion already brought about by men" (*Nature and Grace*, 195. De Lubac quotes Schillebeeckx, *Approaches théologiques*, vol. 3, 146.) In Schillebeeckx's theology, the Church is no longer the sacrament of salvation. She is no longer the Eucharistic *res et sacramentum*, for she mediates nothing in history. What is already needed for salvation is not mediated by the Church (or by Christ) but is already present in the world apart from Christ and the Church. At best the Church is a symbol of an "already" present holiness. De Lubac describes this as a departure from Catholic sacramentality and ecclesiology. Keefe (*Covenantal Theology*, 106-108) issues a like criticism of Schillebeeckx, commenting that he proceeds from an incorrect understanding of the sacrament, in this instance the Eucharist. His rejection of the event character, the historicity of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the Mass, leads to the dehistoricization of the faith. Keefe views this as symptomatic of much of the dehistoricization of theology that is common in contemporary systematic thought.

in the events which are the source of her life. She is the Bride of Christ who takes her life from the full offer of grace given in the cross and resurrection. The Church, then, is shaped by her Eucharistic encounter with the cross of Christ. This is the historical source of her life.⁸³

One key implication of this theology is that all things have their source and meaning in a particular historical event. The New Covenant given in Christ, is not an after-thought to an already ordered creation, but the central event of history and the central event of all reality.⁸⁴ In fact, against those who see the revelation “along side” of a secular history, or the supernatural and the grace of Christ “on top of” the natural, de Lubac argues that all reality has its origin in the covenant.⁸⁵ De Lubac holds that Vatican II “which in many ways affirms the divine vocation of mankind and the gratuitousness of this call, does not seem to feel the need, in order to maintain this gratuity, of calling upon the hypothesis of ‘a purely natural order,’ complete in itself.”⁸⁶ According to de Lubac, the language of two different orders does not work for the Christian. “Indeed, as Jean Mouroux, wrote, ‘if there are in the universe varying levels of analysis (creation, sin, redemption), there are not two different orders of reality, but only one, that of the Covenant which has creation for its first act; and Christ is its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and end; and this order is supernatural.’”⁸⁷ The Word, the Christ, the New Covenant, is the heart of the single covenantal order. Again, although de Lubac does not completely work out the meaning of “creation in Christ,” he places the New Covenant at the center and origin of reality. Reality has an historical “*a priori*,” the New Covenant.

One way in which de Lubac points to the historical and covenantal center of reality in the New Covenant is in his description of the pre-existent Church. As noted, de Lubac recognizes the fact that the existence of the Church precedes its establishment in the period following the resurrection. In fact, he sees the type of the Church in the Old Covenant. “The Church, which is the locus of this concentration of the people of God, is always ‘God’s Israel.’”⁸⁸ Yet de Lubac goes even further to identify the presence of the Church, prior to the formation of the Old Covenant, at “the dawn of time.” He seems to be arguing two things. First, he argues that the Church is ancient, that she precedes the Old Covenant, having “existed under the ‘law of nature.’”⁸⁹ “There has always been a people of God, and a vine which the Father tends unceasingly; the union of Christ and His Church is prefigured in the union of Adam and Eve.”⁹⁰ Yet it appears that the character of the Church as “ancient” has more to do with its primordial nature than mere temporality. The Church exists from the “beginning” with Christ. As such, de Lubac is also aware of the fact that, not only is the Church ancient, but with Christ she is first in the order of being.

⁸³ *Corpus Mysticum*, 14.

⁸⁴ For a description of the theological significance of the Incarnation understood as simply *propter peccatum* see Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 238 ff.

⁸⁵ Of course this has been de Lubac’s great insight that grace is not an accident, but substantial. See Henri de Lubac, *Surnatural*. Keefe notes that, according to de Lubac, nature “as it is used in Scripture and in the patristic and magisterial tradition, is not the cosmic counterpart to grace” (*Covenantal Theology*, 129). Keefe gives a covenantal analysis of the significance of this understanding of nature and grace.

⁸⁶ De Lubac, *A Brief Catechism on Nature and Grace*, 189.

⁸⁷ De Lubac, *A Brief Catechism on Nature and Grace*, 190.

⁸⁸ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 60.

⁸⁹ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 61.

⁹⁰ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 62.

For though Christ was not to appear in the humility of our flesh until long after these things, He is none the less “the first-born of every creature,” as St. Paul teaches; so that whatever is true of Him is also true of His Bride the Church. She was certainly prepared for over many years, as He was, by the history of the Jewish people, and prefigured in the earthly paradise; but in reality she is older than all this, as He is. She must be seen as in God before the beginning of the world—“she flowered there with Christ by the will of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost”—and recognized in the mysterious Wisdom which, with the *Creator* presides over the first creation itself.⁹¹

By recognizing the existence of the Church in union with the divine order, de Lubac is arguing that the Church, in the New Covenant, is at the center of reality. Her role is so central to that order that all things were created for her. Referencing Hermas, he notes the Church was created before all things and that the world “was made for her.”⁹² As the Body of Christ she is the response to God’s offer of grace. This is the One Flesh union of Christ and his Church. And again, citing Origen, de Lubac says:

Do not believe that the Bride—that is, the Church—has existed only since the Savior’s coming in the flesh; she exists since the beginning of the human race and even since creation of the world: even—I call St. Paul to witness—since before the creation of the world. For the Apostle said: “Since He has chosen us in Christ since before the creation of the world, that we might be holy and immaculate before Him, predestining us in love to the adoption of the Son.” And it is written in the Psalms: “Remember, Lord, Thy Church, which Thou hast gathered together from the beginning.” So, the foundations of the Church have been laid from the beginning. And that is why the Apostle also says that the Church is founded not only on the Apostles but also on the Prophets, and Adam Himself is reckoned among the number of Prophets.⁹³

Using these texts from Origen and Hermas, de Lubac reiterates the Church’s role in the economy of salvation as integral to that economy. Her significance is not to be diminished by reducing the Church to an after-thought. It is precisely the historical Church, the Bride of Christ, who is the same pre-existent Church.

The exact significance of the pre-existent Church in the thought of Henri de Lubac is not fully developed in his theology, except that it reveals an essential dimension of the Church which views her always in unity with Christ. But again, the Church has significance as pre-existent only if the historical event of the passion of Christ is the New Covenant and if the analogy of the

⁹¹ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 62. In this text de Lubac cites; Col. 1:15; makes a reference to St. Ambrose, *In Psalm.*, CXVIII, sermo i, no.4 (PL, 15, 1201a-b), etc.; and St Epiphaneus of Salamis, *Expositio Fidei* (PG, 42, 784c-d). Last, he cites the Prayer from the Leonian Sacramentary: “*Quae Ecclesia ante mundi principium in tua est semper praesentia praeparata*” (PL, 55, 111).

⁹² De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 63. De Lubac quotes Hermas, *The Shepard*, vision 2, ch. iv, no.I: cf. St Epiphanius of Salamis, *Haeres.*, bk. I, vol. I, ch.v (PG, 41, 181b).

⁹³ De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, 62. De Lubac is quoting Origen, *In Cant. Comm.*, bk ii (p. 157 in Baehrens’ edition); translated in G. Bardy, *La Théologie de l’Eglise de Saint Irenée au Concile de Nicée*, 146.

Second Eve applies, not only to Mary, but to the Church. If this is the case, the Church who is called into existence at the Last Supper and receives the Holy Spirit at Pentecost has a role to play in the very order of creation. Her participation in the New Covenant, her free response to the Christ-event from whom she receives her life, is an historical event. This understanding of the primordial nature of the New Covenant shifts the discussion of theology away from those perennial challenges of cosmological thinking to the center of the faith, the historical revelation of the New Covenant. And as de Lubac notes, this places the Eucharist at the center of the faith and any attempt to articulate the faith.

Keefe and the Continuing Influence of de Lubac

Building upon de Lubac's efforts to restore the historical basis for Roman Catholic theology, Fr. Donald Keefe's work *Covenantal Theology* gives a systematic account of a theology whose foundation is the Eucharistic worship of the Church. In his theology Keefe sees himself, in part, to be continuing the work of de Lubac which he understands to be the recovery of the historical foundations of theology that have their historical locus in the worship of the Church. Summarizing de Lubac's contribution to theology, Keefe says that "he initiated the theological recovery of salvation history as the proper concern or subject matter of Roman Catholic theology."⁹⁴ He goes on to add, "But de Lubac is without question the first modern thinker to discover what Ignatius and Irenaeus knew, that the unity of the Catholic consciousness, and therefore of the theology which proceeds from it as its question, is historical because it is first liturgical; without his illumination of the interpretation of the historicity of exegesis and of Eucharistic worship the present study could not have begun, for it is entirely dependent upon that most radical insight."⁹⁵ This recovery of the liturgical/historical foundation of the faith, which is at the same time the recovery of its historicity, Keefe regards as one of the most revolutionary theological shifts of recent times. He holds that it is only upon this foundation that Roman Catholic theology can be properly done.

Starting from de Lubac's effort to recover the historical foundations of the faith, Keefe argues against those "rationalisms," what he calls "cosmological theologies," which fail to grasp the fundamentally historical character of the faith, often reducing it to some ahistorical "*a priori*." Such rationalisms ultimately subsume the faith under preconceived cosmological categories, thereby diminishing the rich fullness of the faith by reducing it to an abstraction, a structure, which, no matter what form it takes, abandons the historical mystery of the New Covenant. Keefe states "If we do not experience salvation by the Lord of history within history, we shall surely seek it outside of history, as with every primitive religion apart from Judaism, and as has every rationalistic objectification of the pagan experience of disorder in history, of

⁹⁴ Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 642. This insight is seconded by Rudolf Voderholzer, "Dogma and History: Henri de Lubac and the Retrieval of Historicity as a Key to Theological Renewal," *Communio* 28, Winter 2001), 648-668. Voderholzer understands de Lubac to be recovering the historical foundation of the Church and its doctrine by his recovery of Christ as the historical foundation of the faith. What is argued here is that this historical recovery of Christ cannot be separated from the Eucharistic worship of the Church.

⁹⁵ Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 642-643. See also, Keefe, *Appendix II*, 139-140. Keefe further describes de Lubac's contribution to theology as his discovery of the Eucharistic unity of theology and the corresponding recognition, in the theology of the Fathers, of the defense of the freedom of Revelation against the gnostic attempts to reduce the faith to the "innate immanentism of fallen rationality" (133).

creation as evil.”⁹⁶ The perennial temptation of theology is to abstract from the events that are the foundation of the faith, the revelation given in Christ, to some autonomous rationality that is imposed on history. Implicit in such theologies is the refusal to accept the historical revelation as definitive. As a result history is abandoned in search of some prior possibility upon which the revelation might be understood.

In response to such theologies, Keefe argues that, contrary to the effort to escape history to find the source of unity and intelligibility of all things, Christianity holds that the fullness of being, its source, its unity and intelligibility, is given in historical events. He states that it is precisely by the return to the historical *a priori* of the death and resurrection of Christ, the event of the New Covenant, which is mediated by the Eucharist, that theology can avoid those abstractions that preclude an adequate understanding of the faith. The faith of the Church is historical and Eucharistic.

According to Keefe, theology must begin with the Eucharist because as the historical mediation of the New Covenant it alone can be the proper foundation of theology. As the full revelation of God, the New Covenant cannot be superseded by any other revelation, or subject to any other philosophy or set of ideas. As the revelation of God, the New Covenant is *ex nihilo*, the act of the free love of God, an act for which there is no prior possibility. These events are the source of all grace, the full revelation of God himself in Christ. All things are created and redeemed in Christ and therefore stand in this covenantal relationship to him. Theology must begin with this truth. To attempt to found theology upon some other *a priori* whether philosophy, psychology, sociology, or as so common today, politics, is to relegate the fundamental truth of

⁹⁶ Donald Keefe, “Biblical Symbolism and the Morality of *In Vitro* Fertilization,” *Theological Digest* (Winter 1975): 312. At the heart of this discussion is of course the question of the one and the many in that it raises the issue of whether or not the historical particular can mediate the universal. The tendency in human thought is to abstract from the particular to a universal that transcends history: i.e., the cosmogonic act, the ideal, the One, historical dialectics, etc. In this view of reality, the divine, ultimate reality, full truth, unity, goodness and beauty are never found in space and time. Space and time are unable to mediate the universal in its fullness. In fact, temporality and material existence, as limited, are considered destructive forces. All one finds in history are fragmentary, disassociated events which await some external unity. The source of this unity is usually understood to be either transhistorical or, in later times, the nominalist imposition of autonomous reason. In contrast, the Judeo-Christian view of the created order recognizes the limits of space and time, yet sees them as able to mediate the divine, ultimate reality, full truth, unity, goodness, and beauty. In fact, creation is ordered to and by Christ to the full revelation of God in history, the Christ-event. In the Judeo-Christian tradition it is sin, the free rejection of the New Covenant, that resists the presence of God, not materiality or temporality in itself. In the West, the philosophical traditions have been unsuccessful in articulating a covenantal view of reality in which creation is *ex nihilo*, the free act of God open to the presence of God in his creation. The inherited metaphysics of Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy cannot articulate the free presence of God in history. Keefe argues in his *Covenantal Theology* that what is required is an analogy of being, a metaphysics, that is capable of articulating the free presence of God in history. He argues that the analogy of being ought to be the New Covenant, the free mission of the Son. Only such an understanding of being is capable of articulating the free presence of God in history. History must be understood in terms of the historical event of the New Covenant.

A similar description of the primacy of history is found in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 127ff. In this section he argues that one needs to transcend the monadic notion of substance found in Aristotle. Quoting Augustine he says that “In God there are no accidents, only substance and relation” (*De Trinitate*, V, 5, 6 (PL 42, 913f). This constitutes a “revolution in man’s view of the world.” What this means is that now “relation is discovered as an equally valid primordial mode of reality” (132).

the revelation to at best a secondary status. Such attempts at interpreting the faith will ultimately undermine the faith.⁹⁷

Keefe, like de Lubac, holds that as historical, the faith needs to be rooted in the events of the revelation. For the Christian it is the sacrifice of the cross and the resurrection of Christ that are the central events of the life of faith. In fact, since all things are created in Christ, the New Covenant is not only the source of all salvation, but the foundation of the whole created order. This places an historical event at the center of economy of salvation as well as making it the source of meaning and being of the whole created order. So besides the fact that this historical event is the central event of history, it is also the foundation of reality itself. The sacrifice of the New Covenant is therefore the essential foundation of theology.

Since the New Covenant is given in the revelation and represented in the worship of the Church, Keefe recognizes that only a liturgical foundation, in this case the Eucharist, can mediate the fullness of the mystery of the events of salvation. As the continued presence of the New Covenant, it is in the Eucharistic worship of the Church, the re-presentation of the historical sacrifice of the Cross by which we are saved, that that sacrifice is present *ex opere operato* in the sacrifice of the Mass. The Eucharist, as the historical locus of those events by which we are saved, is the foundation of the faith and must be the source of all theological reflection. “In sum, our objective reality as human is covenantal, and as historical is Eucharistic; this reality is the single interest and the single subject matter of Catholic theology, because it is the single ground of existence in Christ. The Eucharist is the center of objective existence because it is the constituting event of the historically free world, of the Good creation.”⁹⁸ If the Eucharist is the one sacrifice of Christ re-presented in the Mass, then the faith is shaped by that worship and intelligible only in the light of that worship. There is no prior foundation or act to which one can look to ground the faith. The Eucharistic symbols as the representation of those events are the source of the life and order of the faith. In the Eucharistic worship of the Church, the Catholic enters into the historical events that are definitive of the faith. So any theology that claims to be Catholic must be governed by the normative events of the historical New Covenant given in the Eucharist. Keefe, recognizing the primordial nature of the New Covenant, holds that the one sacrifice of the Cross is not only the foundation of the faith of the Church and hence for theology, but that it is the prime analogate for being.⁹⁹ A covenantal theology requires a covenantal metaphysics.

⁹⁷ Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 3ff. Keefe warns that, when the cosmological view of the world is imposed on Christian faith, the faith is dehistoricized. In such a theology one must abstract from the historical particular to find the real. If one must look beyond the event, the particular, to find the unity and meaning of history, it is thought that history must be incapable of mediating the divine. As will be noted later, he argues for a covenantal metaphysics, which alone allows for the free substantial intelligibility of the historical particular. He says that if the “Covenantal existence in Christ” is abdicated for a “monadic absolute.” “One thereby proceeds to the ancient discovery that absolutes are rationally indistinguishable from nothingness, for they are without noetic reference to anything at all” (128). Such absolutes are an abstraction with no complete expression in history. As another common form of this dehistoricization, Keefe discusses the relationship of the individual to the species where the sole source of the intelligibility of being is located in the species. “[N]o created entity is comprehensible as a member of a species, for such membership immediately annuls the analogously covenantal character proper to being as such” (451).

⁹⁸ Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 654.

⁹⁹ Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 364ff. In his application of the historical *a priori* to metaphysics, Keefe sees himself in continuity with the Catholic intellectual tradition which finds Christ at the center of all things.

A more complete summary of Keefe's work would exceed the scope of this article. Of interest here is that his theology stands in continuity with de Lubac on the central point that the Eucharistic worship of the Church is the historical source of the unity of the whole of salvation history. The task of theology, then, cannot but be to place the Eucharist at the center of its reflection and to understand the faith in the light of this sacramental foundation. Like de Lubac, Keefe argues for a Eucharistic unity to history. Only a "sacramental" and covenantal theology will remain faithful to the historical nature of the faith. As already noted, the presence of this historical Eucharistic unity stands in contrast to those approaches to theology which despair of the continued definitive presence of Christ in history. The optimism of the Catholic faith, on the other hand, points to the essentially historical nature of the faith.

In his work, Keefe points out that there are a number of problems concerning the contemporary Catholic interpretation of the Eucharistic symbols. Perhaps the most significant problem has its historical source in Berengarius's reduction of the effects of the sacrament to an *opus operantis* presence in the believer. Under the influence of a monist rationalism, Berengarius denied the objective historical Eucharistic presence of Jesus the Christ.¹⁰⁰ Although his theology was condemned, his work shifted the focus of the theology of the Eucharist from an emphasis upon the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church, to the concern for the objective presence of Christ in the Eucharist in the consecrated bread and wine. Following Berengarius's interpretation of the Eucharist, the *corpus verum*, which in Christian antiquity was used in reference to the Church,¹⁰¹ came to be understood primarily as the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ. In this theology the relationship between the consecrated bread and the Church was not clearly articulated. The result was that the free historical unity of the faith whose locus is the "one flesh" union of the Christ and his Church, the New Covenant, was no longer the center of Eucharistic theology.

Of course, neither Keefe nor de Lubac would reject the Eucharistic change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, but they would say that through "the whole of Christian antiquity, the Eucharist and the Church are linked. . . . [T]he Eucharist corresponds to the Church as cause to effect, as means to end, as sign to reality."¹⁰² It is precisely this link, the relationship of Christ to his Body the Church, that has been neglected for the most part by

¹⁰⁰ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 27. See also note 46 above.

¹⁰¹ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 23.

¹⁰² De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 13. Keefe, in a like manner, says that the "real presence" cannot be separated from the one flesh union of Christ and his Church. "Rather, as the *prophora* of the Church, they then stand in an utterly unique and irrevocable historical or event-relation to the Event by which the Good creation is given: the One Sacrifice by which the New Covenant is instituted. Accepted and taken up by the Christ and transubstantiated by him to become the *sarx*, the human actuality that is identically his Person, at once that of the High Priest and the One Sacrifice, the bread and the wine of the Mass become, by the creative authority with which he sends the Spirit, his Body and his Blood, the efficacious signs by which he offers his One sacrifice in and for the Church, the One Flesh of the New Covenant, for the life of the world, and so, within the order of the free covenantal causality of the *res et sacramentum*, the effective historical cause of the historical Church, for the historicity of the risen King cannot be isolated from the sacramental historicity of the risen Kingdom. This Event, this New Covenant, this *res et sacramentum*, this sacramental transubstantiation, is also and inseparably, *ex opere operato*, the historical actuality of the Church, the historical articulation of whose worship (as *sacramentum tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, *res tantum*) represents effectively the metaphysical-historical order in which the Old Covenant, the New Covenant and the Kingdom are at once the revelation, the dominical and creative immanence of the Lord of history, and the nuptial and covenantal term of the Father's sending of the Son to give the Spirit" (Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 435).

Eucharistic theology since Berengarius and that needs to be restored. Keefe would argue that, in effect, the historicity of the Eucharist is the historicity of the One Flesh union of the New Covenant, the unity of Christ and his Church. It is into this unity that believer is drawn in the celebration of the Eucharist. The one sacrifice of the cross informs the Eucharistic presence.

Keefe, following de Lubac, notes that in many of the patristic and medieval texts the theological interpretations of the Eucharistic symbols presuppose that “the infallible effect of the Eucharistic signing, the *res et sacramentum* of the medieval paradigm, later designated the effect *ex opere operato* of the Eucharistic signing, is the One Flesh of the New Covenant, equivalent in its infallibility to the *res sacramenti* of the patristic tradition.”¹⁰³ This interpretation of the Eucharistic symbols coincides with Keefe’s reading of de Lubac’s work in which the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church is understood to be that of the “one sacrifice” of the New Covenant. “This conclusion is inescapable, for the tradition de Lubac examines is unanimous that (1) the New Covenant is instituted by the One sacrifice of Christ, and (2) the Eucharist is the offering of that One Sacrifice.”¹⁰⁴ The One Sacrifice, the New Covenant, is the One Flesh union of Christ and his Church. Since the Eucharist is the event of the nuptial union of Christ and his Bride, the Church, it is a free historical unity which is the “source and summit of the life of the faith.”¹⁰⁵

Although Keefe, in developing this Eucharistic theology, builds upon the work of de Lubac, there are a couple of points at which Keefe’s theology must be distinguished from de Lubac’s theology, which are important for advancing the discussion of the Eucharist and the historicity of the faith. According to Keefe, the problem with de Lubac’s theology hinges upon two related items. First, after affirming that de Lubac recognizes the significance of the nuptial imagery of the New Covenant, Keefe argues that his interpretation of the union remains under the monadic influence of Aristotelian metaphysics which cannot accommodate a free historical covenantal unity.¹⁰⁶ As a result, de Lubac brings to his analysis of critical texts metaphysical presuppositions that do not permit him to understand the full historical and covenantal significance of the Eucharistic worship.¹⁰⁷

The second point, related to the first, is that on account of these metaphysical presuppositions, de Lubac understands the Church as the Body of Christ as primarily an organic unity and not primarily as the free nuptial union of Christ and the Church. Keefe says that de Lubac fails to “grasp the Pauline synthesis of the free unity of the ecclesial “Body” and of the “One Flesh” of the Head and the Body.”¹⁰⁸

Primarily the reason is a failure to recognize the substantiality of the free and nuptial unity of the One Flesh simply because it is in fact free, together with a consequent attempt to assign it the unfree—because merely organic—unity of a physical body. This entails a failure to grasp the nuptial order of the freedom of

¹⁰³Keefe, *Appendix II*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 30-31.

¹⁰⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 2, 97.

¹⁰⁷ For an analysis of Keefe’s understanding of the work of de Lubac see *Covenantal Theology*, 642. *Appendix II* is a detailed study of de Lubac’s thought.

¹⁰⁸ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 84.

the community that is the Church, although, in I Cor 12, Paul specifically appeals to the moral freedom of the members of the ecclesial body. The recognition of this moral freedom *in ecclesia* of the members of the Church, which is equivalently their personal covenantal imaging of God, by which imaging they are ever more closely integrated into the transcendent free unity of the One Flesh into which they were baptized, is largely suppressed in favor of this supposedly organic unity, the unity proper to a physical body—but not, obviously, to the bridal Body of Christ, the ecclesial Body, the Church.¹⁰⁹

According to Keefe, “The hermeneutical problem arises when Paul’s usual use of the term with reference to the ecclesial ‘body’ is assimilated to the liturgical use of ‘body’ in the Eucharistic words of institution which he recites in I Cor 11: 24. This confusion induces the further confusion of assimilating the ‘one flesh’ of Christ and the Church to the unity of the ‘body.’”¹¹⁰ The failure to recognize the covenantal One Flesh unity of the New Covenant and its significance for interpreting the term the “Body of Christ,” and therefore for the manner in which one understands the Eucharist, has consequences for the way in which one understands the Eucharist and the faith of the Church. Keefe says that de Lubac’s Eucharistic theology, because of the sources upon which he relies, “is finally incoherent by reason of its unreflective but nonetheless incongruent submission to another criterion as well, the radically monist cosmological rationality that is simply incompatible with the freedom inherent in the nuptial *ordo*, the *veritas*, of the Eucharistic liturgy, viz., the sacrificial institution of the One Flesh of the New Covenant, the New Creation.”¹¹¹

Keefe does recognize the fact that apart from Pope John Paul II, no theologian in the last one hundred years has done more than de Lubac to “stress the indispensability to faith of this nuptial symbolism.”¹¹² At the same time he argues that de Lubac fails to see the central significance of this free nuptial and covenantal view of the New Covenant for theology. In fact, Keefe says that the failure to grasp the nuptial nature of the New Covenant, which he describes as a “fastidious reluctance,” is one of the major failures of Catholic theology. Such theology fails to understand the Pauline Head/Body relationship adequately, resulting in the “commonplace monist assimilation of the ecclesial Body to her Head, by way of physical or Personal unity,”¹¹³ in which the covenantal freedom of the One Flesh unity is not developed or given an adequate account.

As noted, according to Keefe, this failure reflects a larger problem within the Roman Catholic theological tradition. This is more than simply a refusal or inability to interpret correctly the Head/Body relationship in Paul. According to Keefe, this subjection of theology to the monist logic is the perennial temptation of theology and has consequences for any theology that embraces such a monism. Keefe holds that, although he has a full adherence to Catholic Eucharistic realism, de Lubac lacks an adequate “appreciation of the covenantal freedom that is the Eucharistic ‘body’ which is the union of Christ the Head with his Body, his bridal Church,

¹⁰⁹ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 84

¹¹⁰ Keefe, *Appendix II*, note 175, 268.

¹¹¹ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 97.

¹¹² Keefe, *Appendix II*, 108.

¹¹³ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 108.

the second Eve, the *unitas corporis* of the Latin Fathers. In short, neither the Fathers, nor the Carolingians, nor de Lubac in his study of them, nor the theological tradition generally, has understood the One Flesh of Christ and his Church to be a substantial reality, the substantial image of the Triune God, and thus to be the criterion, the one prime analogate, of created substance as such.”¹¹⁴ The significance of such a “prime analogate” for theology would be to order the truth of the faith to its free historical unity in the New Covenant.

At this point, one can begin to see the shift in theology for which Keefe is arguing. It is a shift that places the New Covenant, understood in terms of the nuptial imagery of the One Flesh union of Christ and his Church, at the very center of reality. As covenantal, this One Flesh union of Christ and his Church is not only historical, but also substantial. It is the free act of the grace of the New Covenant that finds its liturgical expression in the sacrifice of the Mass which is the center of history. Consequently, this nuptial imagery is primary for understanding the free historical unity of the faith in all of its dimensions. In this covenantal metaphysics, the free unity of the Trinitarian life is understood to the source of the free substantial unity of the good creation.

The center of this historical unity is the mission of the Son. Being sent by the Father, the Son fulfills his mission in the free offering of himself as the perfect sacrifice, the New Covenant. It is from this free Trinitarian unity that all things come to be and all things are redeemed. “Only within this communion can one seek, in freedom from the otherwise implacable determinism of our fallen rationality, the free Truth who can be received only as a gift *ex nihilo*, for the freedom of the faith has no prior possibility.”¹¹⁵ As *ex nihilo*, the free gift of the New Covenant, as all historical freedom and unity, is sacramental. This freedom, as gift, is given *in sacramento, in ecclesia*, in the worship of the Church. This One Flesh Union, represented in the one Sacrifice of the Mass, is the free historical act in which one enters into the one free truth, the New Covenant that is the source of the life of the Church and of the whole created order.

Keefe holds that what is critical in this One Flesh unity of the New Covenant is a metaphysics which frees theology from its bondage to the those metaphysics that cannot give an adequate account of the free gift of the Son, i.e., the Trinitarian freedom of the Father sending the Son to give the Spirit. “In short, it becomes necessary that theology, if it is to be Catholic, abandon the monism of the philosophers and accept the full Trinitarian import of the revelation of the Trinity in the terminus of the Mission of the Son to give the Spirit: the sacrificial institution of the One Flesh. In his giving of that Gift, the Son’s Mission is accomplished.”¹¹⁶ In the gift of the Son, history is not abandoned but opened to the free unity of the Covenant. What is apparently closed to the divine due to sin is now revealed as good. “The Son whose primordial Lordship of the covenant is metaphysically prior to the fall remains obedient to the Mission that terminates in the Covenant; his is a Mission now redemptive as well as creative, for his transcendent immanence in creation continues in our freely fallen creation: by reason of the primordial fall the Word shares our servitude, is ‘made flesh’ and so undertakes, in obedience ‘unto death, death on the cross,’ the recapitulation of our *sarx* into the One Flesh, the *mia sarx* of

¹¹⁴ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 125. See also 136.

¹¹⁵ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 132.

¹¹⁶ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 109. A like account of the significance of the Trinity for theology is found in Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 127ff.

the New Covenant.”¹¹⁷ In the creative and free act of the Trinity, the Son “transcends the creation as its cause” and so does his mission through which, in perfect obedience to the Father, he gives his life on the Cross. There is no prior possibility for such an act. No monist philosophy can give an account of free historical gift that is the Son and his One Flesh unity with the Church which constitutes the New Covenant. Such an act must be *ex nihilo*, the free act of the triune God.

Keefe, recognizing the full import and fundamental nature of the historical revelation, argues for a covenantal metaphysics, one in which the free unity of being and history is understood to be the One Flesh unity of Christ and his Church.¹¹⁸ The mission of Christ requires a metaphysics which must give an account of the unity of being that is both free and substantial. The analogy by which being is understood needs to account for this freedom of the gift of the Son.¹¹⁹ If one’s analogy of being cannot account for this freedom, then the Son’s mission is necessary or an imposition on a closed necessary order. In either case one cannot account for the freedom of the revelation of the Son. On the other hand, if the mission of the Son is not substantial, then it does not touch reality itself and therefore is accidental or “subsequent to creation.” In such an understanding of the mission of Christ, his work would be an “addition” to an already existing unity, or an option that would not take one to the heart of reality. What Christ does would be understood to be ancillary to life, and such a view of the Christ-event would not be adequate. The prime analogate must account for both the freedom of the Son and the substantial nature of the grace of Christ.

The one prime analogate that does this is the New Covenant, which is the nuptial One Flesh unity of Christ and his Church, the single revelation of the Son by which alone we know the Trinity and in whose mission the New Covenant is established. Again, Keefe argues for an understanding of substance that is not monadic, that is not locked into a closed necessary view of reality that permits no novelty, but free. “Substance in its theological meaning is historical and therefore free; its freedom is covenantal and Triune, and substance in this *theological* sense is therefore intrinsically differentiated, Trinitarian rather than monadic. It is then a community of free persons, subsisting sacramentally, with historical significance and intelligibility in the free irrevocable interrelation which is the marital covenant.”¹²⁰

The nuptial unity, the New Covenant, the New Creation, cannot be less than substantial: i.e., its unity in being is on the ontological level substantial, for its

¹¹⁷ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 237. The primordial nature of the New Covenant is such that it is the *prius* of the whole economy of salvation, the source of both creation and redemption. There is no basis for reality apart from the New Covenant. “In brief, the Father’s sending of the Son to give the Spirit is at once the covenantal historicity of the Word, and the creation in grace of humanity and its history as the corollary and the context of the Immanuel’s obedience to the Father. This Mission of the Son by the Father is not then something subsequent to a creation which would by supposition have been created on some other basis than the Mission of the Son, a basis which would not be covenantal and therefore not Christocentric. Rather, the Mission of the Son to give the Spirit transcends the Good Creation as its cause, as the creative act of the Trinity. At the same time, the reality of the New Covenant in history is Eucharistic; it has no other historical reality or objectivity” (232).

¹¹⁸ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 84-85.

¹¹⁹ Keefe *Covenantal Theology*, 390ff. Here Keefe describes the New Covenant as the prime analogate. In this he rejects those metaphysics that reduce the substantial unity to necessity. The primordial nature of the New Covenant is such that it is the *prius* of the whole economy of salvation, the source of both redemption and creation. There is no basis for any reality apart from the New Covenant. See note 117 *supra*.

¹²⁰ Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, 388.

standing as the New Covenant, the full Gift of the Spirit requires this. At the same time, this nuptial union, as covenantal, cannot but be intrinsically free, and therefore must be a community of persons, the New Adam, the New Eve, in the One Flesh, in the New Covenant that is their subsistent love: distinct from each, yet constituted by their free relationship to each other, and having an authority over each of them analogous to that which they have over each other.¹²¹

This is a free substantial unity which has its meaning and being in the Trinitarian mission of the Son, which culminates in the New Covenant.

Understanding substance as relationship is a significant shift in the manner in which being is defined. It enables one to give an account of God's free action in history. Furthermore, as covenantal, the relationship has an historical *prius* in the New Covenant. As a result, the full unity of being which we do not experience in our own personal fallen history is given in history and continues to be mediated in the sacramental life of the Church. "His sacrificial institution of the *mia sarx*, the One Flesh of the New Covenant through the One Sacrifice, is precisely the restoration to creation, in *sacramento*, of the unity lost by the sin of the first Adam and Eve, whose sin was the refusal of the free nuptial unity (no alternative free unity is conceivable) offered them by the primordial *Christus integer*."¹²² It is through the Eucharist that we are able to enter into the "unfallen" unity of the One Flesh union of the New Covenant which is the one source of our existence and our redemption. Through baptism one enters into the "sacramental worship of the Church, who is One Flesh with her Lord."¹²³ In marriage one enters in the covenant whose nuptial order reflects the bridal relationship between Christ and the Church. The same participation in the event of the New Covenant is the foundation of the other sacraments as well. By participation in those events, the believer is saved and enters into the very heart of reality.¹²⁴

I would like to make three points concerning the significance of Keefe's work for systematic theology. First, his work not only establishes a foundation upon which Catholic theology can once again visit the question of the relationship of faith and history, a perennial effort of theology, but in his argument for a "Eucharistic order to history" Keefe begins with an historical *a priori* through which an historical faith can be understood. In this worship the fullness of the revelation of God which is given in Christ remains present in history. He says that "The nuptial symbolism grounded in the Eucharistic One Flesh is radically historical: it is the very ground of history, for it signs the Lordly immanence of Christ in his Kingdom, in the Good Creation, in salvation history, in nuptial union with the second Eve who, by Jesus' Eucharistic immanence, has been freed from fallenness and fatality through his bestowal upon her of the Spiritus Creator, by which Gift he has made all things new."¹²⁵ The significance of the continued historical presence of the Eucharist, then, is the "rehistoricization" of the faith that grounds theology.

¹²¹ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 104. See also pp. 61ff.

¹²² Keefe, *Appendix II*, 115.

¹²³ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 115.

¹²⁴ Here one finds a solution to the problem of metaphysics and history. For a brief account of this problem see Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1987), 153ff.

¹²⁵ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 85.

This Eucharistic restoration of fallen history is sacramental: i.e., it is objectively historical, factual but it is not empirical and, because it is historical, it is not abstract, not ideal. It is concretely and irrevocably given, permanently objective in history, but not imposed: its transcendence of history, by that which it is redemptive and restorative, the work of the Head, is not coerced, for it is the office of the Head to liberate that of which he is head, not to coerce it by the imposition of an extrinsic unity. Thus it is that the restoration achieved by the One Sacrifice can only be sacramental: only thus can it be free in a fallen world.¹²⁶

This restoration of the historical foundation of the faith is given in history in the sacrifice of the New Covenant, the sacrifice of the Mass.

Consequently, what one finds in the work of Keefe and de Lubac is a historical foundation upon which a systematic account of the faith can be built. Keefe, like de Lubac, does not look beyond history in order to impose an intelligibility on the seemingly random events of history. Rather Keefe argues that one cannot get beyond the central event of history to some prior point from which one can interpret history. The *a priori*, the foundation of history, is the One Flesh unity of the New Covenant represented in the Eucharistic worship of the Church. This free act, which is the culmination of the mission of the Son, is the free creative act, *ex nihilo*, which as free cannot be subject to some prior order. In this particular historical event the fullness of the divine was mediated. So following the thought of de Lubac, Keefe argues that grace is not accidental to the created order, but substantial. Again, there can be no prior reality other than the free act of the New Covenant in which all things are created and redeemed in Christ.

Second, Keefe offers an answer to the question of metaphysics and history that transcends the monistic unity of classical metaphysics and the rationalism of modern nominalist thought. By taking the New Covenant as the prime analogate, he places Christ at the center of all of things. This certainly gives theology a metaphysical foundation in the faith rather than one that is imposed on the faith. In fact, Keefe would argue that such a view of reality is Augustinian and once again begins to reestablish a foundation for the faith in the faith. At the same time, the definition of substance that he offers, as covenantal and therefore free, is able to explain the freedom of the revelation and the free historical response of the Church. It is the Eucharist in which the freedom of this full covenantal unity is found in history.¹²⁷

Third, building upon the prior point, a covenantal metaphysics and Eucharistic history is able to give an account of the relationship of the universal and the particular in ways that account for the free and historical significance of the particular. The nuptial unity of the New Covenant places freedom and, therefore, faith and love, at the center of reality. If substance is now understood in terms of the covenantal relationship between Christ and his Church, history must be open to what is unique, the particular. This idea has multiple ramifications for the way in which the faith is understood. Two are of particular importance.

¹²⁶ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 115.

¹²⁷ There are others such as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who also see reality as relational. See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 153ff.

First, in this way of thinking, what is historically unique and free is intelligible. This has significance for the way in which one views the human person. Current scientific and ideological thought is unable to account for the significance of the free person. In the monist logic, the particular is understood in terms of the some universal category; i.e., the race, the species, the class, etc. So that in a monist ontology the unique human life has no significance in itself. One cannot give an adequate Christian account of the unique significance of an individual life when reality is described by the idea of an organic unity on the one hand and nominalism on the other. In an organic unity, the particular is only intelligible as part of the whole. In the nominalist description of reality, each particular is isolated, not intrinsically linked to any other being. In a nominalist philosophy, all unity is extrinsically imposed, logically imposed by the autonomous mind. In contrast, when one understands the nature of substance to be relational, covenantal, and free, each human being has significance by his or her free acceptance of the offering of the grace of the New Covenant or a rejection of that grace. This is the essential freedom of the human person, the freedom of the New Covenant, which is only given in Christ. The reassertion of such a view of the human person is essential to recognizing and protecting the dignity of human life amid the many philosophies, humanisms, sociological abstractions, and Marxist politicizations that fail to recognize the value of the individual human life. At the same time, it protects the person from the dehumanizing and atomizing effects of contemporary individualism, which fails to see the fundamental relationships that constitute our being.

Second, this affirmation of the historical particular understands the Church as historical and sacramental and thereby able to mediate the presence of Christ in history. The Church is the Church of the New Covenant. She is the Body of Christ, whose origin is in her One Flesh union with Christ which is represented in the sacrifice of the Mass. It is in her and through her that the believer receives the faith. There is no extra-ecclesial faith: the truth, goodness, and unity of the good creation is given in the sacrifice of the Cross which is represented in the sacrifice of the Mass. The Eucharist is the one perfect sacrifice offered by Christ, to which the Church's response is the *sacrificium laudis*. As nuptial and covenantal this relationship, requiring the free response on the part of the Church, is made possible by the fact that she is made holy by the blood of the cross. As in the historically concrete and particular life of Mary, the Church is free to accept that offer of grace and lives by her acceptance of that covenantal holiness. In her response to the offer of grace, she enters into the One Flesh union with Christ, so that as an effect of the sacrament, the Church is caused *ex opere operato*, which denotes an historical presence that transcends fallen history. In her life the Church is a sacrament of that unity and fullness. As already noted, this nuptial unity is historical unity.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty of the Church since the Second Vatican Council has been the radical distrust and dehistoricization of the Church in Catholic theology. The result is that the Church is often seen as simply a juridical community or, at best, a moral union of those who believe. When the sacrifice of the Mass is replaced by an understanding that the Church is constituted by the "gathered church," the Church is then without historical locus. The causal dependence in such an ecclesiology shifts from the One Sacrifice of the Cross to the assent in faith, often associated with baptism. This is the Reformation view of the Church in which the Church is caused by "faith alone." According to this view, the fullness of the Church is given in the end, but there is no foundation for that fullness in the historical present which, as fallen,

cannot mediate the fullness of grace. In this ecclesiology the Church lacks historical fullness. The faith is not present in its fullness anywhere in history and is only given in the eschaton.¹²⁸

A Catholic ecclesiology holds that the Church is not the product of the faith of her members, but exists objectively in history. Keefe says that “the Church pre-exists her members, in the sense that her source, her cause, is her Head, the Eucharistic Lord.”¹²⁹ Each member of the Church enters the faith of the Church, which stands in full unity with Christ as the Bride of Christ in the One Flesh union of the New Covenant. This is the locus of the historical presence of Christ whose presence, as covenantal, is always in free unity with the Church. The Church stands, then, in unity with the source of her life, Christ. She is holy and able to teach since she stands in free unity with her Head. Here one again sees the effect of the particular as being able to mediate the fullness of the grace of Christ.

The theology of Henri de Lubac and Donald Keefe would certainly help to restore to Catholic theology the optimism of the faith so often neglected in recent theology. It is an optimism that has its foundation in the continued presence of Christ in the Eucharistic worship of the Church. As is the cause of the Church, the Church is holy and stands in history in unity with her Head. She is his Body and the sacrament of His presence in the world. Building upon the work of Keefe, one could lay a foundation for a theology that would understand the sacramental unity of history, in which one could more fully enter into the mystery of Christ, the Church, and the human person.

Summary

In his theology, Henri de Lubac initiated an effort to restore to theology its historical foundations. His work reflects the perennial effort of all theology to articulate the relationship between the faith of the Church and its foundation, Christ. In Catholic theological tradition, that mediation is sacramental, and de Lubac, grounded in that tradition, reasserts the Eucharistic foundation of the faith. In the Eucharist, the one sacrifice of the Cross is represented, and the Church participates in the one event by which she lives and by which she is saved. In this event, she is made holy, washed in the blood of the cross. The historical nature of this faith reflects its roots in the sacrifice of Christ. In this de Lubac claims to stand in continuity with the Church Fathers, who understood the *corpus verum* of the Eucharist to be the Church. A return to such a view of the Eucharist makes it possible to restore the true historicity of the faith, which has been undermined by modern theological reflection.

Fr. Keefe, building upon the insights of de Lubac, develops a systematic theology whose foundation is the New Covenant represented in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the One Flesh unity of Christ and his Church. The worship of the Church is a participation in the revelation of Christ which is the New Covenant, the full revelation of God in history. Following de Lubac, Keefe builds his theology upon this historical foundation for the faith, while at the same time articulating the metaphysical consequences of a covenantal view of reality. He asserts that the *primae analogate* must be the One Flesh union of Christ and his Church. This union is the free

¹²⁸ For a more complete account of Keefe’s ideas on the dehistoricization of the Church in Catholic theology see Keefe, *Covenantal Theology*, unpublished appendix, 118ff.

¹²⁹ Keefe, *Appendix II*, 79.

unity of the Father sending the Son, through whose death the Church is made holy and freed to receive this sacrifice. This is the New Covenant, the one source of life and grace. In asserting the New Covenant as the *prime anologate* Keefe offers an understanding of theology that places the covenantal relationship at the heart of reality; i.e., grace is now understood to be substantial. Such a view of reality is able to hold together the free creation of Genesis, the covenant at Sinai, and the Christology of John, Colossians and Ephesians. It purports a free unity of being, a notion of being which, as free, is open to the unique and irrevocable presence of the divine in the world. That unity finds its final expression in the New Covenant, whose Eucharistic presence is the continued source of the Church and all historical unity. The significance of such a theology is immense.