

CURRENT THEOLOGY

THE GRATUITY OF THE BEATIFIC VISION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A NATURAL DESTINY

No question is more vital in theological literature of recent years than the problem of the supernatural. The complexity of the question in itself, its intimate connexion with fundamental dogmas, its relation to the thorny problem of the development of dogma and the evolution of theological opinion, and finally, the place of reason and philosophical penetration in arriving at solutions,—all of these factors, and others too, permit and demand careful consideration and a quite different approach. In this paper, we shall confine ourselves solely to the theological aspect and to the fundamental dogma admitted by all Catholics, namely, that our supernatural destiny is completely gratuitous. Because of this limitation of our perspective, we must omit an evaluation of not a few important works of recent years, which deal with different aspects; among these may be mentioned here two outstanding articles by Antoninus Finili, O.P.,¹ and the penetrating study of Joseph Buckley, S.M.²

All Catholic theologians agree that the dogma of the gratuity of our supernatural destiny is unintelligible, unless it is explained in the light of the following two truths, which are admitted by all: (1) there is no exigency whatsoever in our concretely existing human nature for the supernatural; (2) our elevation to a supernatural destiny is caused solely by a free decree of God. Do these truths further, and of necessity, involve the affirmation that a destiny inferior to the beatific vision is concretely possible? This question we shall deal with exclusively in the following pages.

THE AXIOM *desiderium naturale nequit esse inane* IN SAINT THOMAS

In the remarkable volume of *Études Carmélitaines* devoted to a comprehensive study of demonology,³ there is an article by Père Philippe de la Trinité, O. C. D.: "Du péché de Satan et de la destinée de l'esprit d'après S. Thomas d'Aquin,"⁴ which offers some valuable contributions for a solution of the current discussions on the supernatural order.

The first twenty pages of this conscientious work are devoted to a detailed analysis of texts of St. Thomas which deal with the gratuity of man's destiny. The author concludes as follows:

¹ "Natural Desire," *Dominican Studies*, I (1948), 311-59; II (1949), 1-15.

² *Man's Last End* (St. Louis: Herder, 1949).

³ *Satan* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1948).

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-85.

It is certain from these texts and from the general context of the work of St. Thomas that he admitted completely the possibility of a natural final destiny for finite spirits at the level of their connatural exigencies. . . . The natural ultimate happiness of the soul is, to be sure, quite insignificant, if it be compared with the beatific vision, or even with the perfection of natural angelic knowledge, in which the separated soul participates quite imperfectly. But, is this, after all, so strange? Is not the human soul only a "poor relation" of angelic nature, which in turn is infinitely inferior to the transcendent nature of God? Nevertheless, human nature *can* receive grace and is perfected by it. It is not surprising, then, that St. Thomas is preoccupied with the need of stressing how reasonable, both from the apologetic and mystical points of view, is the "natural" aspect (for there must be one) of the prodigious mystery of our effective destiny to the beatific vision.⁵

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of this article is contained in a note on the axiom: *naturale desiderium non potest esse inane*. In his *Surnaturel*, Père de Lubac makes it a cardinal support of his theory that Saint Thomas teaches unmistakably a natural desire to know God in His essence,⁶ but he likewise teaches that a natural desire cannot be in vain; therefore the sole possible destiny of a finite spirit must be the beatific vision.⁷ Père Philippe maintains convincingly, however, that this line of reasoning, apparently so unassailable when based on an isolated text, is quite contrary to St. Thomas' real thought; for it is demonstrable that the axiom *desiderium naturale non potest esse inane*, as applied concretely by St. Thomas, is patient of extreme elasticity, and that the necessity implied is only analogical in its varied applications; this he shows by three examples: (1) the natural desire of the soul for its own immortality, (2) the natural desire for the resurrection of the body, (3) the natural desire to see God in His essence.

1) Having demonstrated the incorruptibility of the soul, St. Thomas concludes:

A manifestation of this truth may be taken from the fact that every being naturally desires to exist according to its own mode of being. But this desire in beings possessing knowledge follows their knowledge: sensible knowledge knows being, but only as "here and now," but the intellect grasps being absolutely and according to all times; hence, every intellectual being naturally desires to exist forever. A natural desire, however, cannot be in vain; therefore every intellectual substance is incorruptible.⁸

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶ Saint Thomas, *Comp. Theol.*, 104.

⁷ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*: ". . . il ne peut y avoir pour l'homme qu'une fin: la fin surnaturelle, telle que l'Évangile la propose et que la théologie la définit par la 'vision béatifique'" (p. 493).

⁸ *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 75, a. 6.

Here, quite evidently, there is a strict metaphysical exigency, which from God's side entails strict justice; if this rigorous exigency were not fulfilled, finite spirits would simply cease to be what they are.⁹ Therefore the necessity of the axiom *desiderium naturale non potest esse inane* as applied to the human soul's desire for immortality is metaphysical and infrustrable.

2) St. Thomas makes use of the same axiom when treating of the resurrection of the body:

We should note that the disquiet of the will cannot be wholly overcome unless natural desire is completely satisfied. Elements that are by nature destined for union, naturally desire to be united with each other; for any being seeks what is suited to it by nature. Since, therefore, the natural condition of the human soul is to be united with the body, it has a natural desire for union with the body. Hence the will cannot be perfectly at rest until the soul is again joined to the body. When this takes place, man rises from the dead.¹⁰

Despite the use of the same axiom, however, one would be quite unjustified in attributing to the soul's natural desire for reunion with the body the same strict necessity of absolute exigence which the soul has for its own incorruptibility. For, speaking of the intrinsic relations of the soul and body, St. Thomas teaches constantly: "Natura autem nulli deest in necessariis."¹¹ On the other hand, he teaches constantly that the resurrection of the body is miraculous, whereas the existence of the soul in the separate state is not miraculous. Therefore, the necessity in these first two applications of the axiom is quite clearly analogous. Hence one who would interpret the necessity implied in the axiom identically in these two instances would merely betray his unfamiliarity with the thought of Saint Thomas.

3) According to St. Thomas, the beatific vision is in a certain sense above the nature of the human soul, because the soul cannot attain to this vision through its own powers; in another way, however, the beatific vision is befitting to human nature (*est secundum naturam ipsius*), in as much as the soul, by its very nature as the image of God, is capable of seeing God.¹² But St. Thomas makes it perfectly clear that the natural desire for the resurrection of the body (less strict than the desire of the soul for its own immortality) is much more rigorous than the natural desire to see God, as

⁹ Saint Thomas, *De Malo*, q. 16, a. 2, ad 17m: "Iustitia vero naturalis consequitur naturam intellectualem et rationalem, cuius intellectus naturaliter ordinatur ad verum et voluntas ad bonum: unde non potest quod talis iustitia subtrahatur a Deo rationali creaturae, ipsa natura manente."

¹⁰ *Comp. Theol.*, 151.

¹¹ *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 76, a. 5, c; cf. *C. Gent.*, IV, 81; *Suppl.*, q. 75, a. 3.

¹² *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 9, ad 3m.

the following objection and answer point out: "5. Moreover, as the possibility of not dying was granted to man supernaturally, so also by supernatural gift was it made possible for him to see God. But it is not contrary to nature that man should lack the vision of God. Therefore it is not contrary to nature that man should lack the gift of immortality of the composite."

In his answer, St. Thomas states: "The vision of God is above human nature, not only with respect to the nature itself, but also with respect to the form; for it exceeds the nature of the human intellect."¹³

On the contrary, however, the resurrection of the body surpasses human nature as a composite of soul and body, but it does not surpass the substantial form, i. e., the soul, since the soul is by its very nature a part of a whole, the human composite: "Other things being equal, the state of the soul joined to the body is more perfect than the separate state, because the soul is a part of the whole composite."¹⁴

Nevertheless, the natural desire of the soul for reunion with the body is not a strict exigency, since the resurrection itself is miraculous. However, this miraculous fulfillment is fitting precisely because the soul is by nature a part of a composite. But no such reason can be urged for the fulfillment of the natural desire to see God without logically incurring the charge of pantheism.¹⁵

THE PECCABILITY OF ANGELS AND THEIR SUPERNATURAL DESTINY

Père Philippe has some interesting observations on the controversy between de Lubac and de Blic concerning the peccability of angels and its relation to their supernatural destiny. This controversy, unfortunately terminated by the death of Père de Blic, was centered on the problem of the true doctrine of Saint Thomas and on the correctness of his commentators' interpretation.

According to Bañez, the Carmelites of Salamanca, John of St. Thomas, Gonet, Billuart, and practically all Thomists, angels were capable of sin because they were called to the beatific vision, whereas in a state of pure nature they could not sin.¹⁶

According to de Blic, St. Thomas juxtaposed two contrary theses without ever succeeding in resolving their antinomies: (1) the thesis that angels

¹³ *De Malo*, q. 5, ad 5m.

¹⁴ *Sum. Theol.*, III, *Suppl.*, q. 75, a. 1, ad 4m.

¹⁵ Père Philippe de la Trinité, *op. cit.*, p. 66: "On n'en peut dire *autant* du rapport de l'âme à Dieu dans la vision béatifique sans incliner logiquement au panthéisme."

¹⁶ Cf. de Lubac, *Surnaturel*, pp. 279 f.; 286-9; 315 f.

are peccable by their very nature, independently of a supernatural destiny; (2) the thesis that angelic nature is only peccable when effectively called to a supernatural destiny.¹⁷

According to de Lubac, the notion of a purely natural order is foreign to St. Thomas; God could refuse to create angels, but if He does create them their sole possible happiness must consist in the beatific vision. This unique destiny, however, must be freely accepted; its rejection constitutes the sole possible sin of angels. Angelic peccability, therefore, is natural, but not in the perspective of a purely natural destiny which is impossible. Furthermore, in a so-called state of pure nature, angels would be incapable of any moral activity, according to de Lubac, and this confirms him in his position that angels could not be created for any destiny inferior to the beatific vision. Finally, he is sure that his conclusions are based on the only correct interpretation of St. Thomas.¹⁸

Père Philippe offers a new solution, which in its entirety, at least, differs from the three preceding solutions. He admits of necessity that, according to St. Thomas, the historical sin of the angels was uniquely a refusal of the supernatural order of grace and glory. But, he is convinced, St. Thomas teaches that the radical peccability of angels, apart from its historical exercise, consists in the power of their free will to reject God, not as He is in the hidden mystery of the Blessed Trinity which can be known only by revelation, but as the transcendent source of all morality and the last end of all creatures.¹⁹

This solution is offered only as tentative. If it could be substantiated with certainty, it would effectively vitiate de Lubac's reasoning concerning the peccability of angels and their uniquely possible supernatural destiny. M.-R. Gagnebet, O.P., however, whose profound and extensive knowledge of St. Thomas can scarcely be surpassed among contemporary theologians, disagrees with the solution of Père Philippe.²⁰ He agrees with de Lubac that angels *in puris naturalibus* are incapable of sinning either with respect to God or any created object, but rejects de Lubac's personal conclusions and strictures of the Thomist position as follows:

Père de Lubac, in his severe strictures of Thomists who follow St. Thomas in attributing inpeccability to angels in the natural order, seems to charge them with two contradictory reproaches: (1) that they should deny to a spiritual creature the

¹⁷ De Blic, *Mélanges de science religieuse*, I (1944), 241-48; III (1946), 162, 359-62; IV (1947), 93-113.

¹⁸ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-60.

¹⁹ Cf. St. Thomas, *C. Gent.*, III, 109, 110; *De Malo*, q. 16, aa. 2, 4.

²⁰ Gagnebet, "L'Amour naturel de Dieu chez S. Thomas et ses contemporains," *Revue Thomiste*, XLIX (1949), 73-86.

highest perfection of freely choosing its destiny; (2) that they should concede to angels a prerogative that belongs to God alone, i.e., impeccability. Here we are dealing only with the thought of St. Thomas. Without doubt he taught that it is a perfection to cooperate by free and meritorious action toward the attainment of final destiny. But this prerogative does not possess in his eyes an absolute value. If it did, Christ should have been deprived of all supernatural gifts in order to merit grace and the beatific vision. But such a privation seemed to St. Thomas more prejudicial to the dignity of the Incarnate Word, than the glory of acquiring the beatific vision through personal merit.²¹ For, in the hierarchical universe of St. Thomas, the more perfect a creature, the more perfectly it resembles its divine exemplar. But in God liberty is reconciled with the necessary love of the divine goodness, and is accompanied with the most absolute moral indefectibility. Why dispute the creative power of God to produce at the pinnacle of created perfection a spiritual creature indefectible in its own finite order? Such a being would manifest within the limits imposed by finite existence the sovereign moral perfection of divine goodness. To concede impeccability of this kind to a creature is not to make it God's equal, for this prerogative would belong to such a spirit only because of its spiritual perfection *received* at the first moment of creation: *secundum quod esse et completionem suam non habet nisi ab alio*.²² The object of such an indefectible will would be limited to natural choices, all ordered to God as Creator and last end; the will could not surpass objects of the natural order and be extended to embrace goods of the supernatural order; there would be no need of superadded gifts to sustain this moral indefectibility. On the part of the intellect, the perfection of natural intelligence would suffice, and on the part of the will nothing more would be needed than natural love of God always in act. To speak of a creature which is impeccable in its own finite order, as we have maintained, postulates nothing more than gifts of a natural order, which are due to the nature of finite pure spirits. On the contrary, to speak of an essential orientation of finite spirits to the beatific vision, is to grant to created nature a prerogative which belongs exclusively to God. Singular indeed is that system which, in order to exalt the dignity of created spirit and to magnify the supernatural, deprives the creature of its specific perfection and the supernatural of its absolute transcendence.²³

According to Gagnebet, de Lubac's comprehensive view on the peccability of angels in relation to their supernatural destiny is influenced by

²¹ Saint Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 19, a. 3: "Quia autem omnis perfectio et nobilitas Christo est attribuenda, consequens est quod ipse per meritum habuerit illud quod alii per meritum habent: nisi sit tale quid, cuius carentia magis dignitati Christi et perfectioni praeiudicet quam per meritum accrescat. Unde nec gratiam, nec scientiam, nec beatitudinem animae, nec divinitatem meruit: quia cum meritum non sit nisi eius quod nondum habetur, oporteret quod Christus aliquando istis caruisset; quibus carere magis diminuit dignitatem Christi, quam augeat meritum."

²² *In II Sent.*, d. 7, q. 1, a. 1; cf. also *ibid.*, d. 44, q. 1, a. 1, and *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. 161, a. 3.

²³ Gagnebet, *op. cit.*, p. 84 f.

his conviction that only in response to the supernatural are angelic spirits capable of a love of God befitting persons; in the impossible hypothesis of a purely natural destiny, their love of God would not be free, it would be merely a *voluntas naturae*, it would be a denigration of the dignity of their personality; therefore, a supernatural destiny is uniquely possible for finite spirits. Gagnebet's answer is that the lack of freedom in their natural love of God does not imply imperfection in angels, as it does in the necessary orientation of inanimate creatures toward God as their last end or in the power of the human soul to freely locate its highest good in a creature, but rather shows the marvellous natural assimilation of angels to God, whose infinite and infinitely beatifying love of Himself loses none of its transcendent sanctity in the Persons of the Trinity from the fact that it is an absolutely necessary love and is absolutely devoid of freedom. He then concludes:

In an angel, continuous knowledge of God, inseparable from the intuition of its own essence, renders this natural love of God explicit from the first moment of existence and removes freedom, without however depriving this natural love of its completely voluntary character, which is at least eminently moral as in God's necessary love of Himself. No more for angels than for men does supernatural charity confer initially the power of elevating the spirit to God by an act fully conscious and already disinterested, but rather presupposes such a power within the natural compass of men and angels. Therefore, Saint Thomas had no need of imagining in spiritual beings a chimerical "Appétit inné absolu" of the beatific vision to prevent grace from becoming a purely extrinsic gift; rather, it was enough for him to appreciate the openness of spiritual powers to the plenitude of being and of goodness. This realized openness of spiritual creatures permitted St. Thomas to affirm a principle which de Lubac's interpretation of his doctrine seems to have lost sight of: "Cum enim gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat, oportet quod naturalis ratio subserviat fidei, sicut naturalis inclinatio voluntatis obsequitur caritati."—We are dealing only with the interpretation proposed by de Lubac of St. Thomas' doctrine of natural love. This interpretation is directly contradictory of St. Thomas, according to whom a spiritual creature, of its very essence, enjoys the power to love God for Himself and above all else, with a love that is fully conscious and personal, perfectly voluntary and in a real sense moral, although in no wise supernatural. This love St. Thomas never opposes to supernatural charity, as a necessary act is opposed to a free act, but solely as an act proportioned to nature is opposed to an act which totally surpasses nature.²⁴

THE EARLY DOCTRINE OF M. MAURICE BLONDEL ON MAN'S SUPERNATURAL DESTINY

Père Henri Bouillard, S.J., has performed an immense service for theologians and philosophers by his long historical and critical survey of the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

works of M. Maurice Blondel, published shortly after the latter's death last year: "L'Intention fondamentale de Maurice Blondel et la théologie."²⁵ Despite the manifold merits of this article, we shall have to limit ourselves to Blondel's doctrine on man's supernatural destiny, the marked evolution and change of his views over a period of years, Bouillard's severe criticism of this change, and finally a personal critique of the opinions expressed by Bouillard in his criticism of Blondel.

Bouillard analyzes with utmost care the fundamentals of Blondel's thought and method as contained in the famous 1893 edition of *L'Action*. He does this masterfully, because he does not confine himself to an abstract schematization of a lifeless text, but rather brings out into clear relief all the major influences exercised on Blondel's unique personality by the turbulent philosophical and religious trends of his time. Blondel's primary purpose was to combat the separation of philosophy from religion and its final development into immanentism, which prevailed at the turn of the last century. The powerful dynamism of this dominating purpose was motivated and controlled by his profound and unalterable conviction of the truth of Christianity as a religion of supernatural transcendence. He chose deliberately the method of phenomenology to bring out in sharp relief the utter frustration of all human activity, whether individual or social, in a closed system of self-sufficient secular rationalism.

From his study of universal human nature, not in the abstract, but in its concrete and historical situation, Blondel concluded that the inevitable tensions of human life and conduct are orientated toward an inescapable option,—the free choice or rejection of a transcendent God. The role of philosophy is not to bestow a possession of being, but to manifest the links between phenomena; it points the way to an affirmation of being, but in itself remains only a phenomenology. Definitive possession and personal affirmation of reality depend on our choice when confronted with the supernatural; only in the acceptance of our supernatural destiny does our knowledge become a real possession of being.

God, to be possessed supernaturally, is our end, at once absolutely necessary and absolutely impossible of attainment by our natural powers. We can only await the unknown Messiah, the hidden Mediator giving Himself. This hope is in itself a gift. Human action, then, cannot come to its full achievement without revelation and redemption; once these are given they bring with themselves dogmatic truth, which demands a total acceptance and subjection. Thus, the philosophy of action leads to the supernatural as to a necessary hypothesis. Nevertheless, this same philosophy recognizes that it has no right to affirm the supernatural as a fact;

²⁵ *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXXVI (1949), 321–402.

this affirmation can only be made legitimately through faith and religion fully lived.²⁶

At this early period, even when he is expressing the transcendence and complete gratuity of the supernatural, Blondel never considers the possibility of a state of pure nature; he neither denies nor affirms it; when he speaks of "l'homme purement homme,"²⁷ he by no means envisages the hypothesis of a purely natural destiny, but rather actually existing men, who are either ignorant of or reject Christianity. He deals with man only in his historical situation, called to divine sonship, and more or less clearly attracted by the grace of Christ. It is uniquely the phenomenological situation of actual men, and in no way the comparison of concrete human nature with a possible state of pure nature, which warrants, for Blondel, the gratuity and transcendence of the supernatural.²⁸

THE EVOLUTION OF BLONDEL'S DOCTRINE ON THE SUPERNATURAL

Bouillard, with great detail, traces the evolution of Blondel's thought during the period of controversy, which began immediately after the publication of *L'Action* (1893) and continued until after the first world war.²⁹ By 1932,³⁰ his thought on the supernatural had crystallized into a stable doctrine which was to remain unchanged in all his later works, and especially in the famous trilogy: *La Pensée; L'Être et les êtres; L'Action* (2nd edition). From this period, Blondel assigns a positive role to the consideration of a purely natural destiny in his doctrine on the gratuity of the supernatural. He reproaches himself for not having taken it into account in his earlier work, and states that it is fundamental.³¹ He stresses the insufficiency of phenomenological methodology in solving the serious problems of man's

²⁶ Bouillard, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-29: "L'homme ne peut vivre s'il ne consent à introduire Dieu dans sa vie. Mais Dieu est celui qui échappe absolument aux prises de l'homme. Nous ne pouvons donc atteindre par nos forces seules à notre fin nécessaire. Absolument impossible et absolument nécessaire, notre destinée est surnaturelle (p. 327). . . . C'est seulement dans l'acceptation de notre destinée surnaturelle que notre connaissance devient possession réelle de l'être (*loc. cit.*). La philosophie conduit ainsi à l'idée du surnaturel comme à une hypothèse nécessaire. Mais elle reconnaît en même temps qu'elle n'en peut affirmer la réalité: celle-ci n'est atteinte que dans la foi et la pratique religieuse (*loc. cit.*)."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 347: "Parle-t-il de 'l'homme purement homme', il ne vise pas l'hypothétique nature pure, mais l'homme réel qui ignore ou refuse le christianisme, bref l'incroyant."

²⁸ *Loc. cit.*: "Mais ce n'est pas l'opposition de la nature concrète à une nature possible, c'est l'épochè phénoménologique qui lui permet d'assurer, au terme de sa déduction, la transcendance et la gratuité du surnaturel."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 334-58.

³⁰ Cf. Blondel, *Le Problème de la philosophie catholique* (1932).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25 f.

destiny and emphasizes the absolute need of a solidly established metaphysic to test conclusions arrived at solely by phenomenology. Assuredly, a state of pure nature does not exist and has never existed as an historical or psychological datum; but it could have existed, and in a certain sense it is not merely an unrealized possibility, since the natural condition of a spiritual creature remains subordinate to and underlying the order of grace.³² It is therefore possible, legitimate, and useful to examine what the very nature of spiritual being implies and requires.³³ A study of this kind will manifest in all finite natures possessed of intelligence a desire, at once natural though inefficacious, of supernatural beatitude.³⁴ Despite this desire, a purely natural destiny must be admitted as concretely possible for our human nature.³⁵

BOUILLARD'S CRITICISMS OF BLONDEL

Bouillard frankly considers this radical change of Blondel's views on the supernatural to be a positive retrogression. He makes it perfectly clear that, in his opinion, the gratuity of the supernatural, springing solely from an inexpressibly free gift of God, can be and should be maintained and defended in all its purity, without any recourse to the possibility of a destiny inferior to the beatific vision. He sets down, as the only real justification of the theory of a possible natural destiny, a decadent and totally inadequate philosophy. For, he maintains, the systematization and expansion of the theory of pure nature are rigorously bound to a twofold development: (1) that of a philosophy more and more divorced from religion; (2) the development of ontology as the science of "deexistentialized" being. It is important, therefore, Bouillard asserts, to understand thoroughly that the doctrine of pure nature is allied historically and logically to a philosophy which pretends to grasp being in its essence completely abstracted from concrete existence,—a philosophy which proceeds from the possible to the

³² *Ibid.*, p. 171, note 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 165.

³⁵ *L'Action* (Paris: 1936), I, 417: "Est-ce dire pour cela qu'un état de pure nature soit impossible, à moins d'être douloureusement frustré et que les êtres spirituels ne comportent aucun achèvement relatif à leur condition et capable de procurer la joie d'un devoir accompli, d'un service rendu, d'une humble et méritoire vertu récompensée? Nullement; car précisément parce que l'intelligence des esprits imparfaits connaît ses limites et jugerait déraisonnable cette présomption dont se scandalisaient les anciens sages, l'attitude normale serait pour eux une réserve soumise à la sublimité divine, un rôle de louanges modestement adoratrices s'alliant à l'exercice des vertus naturelles, sous la conduite de la science, de la raison, de la mutuelle amitié, conforme à l'unité de nature et à la société des esprits. Il serait donc faux de dire qu'un état de nature pure raisonnable est inconcevable, faux également de prétendre qu'en dehors de la foi positive une morale naturelle et de justes sanctions n'auraient point de consistance, ni de justification possible."

real and tends to conceive existence as an obscure complement of the possible.³⁶

For a long period, theologians succumbed to this philosophy. Many, even today, preserve its fundamental principles, even though they avoid its extreme logical consequences. These theologians have an *obligation* to maintain a system of pure nature, since otherwise, because of the unpliant texture of their thought, they could not grasp or defend the Catholic doctrine of the supernatural; inasmuch as they consider man abstracted from his real historical relations, to read into abstract human nature a necessary relation to the supernatural would destroy both the transcendence and gratuity of the supernatural.³⁷

The real question is whether a Catholic theologian ought to hold such a philosophy. It is foreign to Saint Thomas and contradicts his fundamental thought. Apart from this, the theologian should avoid utilizing in his interpretation of dogma a philosophy which can be shown to be deficient and decadent. Now, if the exclusion of any consideration of essences absurdly exaggerates concrete existence to the point of rejecting all intelligibility, it is no less chimerical to pretend to know the real through abstract essences. To define the possible otherwise than by beginning with a real datum and its concrete relations, is to contradict an essential law of the mind, which proceeds from the real to the possible and not otherwise. Possibility and necessity are intelligible only if they are centered on the real; they are not analytic concatenations of abstract concepts.³⁸

One can certainly, and one ought to, define the nature, the possibilities, and the destiny of man. But this can be done only by constant reference to man's concrete and historical existence. Once it is grasped that the mind proceeds from the real to the possible and not vice versa, the question of

³⁶ Bouillard, *op. cit.*, p. 377: "Il importe de bien comprendre que cette doctrine est liée historiquement et logiquement, à une philosophie qui prétend saisir l'être dans l'essence abstraction faite de l'existence concrète, philosophie qui va du possible au réel et tend à concevoir l'existence comme un obscur complément du possible."

³⁷ *Loc. cit.*: "Ceux-là ont le *devoir* de maintenir le système de la nature pure, la possibilité d'une fin transcendante humaine autre que la vision béatifique. Tant que l'on considère la nature humaine abstraction faite de ses relations réelles et historiques, y lire une relation nécessaire au surnaturel détruirait et la transcendence et la gratuité du surnaturel."

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 378: "Or, s'il est vain de promouvoir l'existence concrète au point de rejeter toute liaison intelligible, toute considération d'essence, il est non moins chimérique de vouloir connaître le réel par des essences abstraction faite de l'existence concrète. Définir le possible autrement qu'à partir du donné et de ses liaisons concrètes, c'est contredire la loi essentielle de l'esprit, qui va du réel au possible et non inversement. Possibilité et nécessité sont des connexions intelligibles à l'intérieur du réel, et non des enchaînements analytiques de concepts abstraits."

pure nature and of a natural destiny no longer has any meaning. Hence one can legitimately refuse the dilemma: "Is a purely natural destiny for man possible or impossible?" For the question could not be answered without reference to concrete reality, which is excluded by the very hypothesis of a purely natural destiny.³⁹

The proponents of pure nature keep on repeating: "God could have destined man to an end inferior to the beatific vision." But they do not realize that this is only an anthropomorphism to designate God's complete freedom in establishing a supernatural order, and to signalize the gratuity of the gift itself; it is, however, a deficient means of expressing divine liberty. Even though granted as a rudimentary approximation, it by no means necessitates a consideration of pure nature. For St. Thomas teaches that the permanence of creatures in existence requires divine conservation and concursus, and that, in this sense, there exists for all creatures a "potentia ad non-esse"; but he also teaches that this "potentia ad non-esse" is in God, who could withdraw his concursus, rather than in creatures, whose being naturally tends to persevere in existence.⁴⁰ Similarly, Bouillard concludes, the *potentia ad finem pure naturalem* lies, not in men who are destined to the beatific vision, but in God who could have refused this gratuitous gift. Therefore, even from the anthropomorphic viewpoint, the possibility of a purely natural end is in God and not in man, since man is effectively destined to the beatific vision.⁴¹

Furthermore, Bouillard is convinced that the entire problem should not be formulated exclusively in terms of nature and finality. For these terms, as applied to man, are in large measure inadequate. Man certainly has a nature, and thereby a finality; but he surpasses the former and assumes the latter: he is spirit and liberty. The human soul exists in history and its liberty is realized in time. The concrete relation of man is inadequately expressed in terms of nature and supernature, because it is an historical relation between liberties, a relation of love between persons. Rather, the

³⁹ *Loc. cit.*: "Pour qui admet que l'esprit va du réel au possible et non inversement, la question d'une 'nature pure' ou d'une fin 'purement naturelle' n'a plus de signification. D'une telle nature ou d'une telle fin, on ne dira ni qu'elle soit possible, ni (remarquons-le bien) qu'elle soit impossible. On ne pourrait répondre à la question qu'en se référant à la réalité concrète, ce qui est écarté par l'hypothèse même."

⁴⁰ Saint Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 104, a. 1, ad 1m.

⁴¹ Bouillard, *op. cit.*, p. 379: "Selon la perspective anthropomorphique où nous sommes ici: l'esprit ayant en fait une destination surnaturelle, la possibilité d'une fin purement naturelle résiderait en Dieu et non en lui." One might add, however, that in any perspective (anthropomorphic or not), neither for our supernatural destiny nor for our actual attainment of the beatific vision, is there the slightest exigency in our concrete and existential nature.

concrete and historical notions of the Bible,—those of creation and covenant—ought to hold a place of honor and should even dominate this discussion, since these notions alone are wholly adequate.⁴²

In these perspectives alone can we speak of the divine gift without making it an artificial accretion to a self-sufficient nature, or without compromising its transcendence. The theory of pure nature is necessary to express the gratuity of the supernatural in the context and presuppositions of a philosophy of pure essences divorced from existence; but it suffers from all the defects of such a philosophy; it does not firmly grasp reality; it does not resolve the true problem.

True, the theory of pure nature states well enough that a supernatural destiny and the gift of grace are gratuitous in relation to an imaginary being to whom, by hypothesis, they would not be granted. But it does not express this gratuity in regard of actually existing men who *do* receive these gifts. It is solely in relation to actual men that the supernatural gift of God remains existentially transcendent and gratuitous. Any theory which does not take this into account is inadequate to the dogma which it attempts to interpret.⁴³

Bouillard sums up his severe criticism of Blondel for changing his views on the supernatural. The theory of pure nature is an interpretation of a dogma (the gratuity of the supernatural) by means of a defective philosophy which is foreign to the perspectives of St. Thomas. The elaboration of this theory to defend the gratuity of the supernatural is without solid foundation in Scripture, the Fathers, and the great Scholastics. It is regrettable, then, that certain theologians at the beginning of this century, because of a truncated knowledge of Christian tradition and a defective philosophy, used their authority to orientate Blondel in a direction contrary to his extraordinary genius, instead of encouraging him to bring to perfection his great work of Christian thought.⁴⁴

A PERSONAL CRITIQUE OF BOUILLARD'S VIEWS ON THE GRATUITY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

Bouillard's article will retain permanent value as a history of the development of Blondel's thought. The present writer, however, cannot subscribe to Bouillard's forcefully expressed convictions: (1) that the evolution

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 380.

⁴³ *Loc. cit.*: "Or c'est par rapport aux hommes concrets que le don de Dieu reste transcendant et gratuit, du principe au terme et à chaque instant. Une théorie qui ne contient pas cela dans sa texture même est inadéquate au dogme qu'elle veut exprimer."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

of Blondel's thought, whereby he accepted the possibility of a natural destiny as a necessary foundation for making the gratuity of the supernatural intelligible, was retrogressive; (2) that Bouillard himself, either in this article or in his *Conversion et grâce*, has succeeded in his attempt to defend the gratuity of the supernatural without recourse to the possibility of an inferior destiny.

At the beginning of his critique of Blondel, Bouillard states unequivocally that the following is the Catholic doctrine on the gratuity of the supernatural and hence must be accepted by all Catholics: "This filial adoption, with the intimate union which it effects, is not a good over which we exercise any right whatsoever; it is a *gratuitous* gift, i.e., an entirely *liberal* initiative of divine love which is *free* and all-powerful. These are fundamental ideas which can neither be neglected nor called into question. They pertain to the very essence of Christianity."⁴⁵ This definition of Père Bouillard, which is most certainly accepted by all Catholic theologians, states two truths whose denial or attenuation would falsify, not merely a currently admitted theological opinion, but Catholic doctrine on the gratuity of the supernatural: (1) there is no exigency whatsoever, not merely in some imaginary or abstractly conceived human nature, but precisely in our present historical human nature, for the supernatural order of grace and glory;⁴⁶ (2) precisely because there is no exigency for the supernatural in our concretely existing human race which has *de facto* been elevated to a supernatural destiny, the decree of God to create existential human nature in no way implies or can imply a necessary orientation of the actual human race to the beatific vision; therefore, God was completely free, with

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 375: "... dans l'alliance qui nous fait enfants de Dieu, l'homme reste homme et Dieu reste Dieu. Cette adoption filiale, avec l'union intime qu'elle effectue, n'est pas un bien sur lequel nous aurions des droits, mais un don *gratuit*, une initiative entièrement *libérale* de l'Amour *libre* et tout-puissant. Ce sont là des points fondamentaux, qu'on ne peut ni négliger ni remettre en question: *ils appartiennent à l'essence du christianisme*" (Italics ours).

⁴⁶ Cf. Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (Denz., 2103). Here it is to be noted that Pius X condemned any "germanam verique nominis exigentiam" whatsoever for the supernatural order *in our concretely existing human race*, which is actually elevated. No one, I think, could without absurdity maintain that the Pope condemned any true exigency of the supernatural for human nature in the abstract, or in an hypothetical state of pure nature. Therefore, since the word "exigentia" in Catholic thought is synonymous with necessity (cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3m: "... ordo exigentiae vel necessitatis. . ."), it seems obvious that Pius X taught, not merely by our deduction from his words, but implicitly, that a destiny of the natural order inferior to the beatific vision is concretely possible *de jure* for the existing human race; otherwise how could he have taught explicitly that the supernatural order as actually existing is not necessary for our actual human nature?

true liberty of indifference, to elevate us or not; in other words, it is concretely possible that we, and not merely other men in a purely hypothetical order, could have been created for a destiny inferior to the beatific vision.

According to Bouillard's whole frame of mind with which I heartily concur in this detail, it is utterly absurd to even conceive an exigency in human nature which, as it were, weighs upon God and inclines Him to confer supernatural gifts. Yet, on the other hand, by excluding any necessity of admitting the concrete possibility of an inferior destiny, he maintains, at least implicitly, that the beatific vision is the uniquely possible destiny for the existing human race.⁴⁷ The exclusion of the concrete possibility of an inferior destiny could be understood either as consequent upon or as antecedent to God's decree to elevate us to a supernatural destiny. If he wishes to be understood in the consequent sense just explained, Bouillard is belaboring a banal obviousness, which all adherents of a state of pure nature as concretely possible maintain just as vigorously as he does. He undoubtedly means therefore that, antecedently to the decree of God to elevate us to a supernatural destiny, no inferior destiny was concretely possible for us.

⁴⁷ Bouillard is convinced that the gratuity of the supernatural is completely safeguarded, if one refuses either to affirm or deny the possibility of an inferior destiny (cf. *supra*, note 39). It is my conviction, however, from the doctrine of Pius X and the Catholic teaching of God's complete freedom in elevating our historical human nature, that the possibility of an inferior destiny must be affirmed. Otherwise, the Catholic doctrine on the gratuity of the supernatural is unintelligible, and a refusal to affirm this possibility seems equivalent to its denial; cf. Bouillard, *op. cit.*, p. 379 f.: "Objectera-t-on que la grâce ne détruit pas la nature, mais la suppose, que par conséquent la fin naturelle de l'homme subsiste sous sa fin surnaturelle? Le principe est incontestable; mais la conclusion appelle des distinctions. Si, par fin naturelle, on entend la destinée terrestre de l'homme, au sens d'Aristote par exemple, d'accord. Si le terme désigne une destinée transcendante sous-jacente à la destinée surnaturelle, il faut encore distinguer. Veut-on parler de la modalité humaine selon laquelle l'homme s'approprie sa destinée divine? Soit. Mais on n'admet alors qu'une fin dernière réelle, saisie de deux points de vue différents. Si l'on entend que l'homme aurait deux fins transcendantes également réelles, on introduit une dualité impensable et sans fondement théologique." No Catholic theologian has ever held the absurd and contradictory opinion that man could have two transcendent ultimate destinies capable of simultaneous actualization. From the context, however, Bouillard is obviously rejecting and denying a doctrine actually held by theologians, namely the proponents of a state of pure nature, who hold that man could have two transcendent ultimate destinies after death, one natural and the other supernatural, but that the exclusive actualization of either depends solely on the free will of God. Therefore, Bouillard has either merely set up a "straw man" (against his wont), or he has explicitly denied the possibility of a destiny inferior to the beatific vision. The rest of our critique is based on the assumption that the second alternative is correct.

This concrete impossibility, however, from Bouillard's own admission, is not founded on anything in men, i.e., on any exigency whatsoever for a supernatural destiny; it must therefore be placed in God alone. But if the concrete impossibility of an inferior destiny is founded on God alone, and antecedently to His decree to elevate the existing human race, then God is not free to elevate us or not, and Bouillard must retract his other fundamental position, proposed by him legitimately as Catholic doctrine, that the entire actual supernatural order is based on "une initiative entièrement libérale de l'Amour libre et tout-puissant."⁴⁸ If he still wishes to maintain that God is free to elevate us or not, he must accept the positive consequences, namely: If from eternity, with a sovereign and infinite freedom of indifference, God decreed to elevate *this* human race to a supernatural destiny, for which there is in us no exigency whatsoever, then *we*, and not merely hypothetical members of *a* human race, could have been created for a destiny inferior to the beatific vision. This conclusion is founded, not on any philosophical grounds whatsoever, much less on a philosophy based on essences to the exclusion of existence, but solely on a datum which Bouillard himself holds to pertain to the very essence of Christianity, namely, that the unique existential source and cause of our supernatural elevation is the *free* will of God.

It is therefore, to my mind, a regrettable evasion of Catholic doctrine on the gratuity of the supernatural as stated by Bouillard himself, to insinuate openly that those Catholic theologians, who hold the concrete possibility of an inferior destiny for our human nature, have no bases for their doctrine in Catholic tradition before the baneful intrusion of a decadent philosophy of conceptualistic essentialism. Whatever may have been their philosophical deficiencies, as Catholic theologians their arguments to substantiate the possibility of an inferior destiny have not proceeded from the possible to the real, as Bouillard charges. Rather, they hold the concrete possibility of an inferior destiny as a theological datum, without which the gratuity of the supernatural is inexplicable. Their doctrine is based on the objective fact that Catholic doctrine, as Bouillard admits, teaches that our elevation to the supernatural order is completely free, on the part of God, with a sovereign liberty of indifference, precisely because a supernatural destiny is not demanded or required by any title in human nature and hence is not owed by God in any way or by any title.

The real point at issue, then, is not the quite irrelevant question as to the philosophical tenets of certain Catholic theologians, but rather precisely

⁴⁸ Bouillard, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

what Bouillard himself means by the sovereignly free initiative of God which he holds to be the source of our supernatural elevation. It is quite widely known that a certain current of thought among a restricted number of Catholic theologians attempts to express divine liberty with regard to man's supernatural elevation, as an act of supreme love, totally unconstrained or coerced by anything outside of God,⁴⁹ which is of the same nature as God's love of His own goodness; in fact this theory does not hesitate to say that God's love of Himself is free.

Only if Bouillard subscribes to this concept of divine freedom (which is only liberty of spontaneity and is actual necessity), can he maintain intelligibly that the gratuity of the supernatural is rooted solely in a supremely free act of the divine will and yet implies no possible alternative destiny inferior to the beatific vision. Furthermore, if our supernatural destiny depended exclusively on a divine liberty of spontaneity, there must be in us, contrary to Catholic doctrine, an exigency for the beatific vision; for liberty of spontaneity involves strict necessity and excludes freedom of choice; hence, in this case, an alternative and inferior destiny would be just as inconceivable for us, as the absurd hypothesis that it would be possible for God not to love Himself.

In brief summary: Bouillard holds as pertaining to the very essence of Christianity that our supernatural elevation has its unique source in a free decree of God. He either understands this divine freedom as liberty of indifference or as liberty of spontaneity. If he understands liberty of indifference, he can no longer intelligibly deny or evade the fact that an inferior destiny is concretely possible. If he understands liberty of spontaneity, he must either prove that this is the traditional meaning of the Catholic doctrine which he admits, or he must, at least, reconcile this liberty of spontaneity with the exclusion of any exigency for the beatific vision. As to his reiterated statement that the possibility of an inferior destiny is foreign to St. Thomas, Bouillard must, if he wishes to convince professional theologians, do more than proffer vigorous assertions; he must answer the

⁴⁹ Cf. de Lubac, *Surnaturel*, p. 493 f.: "On en concluera qu'il ne peut y avoir pour l'homme qu'une fin: la fin surnaturelle, telle que l'Evangile la propose et que la théologie la définit par la 'vision béatifique'. . . Rien ici ne limite l'indépendance souveraine du Dieu qui se donne. Tout ici dans ce don s'explique par l'Amour: *secundum propositum eius qui operatur omnia secundum consilium voluntatis suae*. . . , *propter nimiam caritatem suam*." If no other end than the beatific vision were possible for man, as de Lubac states here explicitly, then it is difficult to understand what he means by saying that God was sovereignly independent in conferring this destiny, and that He conferred it *secundum propositum* etc., which Catholic exegetes understand to mean true liberty of choice between concretely possible alternatives (cf. Vosté and Knabenbauer, *Comment. in Ephes.*, 1/11).

masterful articles of M.-R. Gagnebet, O.P., J. Alfaro, S.J., and W. R. O'Connor.⁵⁰

THE ESSENTIAL THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF P. DE LUBAC'S *Surnaturel*

A rapidly growing volume of literature has been focused on Père de Lubac's *Surnaturel* since its publication in 1946. At least the most important of these books, articles, and reviews have been discussed in THEOLOGICAL STUDIES.⁵¹ Since our last survey, de Lubac himself has published two articles: "Duplex hominis beatitudo,"⁵² and "Le Mystère du surnaturel,"⁵³ the result of further reflection and research, occasioned undoubtedly by the criticisms of those who could not accept his theory of the supernatural. In the June issue of THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, W. R. O'Connor presented a scholarly critique of the first article;⁵⁴ we shall therefore confine this section to a consideration of the second. As a preliminary, almost necessary in order to evaluate de Lubac's present position, we shall review briefly the major conclusions of *Surnaturel* and the principal theological objections of critics.

The primary theological conclusion of *Surnaturel* is that the complete gratuity of man's supernatural destiny to the beatific vision does not in-

⁵⁰ M.-R. Gagnebet, O. P., "L'Amour naturel de Dieu chez s. Thomas et ses contemporains," *Revue Thomiste*, XLVIII (1948), 394-447; XLIX (1949), 31-103; J. Alfaro, S.J., "La gratuidad de la vision intuitiva de la esencia divina y la posibilidad del estado de naturaleza pura según los teólogos tomistas anteriores a Cayetano," *Gregorianum*, XXXI (1950), 62-99; W. R. O'Connor, "Natural Beatitude and the Future Life," THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, (1950), 221-40. On the other hand, M. Cappuyns in his review of *Surnaturel* (*Bulletin de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, V [1947], 251-4) agrees with Bouillard: "Le problème des *pura naturalia* et celui du *desiderium naturale* sont, en effet, intimement liés: accepter les uns, c'est condamner l'autre et inversement. Or, s'il est vrai que le moyen âge n'a pas accepté les premiers,—au sens moderne—il est clair aussi par ailleurs qu'il a unanimement admis le second. L'exégèse que le P. de Lubac donne à cet égard des textes de Saint Thomas (p. 118-20, 129-38, et surtout 431-80) est aussi lumineuse que concluante: la nature humaine tend, de soi, nécessairement vers Dieu, c'est-à-dire vers la fin surnaturelle. C'est l'interprétation à peu près générale aujourd'hui des historiens de la pensée thomiste, mais dégagée des subtilités inutiles dont souvent ils l'encombrent." Naturally, in a book review, Dom Cappuyns could not substantiate his opinion from texts of Saint Thomas. In my judgment, the articles of Gagnebet, Alfaro, and O'Connor prove that such an opinion cannot be substantiated, and that the views of de Lubac and Bouillard on the right interpretation of St. Thomas are not as generally admitted by competent scholars as Cappuyns would give us to understand.

⁵¹ Cf. "Current Theology," THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, VIII (1947), 486-88; IX (1948), 213-49, 554-60, by the present writer, and also B. J. Lonergan, S. J., in his review of Joseph Buckley, *Man's Last End*, TS, X (1949), 578-82.

⁵² *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXXV (1948), 290-99.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, XXXVI (1949), 80-121.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit. supra*, note 50.

volve the concrete possibility of an inferior destiny. Man is partially a spirit; because of his spiritual soul, he is not a nature confined and enclosed in a natural order, but rather possesses at the very center of his being a desire to see God as He is in Himself; this desire is simultaneously inefficacious and absolute. Inefficacious, because it is totally incapable of producing grace, the sole means to the vision of God, but rather awaits it as a gift; absolute, nevertheless, because God cannot refuse to fulfill this supernatural destiny which is inscribed in the very nature of finite spirits.

Curiously enough, Catholic philosophers have shown much more readiness to accept de Lubac's major conclusions than have Catholic theologians. His general thesis has been rejected by such outstanding theologians as Leopold Malevez, S.J., Jacques de Blic, S.J., Charles Boyer, S.J., and Guy de Broglie, S.J.⁵⁵ All of these critics point out that de Lubac has by no means demonstrated from historical sources that his central thesis is traditional Catholic doctrine. On the contrary, one of them, de Broglie, maintains unequivocally that it is directly opposed to Catholic doctrine to hold that man could not have been destined to an end inferior to the beatific vision.⁵⁶ All of them are quite frank in their judgment that de Lubac's theory of the gratuity of the supernatural is internally incoherent. As theologians, their criterion of judgment is not a philosophical view of man's nature and aspirations, but solely the teaching of the Church and the theological necessity of possessing an integrated understanding of the fundamental dogmas of the supernatural order, namely, trinitarian life in itself and in its created participation through grace, original justice and original sin, the redemption and the Mystical Body of Christ.

The mystery and complexity of man's supernatural destiny and of the problems which surround it demand that these problems should be solved primarily from theological data proposed by the living *Magisterium* of the Church. It is Catholic doctrine that there is no exigency whatsoever in human nature for the beatific vision,⁵⁷ and that God was sovereignly free to elevate the human race to its supernatural destiny.⁵⁸ Now, Father de

⁵⁵ For an exposition of their views, cf. my articles in *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES*, *supra* note 51.

⁵⁶ Cf. de Broglie, *De Fine Ultimo Hominis*, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1948), p. 246.

⁵⁷ Cf. Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, *Denz.*, 2103.

⁵⁸ Cf. "Acta et Decreta Concilii Vaticani," *Collectio Lacensis*, VII, 547 f.: "Iam vero Deus voluit creaturae suae rationali impertiri cognitionem sui et communicationem sui et communionem sui atque unionem secum ipso in ordine longe superiori, quo vires naturae, quantumvis intra suum ordinem perficiantur, non pertingunt, et qui proinde ordo est supra vires naturae creatae et supra omnem exigentiam naturalis perfectionis, atque ideo, ordo supernaturalis. . . Bonum ergo huius ordinis, *supposita etiam creatione naturae rationalis*,

Lubac himself insists and stresses that there is no exigency in man for the supernatural, and that his vocation to this sublime destiny is rooted uniquely in a completely free act of God's will.⁶⁹

In *Surnaturel*, however, it is not clearly admitted that, in addition to the creative act of God terminating freely in the existence of finite spirit there was, and must have been, also a divine decree terminating freely in the elevation of this concrete historical human race to a supernatural destiny. Without such an explicit admission, however, it seems impossible to maintain, either that there is no exigency for the supernatural in our existing human nature, or that God was completely free in elevating our actually existing human race to its supernatural destiny.

Therefore, despite his protestations of God's freedom in elevating us, or in reality precisely because of these protestations, de Lubac's affirmation, that man's natural desire for the beatific vision is absolute and infrustrable, cannot be sustained intelligibly. Either God was free to elevate or not to elevate our actually existing human nature, or in the existing human race there is an exigency for the supernatural; for, an absolute and infrustrable desire of the beatific vision, proposed as essentially constitutive of finite spirits, is completely unintelligible except in terms of strict exigency.⁶⁰

Here, precisely in Catholic doctrine, and not in a purely philosophical or phenomenological analysis of man and of his natural aspirations, the problems raised by Père de Lubac must find their primary solution. In *Surnaturel* he has not faced the fact that our supernatural destiny involves

et supposita quavis eius naturali perfectione, est *indebitum* tum *exigentiae* tum merito cuius naturali, et hoc sensu dicuntur *bona superaddita et gratuita* atque nonnisi *liberrimo divinae bonitatis consilio* collata." Cf. also *Constitutio de Fide Catholica* (Denz., 1785 and 1786) in which the Vatican defined that revelation is absolutely necessary only because God freely willed ("placuisse eius sapientiae et bonitati") to ordain man to a supernatural end ("quia Deus ex infinita bonitate sua ordinavit hominem ad finem supernaturalem").

⁶⁹ Cf. de Lubac, *Surnaturel*: "[L'esprit] ne cherche point à posséder un objet infini: il veut la communication *libre* et gratuite d'un Etre personnel" (p. 483); "Désirer la communication divine comme un *libre* don, comme une initiative gratuite, c'est bien la désirer d'un désir par lui-même inefficace, mais ce n'est pas pour autant, ainsi qu'on le dit parfois, n'en avoir qu'un désir platonique, conditionnel ou conditionné" (p. 484); "L'esprit désire non seulement Dieu lui-même, mais Dieu . . . se donnant *librement*, dans l'initiative de son pur amour" (*loc. cit.*); "Nous comprendrons sans peine qu'il n'a rien d'attentatoire à la *liberté* divine, Dieu ne le déposant en nous que parce qu'il veut *librement* se donner à nous" (p. 488; italics ours).

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 487: "Bien plus, quoiqu'il y ait de bonnes raisons de l'appeler 'naturel', (puisque'il est essentiellement dans la nature et qu'il en exprime le fond) on doit ajouter qu'il est déjà, en un sens, quelque chose de Dieu." How can this be intelligibly verified in the case of a soul in limbo?

and demands a divine and absolutely free decree over and above the creative decree which terminates freely in the natural existence of finite spirits. Rather, he takes as the cardinal support of his thesis the texts of St. Thomas on the natural desire to see God, and supposes, without sufficient grounds,⁶¹ that these texts confirm his position. On the contrary, Saint Thomas affirms without hesitation that the beatific vision transcends all natural desire as it transcends all finite intelligence, whether human or angelic.⁶² Not only this, but the following passage, utilized by the present writer over a year and a half ago,⁶³ shows conclusively that Saint Thomas maintained a destiny inferior to the beatific vision as concretely possible for our historically existing human race and not merely for men in an hypothetical order, precisely because our actual elevation is due solely to a completely free act of God's will. This passage is so important that we shall cite it completely in the original:

Circa quod sciendum est, quod aliquid movet voluntatem dupliciter: uno modo per modum debiti, alio modo per modum meriti. Per modum autem debiti movet aliquid dupliciter: uno modo absolute, et alio modo ex suppositione alterius. Absolute quidem ipse finis ultimus, qui est voluntatis obiectum; et hoc modo voluntatem movet ut ab ipso divertere non possit; unde nullus homo potest non velle esse beatus, ut dicit Augustinus in lib. de libero Arbit. Sed ex suppositione alterius movet secundum debitum illud sine quo finis haberi non potest; illud autem sine quo finis haberi potest, sed facit ad bene esse finis ipsius, non movet voluntatem secundum debitum, sed est *libera inclinatio* voluntatis in ipsum; sed tamen ex quo voluntas est *libere* inclinata in ipsum, inclinatur in omnia sine quibus hoc haberi non potest, per modum debiti, ex praesuppositione tamen illius quod primo volitum ponebatur: sicut rex ex sua *liberalitate* facit aliquem militem; sed quia non potest esse miles nisi habeat equum, efficitur *debitum* et *necessarium* ex praesuppositione *liberalitatis praedictae* quod ei det equum.

Finis autem divinae voluntatis est ipsa eius bonitas, quae non dependet ab alio quo alio; unde ad hoc quod habeatur a Deo, nullo alio indiget. Et ideo voluntas eius non inclinatur primo ad aliquid faciendum per modum debiti, sed *liberaliter* tantum, in quantum est bonitas eius in opere manifesta. Sed ex quo supponitur quod

⁶¹ Cf. Gagnebet, *op. cit.*, p. 443, who cites many texts against de Lubac's interpretation of natural desire in St. Thomas, e.g., *De virt.*, a. 1, ad 8m: "Bonum proportionatum movet appetitum; non enim naturaliter appetuntur ea quae non sunt proportionata. Quod autem beatitudo aeterna sit bonum proportionatum nobis, hoc est ex gratia Dei," and then concludes: "Une interprétation des textes sur le désir naturel de voir Dieu qui ne tient pas compte de tels textes ne doit pas se présenter comme *historique*."

⁶² Saint Thomas, *In I Sent.*, *Prolog.*, a. 1; *In II Sent.*, d. 29, a. 1; d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2 m.; *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, *sol.* 3 c et ad 2m; d. 27, q. 2, a. 3, ad 5m; *De ver.*, q. 14, a. 2; *ibid.*, a. 3, ad 9m; *C. Gent.*, I, 5; III, 153; *In II ad Cor.*, V, *lect* 2; *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 62, a. 3; q. 114, a. 2.

⁶³ "The Supernatural Destiny of Man," *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Convention of the Jesuit Philosophical Association*, 1949, p. 19.

Deus aliquid facere velit, ex suppositione *liberalitatis* ipsius per modum *debiti cuiusdam* sequitur quod faciat ea sine quibus res ipsa volita esse non potest; sicut si facere vult hominem, quod det ei rationem.

Ubi cumque autem occurrit aliquid *sine quo aliud a Deo volitum esse possit*, hoc non procedit ab eo secundum rationem alicuius debiti, sed secundum *meram liberalitatem*. Perfectio autem *gratiae* et *gloriae* sunt huiusmodi bona, quod *sine eis natura esse potest*, excedunt enim naturalis virtutis limites. Unde quod Deus alicui velit dare *gratiam* et *gloriam*, hoc ex *mera liberalitate* procedit.⁶⁴

For any one who knows familiarly St. Thomas' lofty doctrine on God's complete transcendence, and how far removed this doctrine is from Platonic optimism with its overtones of a moral necessity in God to communicate His goodness in the highest possible degree, the text just cited needs no explanation. Saint Thomas here states unequivocally that God is completely free to elevate our historical race to the supernatural destiny of the beatific vision and is equally free not to do so; his reason is that the nature of rational spirits, actually existing in our historical order of creation, in no way requires that they be so elevated: "Sine eis [gratia et gloria] natura esse potest."⁶⁵ Therefore, it cannot be maintained without absurdity that the very nature of spiritual beings in our historical order is constituted by a natural desire for the beatific vision which God cannot but fulfill with His gratuitous and free gift of grace.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *De ver.*, q. 6, a. 2; cf. also *ibid.*, ad 6m, and q. 23, a. 6. Saint Thomas uses the notion of liberality in opposition to necessity of any kind; it denotes therefore in his mind an action which is totally free, i. e., whose term is by no means inevitable, but rather no more necessary than other possible alternatives, e. g., *De ver.*, q. 23, a. 4: "Unde patet quod non est necessitas divinae voluntatis ex amore quem habet ad suam bonitatem, quod velit hoc vel illud circa creaturam; nec inest ei aliqua necessitas respectu totius creaturae, eo quod divina bonitas in se perfecta est, etiamsi nulla creatura existeret, quia bonorum nostrorum non eget ut in Psalm. XV dicitur. Non enim divina bonitas est talis finis qui efficiatur ex his quae sunt ad finem; sed magis quo efficiuntur et perficiuntur ea quae ad ipsum ordinantur. Unde Avicenna dicit quod solius actio Dei est *pure liberalis*, quia nihil sibi accrescit ex his quae vult vel operatur circa creaturam" (Italics ours); *de Ver.*, q. 14, a. 10, ad 2m: "Dicendum quod ab ipsa prima institutione natura humana est ordinata in finem beatitudinis, non quasi *in finem debitum* homini *secundum naturam eius*, sed ex *solo divina liberalitate*; et ideo non oportet quod principia naturae sufficiant ad finem illum consequendum, nisi fuerint adiuta donis superadditis *ex divina liberalitate*" (Italics ours).

⁶⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁶ Cf. de Lubac, *Supernaturel*, p. 484: "L'esprit désire non seulement Dieu lui-même, mais Dieu *tel qu'il ne peut ne pas être*, Dieu *se donnant librement* dans l'initiative de son pur amour" (Italics ours). True, any action of God *ad extra* is, on His part, a gift; but if, in the hypothesis that He wills to create men, He cannot but give them a supernatural destiny, He is no more free in giving supernatural gifts than in giving men intellectual and sensible faculties. The gratuity of the supernatural thus becomes identified with the natural. If He is free to confer supernatural gifts, then an inferior destiny is *de jure* possible.

The Catholic doctrine of God's absolute freedom in elevating *this* historical human nature to a supernatural destiny is not sufficiently safeguarded by those who concede verbally the tenor of the passage just cited from Saint Thomas, and then conclude:

Would God create man in a state of non-elevation? The question is not whether He could do so, because He could; the question is rather: would He? We know in fact that He has not. Yet is this *has not* merely a fact, an incident that could just as easily not have happened? I cannot think so. . . . Exigency of the supernatural, it will be asked? Assuredly not, for the divine generosity does not presuppose receivers, it prepares them. God's most perfect gift comes first. It is not nature, therefore, which requires grace; it is rather grace which, as a gift of the divine life, given with a love which is as unconditioned as it is perfect, calls into being spiritual creatures to receive it.⁶⁷

If God is completely free to elevate us for two reasons, (1) because He Himself is no more perfected or enhanced in His infinite perfection by our elevation than He is by our creation, or for that matter, by the Sacred Humanity of the Incarnate Word, (2) because our actually existing human nature, in no way and by no title founded on the essential and unchangeable wisdom of God, requires a supernatural destiny, then our *de facto* elevation is a fact "which could just as easily not have happened"; and this can be denied only by denying that the unique cause of our actual elevation is the ineffably free decree of the divine will.

Similarly, it does not seem to me that the theological viewpoint has been sufficiently grasped by those who maintain that our argument from divine liberty is not exclusively theological, since "it is not perfectly clear that freedom of choice at the level of philosophy is destroyed by the inevitability of its specific term—if there is a term. The liberty of indifference is a philosophical notion and one which is not uncontested at that."⁶⁸ No one would think of denying that the notion of liberty of indifference is philosophical, or that, on the philosophical level, it is a hotly contested concept. But it is also a theological notion, whose real, as opposed to notional, content is derived, not from any metaphysical speculation however solidly grounded in reality, but from a solemnly defined dogma of the Catholic faith interpreted authentically by the infallible *Magisterium* of the Church. Therefore, the interminable discussions and difficulties of liberty of indifference on a philosophical level can never impugn in the slightest degree our

⁶⁷ A. Pegis, "Nature and Spirit: Some Reflections on the Problem of the End of Man," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, XXIII (1949), 79.

⁶⁸ G. Smith, S.J., *ibid.*, "The Natural End of Man," p. 52, note 6.

certitude of faith in the solemnly defined dogma that God's liberty, from the very fact of His infinite transcendence, is denied at the very moment when we affirm the inevitability of any term which He freely chooses. The Vatican Council solemnly defined that every created being is a term of divine liberty; hence since, according to the Vatican Council also, God is "in se et ex se beatissimus, et super omnia, quae praeter ipsum sunt et concipi possunt, ineffabiliter excelsus," neither this actually created universe, nor any other, need ever have existed; to assert the opposite is to deny God's infinite transcendence and to affirm some form of pantheism.⁶⁹ It is Catholic doctrine, although not a defined dogma, that our supernatural destiny is also a term of divine liberty, and no one affirms this truth with more insistence than de Lubac; therefore, our supernatural destiny is a term of divine liberty which need never have existed, even though God had freely created precisely the same human souls which He has *de facto* freely elevated.

Le Mystère du surnaturel

Father de Lubac's attempt at further clarification and precision in his article "Le Mystère du surnaturel" is not, I think, successful. First of all, his purpose in this article should be made clear: it is to explain the gratuity of the supernatural without any recourse to the possibility of an inferior destiny, i.e., to the possibility of a state of "pure nature."⁷⁰ If by "pure nature" one means a systematically perfect and completely intelligible exposition of what man's concrete destiny, with its detailed circumstances, would be, if he were not destined to a supernatural end, I agree fully with de Lubac that the hypothesis of a state of "pure nature" is not necessary to defend the gratuity of the supernatural. It is certainly not imposed by any datum from dogma or theology, and, I personally believe, exceeds the limitations of human reason and philosophical penetration, precisely because of the cloud of natural mystery which envelops our knowledge of the human soul, especially in its state of separation from the body and from the sensible categories of space and time, which condition all proper human

⁶⁹ Cf. *Denz.*, 1782, 1783, 1803-5.

⁷⁰ Cf. de Lubac, *art. cit.*, p. 89: "Dans ces conditions, n'est-il pas plus simple d'en revenir, comme nous le proposons, à la position des Anciens qui ne s'embarrassaient pas de pareille hypothèse [i. e., of pure nature]? Ce serait à charge, bien entendu, de montrer—comme il se doit en tout état de cause, et sans d'ailleurs prétendre élucider pleinement ce qui touche au mystère—comment on peut se représenter la gratuité totale du Don de Dieu,—de ce Don de Dieu qui n'est autre que Dieu. . . Et c'est à cette fin que nous poserons aux partisans de la 'pure nature', à titre d'argument subsidiaire, cette simple question: Pensez-vous que votre hypothèse, à la supposer solide et sans inconvénients, soit utile à la fin que nous nous proposons tous?"

knowledge that is not analogical or purely approximative. On the other hand, if by "pure nature" one means only that a lesser destiny than the beatific vision is *de iure* possible for our concretely existing human race, this meaning is, I am convinced, imposed on all Catholics as the sole intelligible explanation of the gratuity of the supernatural order proposed for our belief by the Church.

In a beautifully expressed passage, de Lubac seems to admit unequivocally that God need not have destined the existing human race to the beatific vision; for he insists that our actual destination is due to a free divine decree over and beyond the free decree of creation, and that the abyss between our actually existing nature and the supernatural is as profound as the void between being and non-being. This acknowledgement of a twofold free decree of God is a great advance over the reiterated, but generic and vague affirmation, in *Supernaturel*, that our divine destiny is founded uniquely on divine liberty. This passage is so important, both in its relation to *Supernaturel* and to the rest of the present article, that it should be given in full:

After as well as before [all discussion of the gratuity of the supernatural], we shall be able to continue to affirm that if God had so willed He could have refused to create us, and that He could have not destined this being which He has created to the beatific vision. For, if these expressions are inadequate, their inadequacy does not stem from the reality of the sovereign liberty which they attribute to God. If they ought to be criticized for the reason which we shall presently see, they nevertheless in their own way convey a most legitimate and important truth, while their denial would suggest a twofold error. We know, both from our knowledge of God and of creatures, that it could not be otherwise. God could not have been constrained by anything to impress on my being a supernatural finality. And though it be true that in God everything is identical with a perfect simplicity, nevertheless, in relation to me, I must distinguish with the utmost care, and uphold a double gratuity, a double divine gift, and consequently, if one may so speak, a double divine liberty. There exist, as it were, two distinct levels without any communication between the lower and the higher. Ontologically, there is a twofold transition, both of them insurmountable to me as a creature; the transition from non-being to being through creation, and my destiny to a supernatural end. Therefore, the gift of the supernatural is no more a simple *sequela* of creation, than creation itself is a necessary consequent of something preceding. Between an existing nature and the supernatural to which God destines it, the distance is as great, the void as profound, the heterogeneity as radical as between being and non-being. The *donum perfectum*, to use the traditional words taken from the epistle of St. James, is transcendent, in relation to the *donum optimum*. There is "another order,—the supernatural." It is exactly, in the words of Scripture, a new creation without any commensurate proportion to the first creation. This can be called into doubt only by those who, like

Baius, have no concept of the elevation whereby the supernatural confers upon nature a real *sublimation*, a real *exaltation* above itself, in a word, a real *deification*. The supernatural does not find its explanation in nature, at least in the sense that there is or can be any exigency in nature for the supernatural; rather nature is explained through the eyes of faith by the supernatural. Considered in itself, statically so to speak, or again in its "species" my nature is only "what it is." There is not in my nature, let us repeat, the slightest supernatural element.⁷¹

With every statement of this long passage I concur completely. It affirms *ad unguem* my conclusion expressed in preceding pages and in THEOLOGICAL STUDIES,⁷² that God could have created our existing human race, and not have destined it to a supernatural end. On the other hand these acknowledgements of de Lubac, made here for the first time, are incompatible, I am convinced, with his doctrine in *Surnaturel* that finite spirits are constituted essentially by a desire for the supernatural, and that this desire is absolute and infrustrable. Furthermore, I cannot reconcile this passage with other affirmations made in the same article. For, in this article with a fairly extensive development, de Lubac expands his doctrine of *Surnaturel* that it is not concretely possible that I or any member of our existing human race should not have been destined to a supernatural end. His reasons are the following:

- 1) To maintain the gratuity of the supernatural by a recourse to another possible finality, it would not suffice to assert that the same human nature could have been constituted in another order with this different finality. Rather one would have to say all this of the same humanity, the same human being, the same "I." But on reflexion, this is nonsense. For in supposing another order, one also supposes, whether he wills it or not, another humanity, another human being, another "I." In this purely natural world which is either imagined or proposed as possible, my nature, so the argument runs, would have existed. Let us concede this, even though it be not as firmly established as some think. At any rate, the same "I" would not have existed. . . . For the difference between one and the other affects not only individuality, but the very nature itself.⁷³
- 2) In me, a real and existing human person, in *my* concrete nature, the desire to see God could not be eternally frustrated without an essential suffering. Is this not the definition of the pain of loss? And consequently, it is evident, God in His justice and goodness could not allow me to be frustrated, unless I by my own fault turn myself deliberately away from Him. . . .

To sum up, from the moment that I say "I," I exist, I have my being. And from this moment I am finalized. . . . From the moment that I exist, all in-

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁷² Cf. THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, IX (1948), 241-49.

⁷³ De Lubac, *art. cit.*, p. 93.

determination is removed, and whatever might have been, no other end is henceforth possible except that destiny which is inscribed in my nature, and for which I bear in myself *eo ipso*, whether consciously or not, a natural desire. Some theologians are shocked by an apparent opposition between the destiny essential to man and the gratuity of this destiny. Moved by the desire of a facile solution, they let themselves be guided by analogies drawn from human relations or even from the material world. At this level, any reconciliation demands a sacrifice. Obviously gratuity cannot be sacrificed. Therefore, the essentialness of our destiny is sacrificed.⁷⁴

De Lubac's first reason, based on the assertion that one would not be the same concrete person if he were not supernaturally finalized, does not seem to take into consideration certain theological data, which are directly contradictory of his position. Sanctifying grace, the *lumen gloriae*, and the beatific vision itself are all, according to Catholic doctrine, in no way constitutive of human persons, but modifications of persons who already exist. Judas baptized, Judas unbaptized, Judas in heaven, or Judas in hell would be exactly the same concrete substantial person. If de Lubac's reasoning were sound, he would have to maintain that an unbaptized infant in limbo is a different human being, a different human nature, a different *ego* from the same infant in the hypothesis that, before death, he were supernaturally finalized intrinsically through baptism and were admitted immediately to the beatific vision.

We grant completely the legitimacy and necessity of de Lubac's assertion that, to uphold the gratuity of the supernatural through recourse to a possible destiny inferior to the beatific vision, we must speak of the same humanity, the same human being, the same *ego*. But we likewise insist that this required identity of the same *ego* in various possible states must be and can be only a substantial identity; for, it is obvious that a person elevated to the supernatural order by baptism receives a new modification and differs accidentally from his previous state before baptism. But de Lubac's position seems to maintain that, apart from the accidental differentiation of a person in a supernatural state from the same person before his elevation, there must be a substantial differentiation pertaining to the essential constitution of the person; for, if he means nothing more than this accidental differentiation, it is almost incredible that he should belabor and expand at such great length a trite banality, whose truth is not only immediately evident, but is held just as vigorously by those theologians whose position he is in the process of rejecting. If therefore the identity of

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 103, 116.

person which he asserts to be concretely impossible is the substantial identity of the *ego*, he is either implying that the whole order of grace is substantially constitutive of our concrete human personality, or he is implicitly retracting his explicit avowal that God is completely free to elevate our existing human nature to a supernatural destiny.⁷⁶

De Lubac's second reason for the concrete impossibility of an inferior destiny, based on his views of supernatural finality, I find difficult to harmonize with theological data closely connected with fundamental dogmas, as these latter have been concretely revealed and historically realized in the infallible consciousness of the living *Magisterium* of the Church. When de Lubac asserts that in no human being of our existing human race can the desire to see God be frustrated without an essential suffering, identified by him with "the pain of loss," he seems to be in direct opposition with the common teaching of all Catholic theologians. For in infants who die without baptism, their supernatural destiny is, and will remain eternally, unfulfilled; nevertheless not only are these infants without the slightest shadow of personal fault (which de Lubac assigns as the unique ground for the frustration of the natural desire to see God), but they do not suffer in the slightest degree, and, according to Saint Thomas, happy and secure in the possession of natural goods, they are not even aware that they were destined to the beatific vision.⁷⁶

One might, of course, reject the common teaching on the condition of souls in limbo and revert to the Augustinian tradition definitively refuted by St. Thomas, but such a rejection could not be sustained intelligibly, unless one were to hold that each infant in limbo is personally responsible for and guilty of original sin.⁷⁷ If each human soul in the present historical order is finalized intrinsically to its supernatural end at the first moment of its existence, as de Lubac maintains, there would be no basis for the Catholic doctrine of limbo, which is founded on two truths, the transmission of original sin, and the possibility of death in original sin before personal sins can be committed. But original sin consists precisely in the fact that in his initial existence no human person descended from Adam is intrinsically finalized by the supernatural end of the beatific vision. This lack of intrinsic finalization or proportion is solely an hereditary state of

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁷⁶ *De Malo*, q. 5, a. 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: "Quia cum in pueris non sit peccatum actuale quod est proprie peccatum personale non debetur eis ut detrimentum aliquod patiantur in naturalibus bonis. . . . Ad quartum dicendum, quod pueri in originali decedentes, sunt quidem separati a Deo quantum ad amissionem gloriae quam ignorant, non tamen quantum ad participationem naturalium bonorum quae cognoscunt."

sinfulness, without the slightest element of personal responsibility. It is furthermore totally unintelligible in the light of the revealed attributes of God, unless it is the deprivation of a destiny which is utterly and completely unowed, and hence need never have been granted to our human nature in Adam, who is the unique personally responsible cause of the transmission and existence of original sin in us, his posterity.⁷⁸ The assertion, then, that my supernatural destiny is inscribed in my nature, and so finalizes it, from the first moment of my existence, and moreover is identical with a natural desire of the beatific vision which cannot be frustrated apart from personal sin, simply cannot, in my opinion, be squared with any explanation of original sin which would be intelligible or in full accord with theological data that constitute common Catholic doctrine.⁷⁹

True, Father de Lubac concedes that "Considered in itself, statically so to speak, or again abstractly, my nature is only 'what it is.' There is not the slightest element of the supernatural in it." But he is quick to add immediately, that in the concrete order of existential reality, "one has no right to consider this nature as a reality, before he takes into consideration its supernatural finality which is inscribed therein."⁸⁰ To this addition,

⁷⁸ Cf. St. Thomas, *Comp. Theol.*, 195: "Neque hoc est contra ordinem iustitiae, quasi Deo puniente in filiis quod primus parens deliquit; quia ista poena non est nisi subtractio eorum quae supernaturaliter primo homini divinitus sunt concessa, per ipsum in alios derivanda: unde aliis non debebantur, nisi quatenus per primum parentem in eos erant transitura."

⁷⁹ Cf. St. Thomas, *ibid.*, 197: "Nec tamen oportet quod omnia peccata alia vel primi parentis vel caeterorum traducantur in posteros, quia primum peccatum primi parentis sustulit donum totum, quod supernaturaliter erat collatum in natura humana personae primi parentis."

⁸⁰ De Lubac, *art. cit.*, p. 105: "Mais pas plus qu'on n'avait le droit d'envisager sinon par manière de dire un sujet réel avant sa position dans l'être par l'acte créateur, pas davantage on ne pourrait réellement envisager cette nature avant d'y voir inscrite sa finalité surnaturelle." The Council of Trent, *Sess. VI*, "Decretum de iustificatione," defined that the final cause of justification is "vita aeterna," i.e., the beatific vision (*Denz.*, 799); the Council also defined that justification itself finds no natural disposition, no intrinsic proportion whatsoever in man, but rather that the dispositions for justification are radically due to graces of Christ which are completely unowed (*Denz.*, 798). Therefore, in defining that the beatific vision is the final cause, i.e., the ultimate intrinsic *finis operis* of justified man, Trent excludes the beatific vision as the ultimate end of man's nature without the gratuitous gift of justifying grace. If it be urged that Trent is speaking only of the justification of men in fallen nature, we reply that original sin is not in any way a personal sin, and consists totally in the loss, not of natural endowments, but of gifts that are totally unowed to human nature. Therefore, according to Trent, a supernatural finality is not inscribed in my human nature from the first moment of my existence. Hence one not only has the right to, but one must, consider human nature as a reality, before its supernatural finality is inscribed therein.

one must reply: either there is no supernatural finality inscribed in the nature of each newly existing member of the human race, or no member of the human race is conceived and born in original sin; for the precise and only reason why each individual is conceived and born in original sin, i.e., in an habitual state of aversion from God, is because he is not intrinsically finalized by, and internally proportioned to, the supernatural end which was absolutely, though freely, willed by God for all men in Adam. It is precisely because our supernatural destiny is not inscribed in our nature, it is precisely because we are not intrinsically finalized by the beatific vision or internally proportioned to it, that we are conceived and born in opposition to the absolute will of God, i.e., in a sinful state of real guilt, whose sole cause is, not in any way the absolutely innocent personal will of a new-born infant, but entirely the sinful transgression of Adam.

Though born in original sin, i.e., without any internal supernatural finality whereby we would be intrinsically proportioned to the beatific vision, we are by no means born in a state of pure nature, because we remain from eternity destined extrinsically in Adam by the absolute will of God to a supernatural end. Nevertheless, the very fact that there are members of our human race, sharers in the original sin of Adam by hereditary guilt alone, redeemed in principle by the *gratia capitalis* of Christ's passion and death, who, in the mysterious designs of divine providence, will actually live throughout eternity deprived of their supernatural destiny, though spotlessly innocent of the slightest stain of personal sin,—this astounding fact, which no Catholic would care to deny,⁸¹ is an unassailable

⁸¹ Cf. Council of Florence, *Decretum pro Armenis*: "Primum omnium sacramentorum locum tenet BAPTISMA, quod vitae spiritualis ianua est: per ipsum enim membra Christi ac de corpore efficiuntur Ecclesiae. Et cum per primum hominem mors introierit in universos, nisi ex aqua et Spiritu renascimur, non possumus, ut inquit Veritas, in regnum coelorum introire" (*Denz.*, 696). Cf. also *ibid.*, *Decretum pro Iacobitis*: "Circa pueros vero propter periculum mortis, quod saepe potest contingere, cum ipsis non possit alio remedio subveniri, nisi per sacramentum baptismi, per quod eripiuntur a diaboli dominatu et in filios Dei adoptantur, admonet, non esse per quadraginta aut octoginta dies seu aliud tempus iuxta quorundam observantiam sacrum baptismum differendum; sed quam primum commode fieri potest, debere conferri: ita tamen, quod mortis imminente periculo mox sine ulla dilatione baptizentur, etiam per laicum vel mulierem. . . ." (*Denz.*, 712). Sporadic efforts of some theologians like Schells to attenuate the Catholic doctrine on limbo and to find some extraordinary means whereby infants dying without baptism may attain the beatific vision have always met with failure. In his scholarly monograph, *Das Los der ohne die Taufe sterbenden Kinder* (Freiburg im Br., 1923), Dr. Wilhelm Stockums concludes: "Ueberblickt man die angeführten kirchlichen Aeusserungen, so gewinnt man von selbst die Ueberzeugung, dass es sich hier um uraltes, apostolisches Glaubensgut handelt, nicht aber um eine Theorie, die sich von schwachen und dunklen Anfängen in langen Auseinandersetzungen erst zu voller Klarheit und dogmatischer Prägung hätte durchdringen müssen. Die Konzils-

proof that God could have created precisely the same human persons whom He has *de facto* elevated to a supernatural destiny, and never have called them to share in the ineffable riches of His trinitarian life. If there exist now in limbo human souls of infants who died without baptism, who remain irrevocably destined by God to the beatific vision, who were actually elevated and proportioned to this unique end in Adam before his sin, but were conceived, were born, and died without any intrinsic proportion to their supernatural destiny,—if these same souls now and for eternity are without all personal sin, and if in the enjoyment of natural knowledge of God they are unaware of their supernatural destiny and certainly are in no wise afflicted by the slightest sorrow, then, in the face of these theological data which constitute common Catholic doctrine, all attempts to prove that man's natural desire to see God excludes the concrete possibility of his having been destined to an end inferior to the beatific vision will be necessarily abortive.

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dekrete von Nordafrika atmen denselben Geist und die gleiche Bestimmtheit wie diejenigen von Trient, die tausend Jahre später erfolgten: Die Taufe ist das einzige und unerlässliche Mittel des Heils, und zwar darum, weil Christus es so gelehrt und gewollt hat" (p. 117). There is no supernatural finality without sanctifying grace, and in the case of infants, baptism is the unique means of obtaining sanctifying grace.