

CURRENT THEOLOGY

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA AND THE SUPERNATURAL

The quantity and quality of theological literature which has poured from the pens of European, and especially French, theologians during the war and post-war years have been almost incredible. This mass of writing is witness to a profound realization that the present world-wide sickness of men's hearts and minds is the inevitable result of an interior spiritual torpor, deriving from a cultivated and all-pervasive ignorance of God and religion. It is likewise witness to a vital awareness that the multiple obstacles to the true happiness of men cannot be shattered by physical prowess, economic resources, social planning, or any other purely human means, but only by a complete change of heart, initiated by the loving impulsions of grace and directed by a living theology serving the needs of our peculiar age.

Because of the lofty and apostolic motives of these writers and their recognized theological stature, and because the problems they are confronting are similar to ours, it is almost essential that American Catholic leaders, and especially theologians, follow closely the major trends and controversies of European theological thought. The times, however, are too serious, the need of an immediate alleviation of the misery of spiritual desolation and barrenness too overwhelming, for biased criticism, whether based on false loyalties to theological schools, inadequate knowledge, or superficial judgments.¹ On the other hand, critical evaluation on the part of professional theologians is absolutely necessary for any true progress. The present article, though for the most part a summary, will make some critical comments, with the sole intention that the momentousness of the problems discussed and the serious consequences of varying solutions may be brought into focus as a basis for further discussion by American theologians.

I.

In an article entitled, "Present Orientations of Religious Thought,"² Père J. Daniélou, S.J., after stressing the eagerness of modern minds for a

¹ The present writer confesses candidly that he may justly be charged with similar defects in his review of Matthias Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, VIII (1947), 136-40. He wishes to reject any overt statement or implication that the *Surnaturel* of P. Henri de Lubac is in any way to be connected with modern false philosophies or that it is disparaging to Saint Thomas.

² J. Daniélou, S.J., "Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse," *Études*, CCXLIX (1946), 5-21.

deeper appreciation of religion, nevertheless deplors the lack of vital influence exerted in the fields of theology, apologetics, and exegesis.³

Conceding the temporary necessity of severity against Modernism earlier in the century, P. Daniélou feels, that its legitimate aspirations were never taken into account; rather, repressive measures in the form of neo-thomism and the Biblical Commission were the barriers set up to stem the tide of Modernism; but, he maintains, barriers (*des garde-fous*) are not answers to legitimate aspirations.⁴

To remedy the rupture between theology and life, the former is faced with a threefold demand: (1) it should treat God as God, as the subject *par excellence*, not as an object, and hence be penetrated with a profound religious spirit; (2) it should fit in with the experiences of our age and consider the new dimensions which science and history have given to space and time, and which literature and philosophy have given to men and society; (3) finally, it should adopt a realistic attitude, an outlook stimulating activity which may engage and irradiate the entire man; for theoretical speculations, divorced from life and action, have had their day.⁵

For the fulfilling of these demands, Daniélou offers the following positive program.

We must have a vital contact with essential sources, namely, the Bible, the Fathers of the Church, and the liturgy. He attributes the progressive dryness of theology to the rupture between it and exegesis, which began with Scholasticism.⁶ Acclaiming the solid scientific labors during recent years of Lagrange, Coppens, Podechard, Robert, and others, he nevertheless calls for a more theological treatment of Scripture as the word of God, addressed to men of our day and capable of satisfying their needs.⁷

Among the benefits of patristic studies, P. Daniélou places first an appreciation of the notion of history, which has long since been established firmly at the center of modern thought by contemporaneous philosophies from Hegel to Marx and Bergson, but which, he maintains, is entirely foreign to thomism.⁸ The second benefit is the viewpoint of the Greek Fathers that

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5: "Si l'on demande à la théologie d'être présente au monde de la pensée, c'est sans doute qu'elle en était absente."

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7: "Je reprendrai ici encore un mot du P. de Montcheuil: 'Le modernisme ne sera liquidé tant qu'on n'aura pas donné satisfaction dans la méthode théologique aux exigences d'où est né le modernisme.' Et ceci pour la simple raison que le modernisme n'a été lui-même que l'expression malheureuse d'exigences authentiques."

⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁷ *Loc. cit.* For a more detailed development of these ideas, see the balanced article of M. Zerwick, S. J., "Quomodo oporteat nos legere Sacram Scripturam," *Verbum Domini*, XXV (1947), 3-11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

salvation is not only individualistic, but a collective plan—an orientation so necessary for our age; here P. Daniélou very prudently points out the dangers of exaggeration, to the detriment of personal mortification and the interior life.⁹ The need for a return to the spirit of the liturgy as breathed forth especially in patristic writings is again in harmony with the modern preoccupation with life and action.¹⁰

The second part of his positive program is that theologians should open up their perspectives to take into account the expansion of our vision of the universe offered by the philosophies of Marxism, evolutionism and existentialism; here the temptation will be that form of laziness which constrains us to accept the clothing of truth for truth itself, and, because the words of Christ are immutable, to convince ourselves that we may forego the modification of the formulas by which we must express these undying truths.¹¹ The categories of modern thought, it is clear, are foreign to Scholastic theology, whose world is the immobile world of Greek thought; Scholasticism has indeed a permanent value in its affirmation that the decisions of man's free will and his ability to transform the conditions of life are not an absolute, due to his own creative activity, but rather the answer to a divine call, whose expression is the world of essences; nevertheless, Scholasticism attaches no importance to history and ignores the dramatic world of persons, i. e., concrete universals transcending every essence and differing only by existence, which should not be categorized according to object and understanding, but according to value and love, or hate.¹²

Theology has, however, taken the first steps toward aligning itself with the dimensions of modern thought and a sense of history; and here we have the service rendered by P. Teilhard de Chardin; the broad perspectives of his thought, according to which history is elevated progressively from the world of life to that of thought, from the world of thought to that of Christ, thereby renewing the views of the Fathers, will remain henceforth an established fact.¹³ But, P. Daniélou warns, this optimistic outlook must be

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹ *Loc. cit.*: "Et la tentation ici serait cette paresse, qui nous ferait prendre le vêtement de la vérité pour la vérité elle-même, et parce que les paroles du Christ ne passent pas, nous persuaderait de nous dispenser de modifier les formes par lesquelles nous avons à l'exprimer."

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 14: "Mais par ailleurs, elle [la théologie scolastique] ne fait aucune place à l'histoire. Et d'autre part, mettant la réalité dans les essences plus que dans les sujets, elle ignore le monde dramatique des personnes, des universels concrets, transcendants à toute essence et ne se distinguant que par l'existence, c'est à dire non plus selon l'intelligible et l'intellection, mais selon la valeur et l'amour, ou la haine."

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15: "C'est le service qu'a rendu le P. Teilhard de Chardin que d'aborder audacieusement le problème et de s'efforcer de penser le christianisme en tenant compte

complemented by the doctrine of original sin; here, however, Christian thought finds an echo in existentialism, whose founder, Kierkegaard, stresses original sin in the most theological sense of the term.¹⁴

It is clear how the mystery of Christianity is the center in which the conflict of modern thought finds its supreme expression; therefore if theology is to be contemporaneous, it is sufficient for it to go to the limits of all its exigencies and to adhere simultaneously to St. Irenaeus and St. Augustine, to P. Teilhard and to Kierkegaard.¹⁵

It is not without profit to note that Kierkegaard's current of thought was born of a reaction against the rationalization of Christian mysteries; consequently, against a theology which treats God as an object, he affirms the mystery of a personal God, hidden in darkness, impenetrable to assault, revealed only by love; thereby, Kierkegaard recalls to theologians the attitude of reverence so necessary for the contemplation of mysteries, which by very definition escape our understanding.¹⁶ Another noteworthy trait of

des perspectives ouvertes par l'évolution . . . Et les grandes lignes de son schéma selon lequel l'histoire s'élève progressivement du monde de la vie à celui de la pensée, de celui de la pensée à celui du Christ, et qui rejoint d'ailleurs les vues des Pères, reste chose acquise." For a quite different evaluation of Teilhard de Chardin, cf. Pedro Descoqs, S. J., *Autour de la crise du transformisme* (2d ed.; Paris: Beauchesne et ses Fils, 1944), pp. 40, 50, 81, 85. For the most recent expression of Teilhard de Chardin's views, see his articles: "Vie et planètes," *Études*, CCXLIX (1946), 145-169; "Une interprétation biologique plausible de l'histoire humaine," *Revue des questions scientifiques*, LXVIII (1947), 7-38.

¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*: "Il ne faut pas oublier en effet que chez son fondateur Kierkegaard, le péché originel, au sens le plus théologique du mot joue un rôle capital."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16: ". . . et qu'ainsi pour que la théologie soit présente à notre temps, il lui suffit d'aller au bout de toutes ses exigences et de tenir à la fois à Saint Irénée et à Saint Augustin, au P. Teilhard et à Kierkegaard."

¹⁶ *Loc. cit.* These statements may very profitably be compared with the following evaluations of Kierkegaard by R. Arnou, S. J., "L'existentialisme à la manière de Kierkegaard," *Gregorianum*, XXVII (1946), 63-88: "Pour trouver la vérité, il faut donc entrer en soi? Oui, c'est dans cette solitude et ce silence que le sujet découvrira la vérité essentielle. Kierkegaard, l'ennemi des systèmes et des thèses, appelle cela pourtant 'sa thèse' qu'il formule ainsi: 'La subjectivité, c'est la vérité'" (p. 69). "Formalisme sentimental, où nous ne pouvons pas ne pas voir une renonciation à la valeur objective dans le sens absolu du mot, c'est à dire une renonciation à l'intelligence. Notre pouvoir de connaître est réduit à une espèce de faculté sensible dont l'objet est le singulier concret. L'homme est decouronné, l'homme dont on voulait pourtant revaloriser la dignité personnelle" (p. 81). "Voilà ce qu'est la subjectivité. La subjectivité qui est la vérité. Non point la vérité considérée comme un objet. Nous savons ce que Kierkegaard pense de tout ce qui est objectif. En ce sens, il va jusqu'au dire: 'On a assez parlé de nos jours de la vérité; il est temps maintenant de révéler le drapeau de la certitude, de l'intériorité'"

existentialism brought out by P. Daniélou is its method of phenomenology in opposition to the systematizations of Aristotelian logic or Hegelian dialectic; instead of showing the connections between ideas, this method rather insists on their irreducibility, and may in some instances, he feels, be utilized to good effect.¹⁷

The concluding pages of this provocative article contain stimulating suggestions and practical directives for fostering and increasing a more vital contact between theology and major modern problems.¹⁸

II.

P. Daniélou's article has been severely attacked in a critical study written by M.-M. Labourdette, O.P.¹⁹ Although the latter's essay purports to be a global presentation of two important theological series begun within this decade (*Collection: Sources chrétiennes*,²⁰ and *Collection: Théologie*²¹), his criticism seems to have been occasioned by, and certainly is preponderantly documented on P. Daniélou's article. Except for a fairly long and entirely laudatory critique of J. Mourroux', *Sens chrétien de l'homme* (n. 6 of the *Collection: Théologie*),²² no other work of either series, comprising about twenty volumes at the time P. Labourdette wrote, receives any detailed treatment.

(p. 70). "Il y a un *comment*, qui, s'il est donné, le *ca que* est donné aussi. Le *ce que* est l'objet. Le *comment* est la disposition du sujet; et le *comment* privilégié, qui révèle la vérité essentielle, c'est l'intériorité passionnée. En certains instants, nous nous trouvons ainsi en rapport avec Dieu; Dieu qui n'est pas une idée que l'on prouve, ni un objet que l'on saisit, mais ce pour quoi on accepte tout, on risque tout, on sacrifie tout, celui vers qui la volonté se tend avec une passion sans limite. C'est dans cet acte, dans cet acte seul que pour nous il [Dieu] est déterminé. Vouloir absolument, c'est vouloir l'absolu" (p. 71).

¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*: "... il présente une méthode caractérisée par le fait qu'au lieu de montrer l'enchaînement des concepts comme le font la logique aristotélicienne ou la dialectique hégélienne, elle insiste au contraire sur leur irréductibilité."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21: "Il faut que se lèvent pour cela . . . des hommes d'autant plus libres à l'égard de toutes les formes humaines, qu'ils seront liés plus étroitement par le lien intérieur de l'Esprit."

¹⁹ M.-M. Labourdette: "La théologie et ses sources," *Revue Thomiste*, XLVI (1946), 353-71.

²⁰ *Sources chrétiennes: Collection dirigée par H. de Lubac, S. J. et J. Daniélou, S. J.*; this collection now comprises at least fifteen volumes.

²¹ *Théologie: Études publiées sous la direction de la faculté de théologie S. J. de Lyon-Fourvière*; this series now comprises at least nine volumes.

²² Labourdette, *op. cit.*, pp. 356-58.

In general, P. Labourdette is in complete accord with the positive aims of the two series,²³ but he disagrees completely with the intention of *Sources chrétiennes*, at least according to the statement of P. Daniélou (co-editor of this series with P. Henri de Lubac, S. J.) that it aims "not at presenting the Fathers as witnesses of an era that is ended, but as the most up-to-date nourishment for men of this age, precisely because in the Fathers there are certain categories which are those of contemporaneous thought and which Scholastic theology has lost."²⁴ P. Labourdette is quick to add, however, that this aim, which he feels is well illustrated by P. Daniélou's introduction to the first volume of the series (*Grégoire de Nysse: Vie de Moïse*), is not carried out in several other works of the same series.²⁵

Quite obviously, P. Labourdette's criticisms are directed against what he considers to be an open disparagement of St. Thomas and a tendency toward admitting a relativistic concept of truth. We may note here, that in his fears of relativism, at least with regard to *Sources chrétiennes*, P. Labourdette seems to be sounding a solitary note. The reviews which have come to our attention have, without exception, been lavish in their praise not only of the undertaking itself, in such difficult times, but also of the method and general aims of the series. In only a few instances does a detached criticism, applying only to a single statement or view, approach the general tenor of P. Labourdette's remarks. For example, M. Richard, in his review of volumes IV to IX, does point out the following exaggerated disparagement of modern theological thought:

It seems to us that Père Laplace exaggerates when he writes: 'Having lost the profound meaning of Scripture, as we have lost the religious meaning of the uni-

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 354 f.: "Il y a dans le parallélisme des deux collections une communauté d'esprit . . . qui manifeste un dessein positif et constructif, en lui-même plus important que les défauts qui l'entachent: celui d'une théologie plus consciente à la fois de la richesse de ses sources, de la multiplicité de ses expressions historiques, des circonstances de son évolution et des réalités humaines les plus proches. Avec ce dessein nous disons notre plein accord et notre entière sympathie."

²⁴ Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 10: "La nouvelle [*Sources chrétiennes*] pense qu'il y a plus à demander aux Pères. Ils ne sont pas seulement les témoins d'un état de choses révolu; ils sont encore la nourriture la plus actuelle pour les hommes d'aujourd'hui, parce que nous y retrouvons précisément un certain nombre de catégories qui sont celles de la pensée contemporaine et que la théologie scolastique avait perdues."

²⁵ Labourdette, *op. cit.*, p. 354, note 1: "Cette intention fort bien illustrée par l'introduction du P. Daniélou au premier volume, n'apparaît d'ailleurs pas en plusieurs autres, qui n'ont heureusement visé que la plus grande exactitude et restent des modèles de travail probe que n'orientent et ne sous-tendent aucune arrière-pensée."

verse, we have difficulty in following Gregory's thought.²⁶ There are perhaps other reasons for this lack of comprehension less humiliating to our poor modern Church: for example, the fact that we no longer live in the age of the Second Sophistic, that the philosophical syncretism underlying Stoicism and Platonism, which flourished in the fourth century, has long since passed out of fashion, that there has been in the intervening years a certain progress in theology.²⁷

Despite an avowed intention not to apply to any individual his critique of relativism,²⁸ P. Labourdette at least insinuates that this false theory is involved in *Sources chrétiennes*. This implication is certainly not substantiated in his article, and we believe it to be untrue.

III.

In addition to his strictures on P. Daniélou's article in *Études*, the only other concrete justification offered by P. Labourdette for his misgivings concerning relativism is derived from the first volume of the series *Théologie: Conversion et grâce chez s. Thomas d'Aquin*, by Henri Bouillard, S.J.²⁹ Here again, we may note that apart from his colleagues, Guérard des Lauriers, O.P.,³⁰ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.,³¹ and L.-B. Gillon, O. P.,³² P. Labourdette is the only severe critic of P. Bouillard's book. All other reviews and notices have stressed P. Bouillard's masterful historical demonstration that St. Thomas in his earlier writings was unaware of the Semipelagian heresy; they have praised the scientific character of the book as a whole and the solid application of historical method to a most difficult problem.³³

²⁶ Jean Laplace, S. J., *Grégoire de Nysse: La création de l'homme*, Introd. et trad. par J. Laplace; notes de J. Daniélou; *Sources chrétiennes*, Vol. VI, Paris: Éditions du Cerf.

²⁷ M. Richard, *Mélanges de science religieuse*, III (1946), 172 f.

²⁸ Labourdette, *op. cit.*, p. 356. It must be said in fairness to P. Labourdette that he is justified in thinking that the tone of P. Daniélou's article in *Études* is altogether excessive in its statements about Scholasticism and, in general, quite intemperate. Furthermore, P. Labourdette's views about the absolute need of solid foundation in Scholastic metaphysics are well worth pondering.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 364-67.

³⁰ Guérard des Lauriers, "La théologie de s. Thomas et la grâce actuelle," *Année théologique* (1945), p. 279 ff.

³¹ Garrigou-Lagrange, "La nouvelle théologie, où va-t-elle?," *Angelicum*, XXIII (1946), 126 ff.

³² Gillon, "Théologie de la grâce," *Revue Thomiste*, XLVI (1946), 603 ff.

³³ Typical of these laudatory reviews are: P. Glorieux in *Mélanges de science religieuse*, II (1945), 372-74; Charles Boyer in *Gregorianum*, XXVII (1946), 157-60.

P. Labourdette's criticisms, however, are not concerned with the book's central thesis, but solely with the concluding chapter.³⁴ In this section, the author is concerned with showing that the historical method applied to theology does not lead to relativism, but leaves intact the absolute affirmations of revealed truth.³⁵ He then goes on to say:

The truth of Christianity never subsists in a pure state. By this we by no means intend that it must always be presented with an admixture of error, but rather that it is always fitted into contingent schemes and notions which determine its rational structure. It cannot be isolated from this contingency. . . . Divine truth is never accessible, to the exclusion of every contingent notion. This is the law of incarnation. . . . It is essential to grasp that these unchanging [affirmations of revealed truth] do not subsist apart from, and independently of, contingent concepts. They are conceived and are expressed necessarily in these latter contingent concepts. But when these themselves change, the new concepts contain the same absolute relations, the same eternal affirmations.³⁶

After stressing the existence of different terminology in different eras to express the gratuity of grace, P. Bouillard concludes:

In order to preserve in new intellectual contexts the purity of an absolute affirmation, theologians have spontaneously expressed it in new notions. When the mind evolves, an immutable truth is only maintained by a simultaneous and correlative evolution of all the notions, which thus maintain mutually an identical relation. A theology which would not be contemporaneous to its age, would be a false theology.³⁷

These citations form the main matter of P. Labourdette's criticism. If absolute and unchanging truths cannot be expressed apart from, or independently of, essentially changeable and contingent representations, and yet are preserved intact in each new mode of presentation, he asks: "By what miracle and with what guarantee, if they are inseparable?"³⁸

³⁴ Bouillard, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219: "Ainsi l'histoire de la théologie nous fait voir la permanence de la vérité divine, en même temps qu'elle nous révèle ce qu'il y a de contingent dans les notions et les systèmes où nous la recevons."

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 220 f.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 219: "Pour maintenir dans de nouveaux contextes intellectuels la pureté d'une affirmation absolue, les théologiens l'ont spontanément exprimée en des notions nouvelles. Quand l'esprit évolue, une vérité immuable ne se maintient que grâce à une évolution simultanée et correlative de toutes les notions, maintenant entre elles un même rapport. Une théologie qui ne serait pas actuelle, serait une théologie fausse."

³⁸ Labourdette, *op. cit.*, p. 364, note 2: "Par quel miracle et avec quelle garanti, si ces éléments sont inséparables pour l'esprit."

IV.

In his article cited above, P. Garrigou-Lagrange disagrees vehemently with P. Bouillard's assertions: that it is still possible to consider as contingent the notions implied in conciliar definitions; that the Council of Trent (*sess. 6, cap. 7, can. 10*), in using the term "formal cause of justification" made use of a notion common to theology of that era; that one could substitute for the term "formal cause" other notions without modifying the meaning of the conciliar decree.³⁹

P. Garrigou-Lagrange agrees that the Council of Trent did not canonize the Aristotelian or Thomistic notion of form, but rather approved and adopted it in as much as it is a permanently valid human concept. He then asks how the meaning of Trent can be preserved, if one substitutes, not merely a verbal equivalent, but another notion; if the substituted term is another notion, it is no longer the notion of formal cause; in this case it is no longer true to affirm with the Council that sanctifying grace is the formal cause of justification; therefore, one must be satisfied to maintain that at the time of Trent grace was conceived as the formal cause of justification, whereas to-day grace must be conceived otherwise; such an outworn concept is no longer modern, and hence is no longer true, since according to P. Bouillard, a doctrine which is no longer modern is false.⁴⁰

This indictment of P. Bouillard seems most unfair not to say un scholarly. To the present writer it seems to be based entirely on a misconstruction of P. Bouillard's thought; he is not maintaining the possibility of substituting a different objective concept, but only the possibility of substituting a different, though equivalent, concept. This manifest intention seems inescapable from the sentence which P. Garrigou-Lagrange omitted and which follows immediately the context whence the indictment is derived.⁴¹

On the basis of the texts cited above, P. Garrigou-Lagrange goes on to deduce that P. Bouillard's idea of truth approximates, if it is not identical with, the false notions of Modernism condemned by Pope Pius X (*DB*, 2068,

³⁹ Bouillard, *op. cit.*, pp. 221 f.: "On se demandera peut-être s'il est encore possible de considérer comme contingentes les notions impliquées dans les définitions conciliaires? Ne serait-ce pas compromettre le caractère irréfornable de ses définitions? Le Concile de Trent, par exemple, a employé dans son enseignement sur la justification la notion de cause formelle. N'a-t-il par le fait même consacré cet emploi et conféré à la notion de grâce-forme un caractère définitif? Nullement . . . il a utilisé à cette fin des notions communes dans la théologie du temps. Mais on peut leur en substituer d'autres, sans modifier le sens de son enseignement. La preuve en est que lui-même a utilisé beaucoup plus souvent des notions *équivalentes* tirées de l'Écriture." (Italics ours)

⁴⁰ Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, pp. 128 f.

⁴¹ Cf. the last sentence of footnote 39 *supra*

2080) and similar errors condemned by the Holy Office (*Monitore Ecclesiastico*, 1925, p. 194).⁴² He assigns, as the underlying cause of these deviations, a captivation by M. Blondel's philosophy of action,⁴³ and a corresponding ignorance or, at least, neglect of St. Thomas.⁴⁴ He concludes this section of his article with the following warning of Pope Pius XII: "Plura dicta sunt, at non satis explorata ratione, de 'nova theologia,' quae cum universis semper volventibus rebus, una volvatur semper itura numquam perventura. Si talis opinio amplectenda esse videatur quid fiet de numquam immutandis catholicis dogmatibus, quid de fidei unitate et stabilitate?"⁴⁵

Certainly, no one who is familiar with the extremely complex problems involved in the development of Catholic doctrine on grace could possibly quarrel with P. Bouillard's almost trite observations concerning the different categories by which the same essential notions have been expressed historically. Obviously, the notion of justification in terms of matter and form would be sought for in vain in either Scripture or the Fathers. Therefore, P. Bouillard's arduous task of inquiring historically into the occasions and causes of various methods of presentation enriches theology immeasurably and deserves the highest praise and gratitude. Nevertheless, one can readily see how certain expressions may be, and possibly should be, subjected to impartial criticism; for example, the phrases cited by PP. Labourdette and Garrigou-Lagrange, if isolated from their context, exaggerate undoubtedly the contingency of theology, leave a false impression of P. Bouillard's real intention, and should have been expressed more prudently and with greater reserve.⁴⁶

However, these human deficiencies, which in an impartial judgment of the entire book must be considered minor defects, by no means justify the tactics resorted to by P. Garrigou-Lagrange in the second part of his article in order to heighten the seriousness of his charges against P. Bouillard and his colleagues. Their writings are here linked up, by an imputed similarity in tendencies, with erroneous and heretical manuscripts, which have been current, according to P. Garrigou-Lagrange, among the clergy, seminarians, and a certain class of Catholic intellectuals in France since 1934. These manuscripts, from which liberal quotations are made, deny fundamental Catholic doctrine concerning original sin and the real presence of Christ in

⁴² Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-132.

⁴³ For a recent and temperate evaluation of M. Blondel, see R. Aubert, *Le problème de l'acte de foi*, Louvain: E. Warny, 1945, pp. 277-94.

⁴⁴ *Loc cit.*

⁴⁵ *Osservatore Romano*, Sept. 19, 1946.

⁴⁶ Cf. Charles Boyer's review of Bouillard, *Gregorianum*, XXVII (1946), 139.

the Eucharist. No indication whatsoever is given of their authors, but certain fantastic ideas relative to anthropology and the evolution of religion are compared to the writings of P. Teilhard de Chardin.⁴⁷

Such procedure is certainly extraordinary in scientific theological writing. One could have wished that a theologian of P. Garrigou-Lagrange's international standing had been more objective, not to say conclusive, in his charges of unorthodox tendencies directed against individual theologians of outstanding merit, before linking their views with those of anonymous proponents of open heresy.

V.

A similar charge of relativism, although with much greater moderation, has been expressed by M.-J. Nicolas, O.P., against the book of Henri de Lubac, S. J. *Corpus Mysticum: L'Eucharistie et l'Église au moyen age* (Collection: *Théologie*, n. 3).⁴⁸ Much of P. Nicolas' critique is devoted to unmitigated praise of De Lubac's brilliant and solid demonstration of the change whereby the term "corpus mysticum," applied for nine centuries only to the Eucharist, was gradually applied exclusively to the Church. P. Nicolas' criticism is confined to the chapter entitled "Du symbolisme au dialectique" and is summarized by him as follows:

The only thing for which we reproach Père de Lubac is that he sees in the unmindfulness of Eucharistic symbolism the necessary consequence of the scientific form taken by theology in the Middle Ages and, in this scientific form, the expression of a mentality outmoded and perhaps less accessible to modern minds, or at any rate less traditional than the symbolistic mentality of the Fathers.⁴⁹

Quite the opposite of P. Nicolas' view is the summary of the same chapter in a review written by P. Glorieux whose authority as a medievalist is well known.⁵⁰

In addition to charges of relativism directed against PP. Daniélou, de Lubac, and Bouillard, the last-named has also been severely attacked for his historical interpretation of St. Thomas' doctrine on grace. In the opinion of the present writer, the general lines of the attack have been success-

⁴⁷ Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁴⁸ Nicolas, "Théologie de l'Église," *Revue Thomiste*, XLVI (1946), 385-89.

⁴⁹ Nicolas, *op. cit.*, pp. 388 f.

⁵⁰ Glorieux, *Mélanges de science religieuse*, II (1945), 370: "Notre 'progrès' dans le sens de la dialectique, ne nous ferme-t-il pas à jamais dans son orgueil simpliste un royaume dont il nous ferait perdre jusqu'à la nostalgie?" Cf. also the favorable review by M.-D. Chenu, O. P., *Dieu Vivante*, I (1945), 141-43.

fully and masterfully refuted by P. Bouillard.⁵¹ However, after his detailed answer to various accusations was written, although probably not yet published, another assault along similar lines was directed against him by L.-B. Gillon, O. P.⁵²

In general, this controversy raging over P. Bouillard is quite reminiscent of the storm of criticism stirred up over P. Stuffer's renowned *De Deo Operante* (Innsbruck, 1923). He was the pioneer, whose painstaking and scholarly researches in St. Thomas have been advanced by P. Bouillard. Whether one agrees with the latter's interpretations or not, it is an indisputable fact that no theologian since Stuffer has produced a more minutely detailed or a more scientifically conscientious examination of St. Thomas' entire doctrine on grace and conversion.

In the name of all the theologians who have been attacked from the various angles we have seen, the theological review, *Recherches de science religieuse* published a general refutation.⁵³ Admitting that many of the books and articles in question are open to challenge and discussion because they bring out most serious problems for which there is as yet no solution sanctioned by the authority of the Church, welcoming all criticism, even the most severe, the article nevertheless deplores the injustice of criticisms not founded on the works themselves but on the subjective interpretation of the critics. This article also stresses the fact that, although united in a general harmony of outlook, the authors hold different views on not a few serious problems; therefore, they should not be lumped together, and views expressed by one should not *eo ipso* be imputed to all. The heart of the differences between themselves and their critics is acutely analyzed as founded on a different view of intelligence; the former are totally opposed to an outlook which takes a systematization of truth for the truth itself to the exclusion of other systems, or even worse, which conceives truth itself as a system.⁵⁴ This article is absolutely essential for any theologian who wishes to come to an objective conclusion concerning the controversy outlined in these pages. We may also note here that a "neutral" theologian, Mgr. de Solages, Rector of the Catholic Institute of Toulouse has refuted

⁵¹ Bouillard, "A propos de la grâce actuelle chez saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXXIII (1946), 92-115.

⁵² Gillon, "Théologie de la grâce," *Revue Thomiste*, XLVI (1946), 603-13.

⁵³ "La théologie et ses sources: Réponse aux *Études critiques* de la *Revue Thomiste* (mai-août 1946)," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXXIII (1946), 385-401.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 398: "Il faut grandement craindre, en théologie plus qu'ailleurs, cette déformation 'intellectualiste' qui prend un système pour la vérité—bien plus, qui conçoit la vérité comme un système."

the main charges of P. Labourdette,⁵⁵ and has undertaken a refutation of P. Garrigou-Lagrange's very serious charges in an article with the significant title, "Pour l'honneur de la théologie."⁵⁶

VI.

Of greater importance than any of the works mentioned, is P. de Lubac's book on the supernatural.⁵⁷ Readers of THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, who have not yet had the opportunity to study it, will be familiar with its general outline and central thesis from the excellent review written by Cyril O. Vollert, S. J.⁵⁸

Among the many who have received this outstanding work without any reserves, Vincent Turner, S. J., of England writes:

Indeed it may well be that, once it [*Surnaturel*] comes through the preliminary barrage that it is fairly certain to invite, it will take its place as one of the very few classical works in theology in this half-century. It does not appear unheralded or unprepared for; rather it resumes and, with great historical erudition and an abundance of shrewd theological insights, perfects a work that has been going on in the hands of men like de Broglie, one of Rousselot's disciples, of Father de Montcheuil, who wrote the best essay on Blondel that has yet appeared, of M. l'Abbé Tiberghien and others. Yet the mere mention of these names suggests the nature of the criticism that *Surnaturel* will have to meet. . . . *Surnaturel* is a work of great importance, whose influence in all likelihood will be profound, not only in theology, but also (and especially in France) in spirituality. For it makes a pervasive difference whether one regards supernatural glory as just the last stage after a pilgrimage or as a gift that none the less is responsible for a purposiveness in nature, in a quite proper sense of that ambiguous word.⁵⁹

Similarly, Dom Iltyd Trethowan O.S.B., bestows the following lavish praise:

This book, in the opinion of the present writer, provides the definitive solution of the long theological controversy about man's natural desire for the supernatural. P. de Lubac's conclusion is that it is not only legitimate, but necessary to claim this natural desire. To the regular objection that this is to grant man a right over God, that it is not consistent with the gratuity of man's destiny, P. de Lubac

⁵⁵ *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* (janvier-mars, 1947).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, (avril-juin, 1947).

⁵⁷ H. de Lubac, *Surnaturel; Études historiques* (*Théologie*, n. 8), Paris: Aubier, 1946, p. 498.

⁵⁸ THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, VIII (1947), 288-93.

⁵⁹ *Letters and Notices*, LV (1947), 47 f.

replies (it needed saying long ago): *'la question de l'exigence ne se pose pas* (p. 487), . . . We may speak of two states, one natural (transitional) and the other supernatural. But the modern theologians' state of pure nature is not only unhistorical, but also inconceivable. . . If P. de Lubac is right to say that modern theologians have largely departed from the teachings of the Fathers and of Saint Augustine on this great question, that they have misunderstood the condemnation of Baius, that they have deserted Saint Thomas for his commentators, that they have failed to appreciate the true significance of Ruysbroeck's teaching because they have lost the 'spiritual eye,' then they must set to work and put their house in order.⁶⁰

In a brief account, J. Lebreton, S. J. analyzes the various parts of the book and praises it, especially for its religious tenor:

. . . that which is at stake is the fundamentals of the religious problem; from man's side, the renunciation of a proud isolation which immures him in his nature; on God's part, the gift of a nature made for Him and aspiring toward Him, then the gift of a grace which renders this desire efficacious and raises man up toward God, his sovereign Good and Father.⁶¹

Not only the present writer, but others also have found the following statements of P. Lebreton quite remarkable for reasons which we shall outline below:

. . . one can inquire whether this end [the beatific vision] had been set before humanity from the creation of the first man, or only after the fall, by the prevision of the merits of the Redeemer; in this second hypothesis, should Adam be represented before his sin as directed by God to a natural beatitude, merited by a devout and just life—such a beatitude as the powers of nature could assure him? If *this* hypothesis of a pure nature ought to be rejected, we must study more closely. . . the unique end set before men, i.e., the supernatural end.⁶²

This statement is puzzling, because such a description of the state of pure nature does not correspond to any doctrine held by those theologians of the

⁶⁰ *The Downside Review*, no. 199 (1947), 71 f.

⁶¹ "Notes et mélanges," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXXIV (1947), 79.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 77: ". . . mais il peut se demander si cette fin à été proposée à l'humanité dès la création du premier homme, ou seulement après la chute, en prévision des mérites du Rédempteur; dans cette deuxième hypothèse, doit-on se représenter Adam, avant son péché, comme orienté par Dieu à une béatitude naturelle, méritée par une vie pieuse et juste, telle que les forces de la nature la pouvaient assurer? Si *cette* hypothèse d'une nature pure, orientée vers une fin naturelle, doit être écartée, il nous faut étudier de plus près la fin unique proposée aux hommes . . . la fin surnaturelle, la vision intuitive de Dieu." (Italics ours) It is of Catholic faith, formally implicitly defined in Trent (*DB*, 788, 795, 799) that Adam had sanctifying grace before the fall, and consequently was intrinsically ordained and destined by God to the beatific vision.

last four hundred years, whose views P. de Lubac rejects; nowhere in his book does P. de Lubac thus describe the state of pure nature which he thinks should be discarded. For no Catholic theologian ever held, even as a mere hypothesis, that men, either Adam or his descendants, were ever actually destined by God to a purely natural end as opposed to the intuitive vision of God. Moreover, such a view applied to Adam before the fall would make original sin impossible, according to the common view, sustained by all theologians since St. Thomas, that original sin is inconceivable in a purely natural order. Hence the hypothesis of pure nature, represented by P. Lebreton as the doctrine which P. de Lubac thinks should be rejected, is untenable and was never held by any reputable theologian. The problem of the state of pure nature is entirely a question of its possibility, not a question of its hypothetical actuality in the present order, either before or after the fall. P. de Lubac's underlying thesis, made explicit in his conclusion, denies this possibility.

Certain critics vigorously oppose P. de Lubac's historical conclusion that the state of pure nature and a purely natural end were never asserted by St. Thomas, but rather were introduced by various Dominican theologians in the sixteenth century.⁶³ In the opinion of the present writer, however, among the many definitive contributions contained in this extraordinary work, the above conclusion must be accepted; as a matter of fact it has been more and more widely accepted, due largely to an impetus received from the research of E. Elter, S. J.,⁶⁴ although never before provided with such a rich array of overwhelming proof. This negative conclusion, however, by no means establishes the positive aspect of P. de Lubac's thesis, namely, that traditional doctrine precludes the possibility of a state of pure nature; nor does P. de Lubac seem by any means, to have established conclusively that St. Thomas not only never explicitly envisaged a purely natural end after death, but also that the internal structure of his system precludes its possibility.⁶⁵ Even after P. de Lubac's ingenious efforts, the possibility of a purely natural state and destiny will be maintained by many theologians to be, not a retrogression from a more religious and spiritual outlook of traditional doctrine, but rather a sound theological progression derived from a synthesis of Catholic doctrine on original sin, redemption and participation in trinitarian life.

⁶³ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-57.

⁶⁴ Elter, "De naturali hominis beatitudine ad mentem Scholae antiquioris," *Gregorianum*, IX (1928), 269-306.

⁶⁵ cf. Brisbois, "Désir naturel et vision de Dieu," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LIV (1927), 81-97.

In the second part of *Surnaturel*, entitled "Esprit et liberté," previously published in 1939, P. de Lubac treats again, and almost in the same words, the opinion of St. Thomas on the peccability of angels, and opposes the views of J. de Blic, S.J.⁶⁶ The latter had maintained against P. de Lubac that, teaching in accord with unanimous tradition the absolute peccability of creatures in general, St. Thomas, in the case of the angels, was confronted with a specially grave difficulty from the fact that, according to his own intellectualistic tendencies, every sin presupposes an error; now, in the angelology of St. Thomas a pure spirit could not err, at least in the domain of natural knowledge; therefore he was led to restrict the peccability of a pure spirit to the hypothesis of a free choice of the supernatural order; a natural peccability of angels was therefore inconceivable to St. Thomas.

To P. de Lubac, P. de Blic's interpretation of St. Thomas is inadmissible, although it is admittedly the interpretation of the great Thomistic commentators. It would imply a contradiction in St. Thomas, but above all it would imply the possibility of the state of pure nature, when St. Thomas believed all his life that no spiritual being could have any other end than the intuitive vision of God.⁶⁷

P. de Blic, prevented by lack of time from answering fully P. de Lubac's rejection of his position, was however, able to register the following protest:

Without anticipating an over-all evaluation of the work *Surnaturel*, I believe I can say at least that in what concerns the precise point of our controversy, the author has not proved his point, for want of treating the objections which I opposed to his first publication, and for want of taking into account the positive part of my article. Certain phrases of my conclusion are cited (256-7); but is a controversy fruitful, if its result is not an evaluation of evidence?⁶⁸

The most extensive critique of *Surnaturel* has been written by L. Malevez, S. J.,⁶⁹ who finds two main obstacles against accepting its conclusions. The first consists in the lack of traditional bases for the constantly reiterated theme, that from its very nature a created spirit can have no other destiny than the intuitive vision of God; to found this doctrine on the Fathers, P. de Lubac must show that they unequivocally taught, as essential to the very notion of created spirit, its vocation to the possession of God in the

⁶⁶ J. de Blic, "Saint Thomas et l'intellectualisme moral à propos de la peccabilité de l'ange," *Mélanges de science religieuse*, I (1944), fasc. II.

⁶⁷ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-60.

⁶⁸ J. de Blic, "Peccabilité du pur esprit et surnaturel," *Mélanges de science religieuse*, III (1946), 162.

⁶⁹ L. Malevez, "L'esprit et désir de Dieu," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXIX (1947), 1-31.

beatific vision, and did not rather speak in the hypothesis of the present concrete order without ever considering the question of essences. Since this second hypothesis, in P. Malevez' opinion seems much better grounded than the first, he is astounded that:

Père de Lubac has chosen the first hypothesis without applying himself to prove it. Even though in its favor there should be adduced texts of ecclesiastical writers, it would still remain to be proved that they considered the doctrine of the *essential* desire as an article of faith proposed by the Church. Here and there, Père de Lubac gives the impression that it is to be ranked among Christian ideas and the truths of tradition; but this has not been established and without doubt has little chance of ever being proved.⁷⁰

If not founded with certainty on the Fathers, can it at least be maintained that P. de Lubac's theory is a conclusion of Christian philosophy? P. Malevez doubts this very much, because, at least in its present state of development and formulation, the theory labors under an internal contradiction; for its distinctive character consists in the affirmation of a natural, essential desire for the beatific vision, which is simultaneously inefficacious and absolute.⁷¹ P. de Lubac holds steadfastly to the inefficacy of the desire, and he must: otherwise the supernatural would not exceed our native powers; any morally good act would merit divine life without grace; not only would the gratuity of grace be lost, but grace itself would find no place to be inserted in nature; without grace, a spirit of its very essence would be elevated to divinity—conclusions which P. de Lubac would undoubtedly reject as irreconcilable with Catholic dogma.⁷²

But if the essential desire is essentially inefficacious, by what constraint or necessity is it absolute, to the extent that the beatific vision is the sole possible end of a spirit? Not because of any exigency in the created spirit; P. de Lubac inveighs frequently against such juridical notions, as being

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24: "... dans ces conditions, il est assez étonnant que le P. de Lubac ait, quant à lui, choisi la première sans s'appliquer à la fonder. Mais dût-elle même invoquer en sa faveur les textes des écrivains ecclésiastiques, resterait encore à savoir si ces derniers ont considéré la doctrine du désir *essentiel* comme un article de la foi de l'Eglise; le P. de Lubac donne ici et là à penser qu'elle se range parmi les idées chrétiennes et les vérités de tradition; mais cela non plus n'est pas établi et sans doute a peu de chance de l'être jamais." In this connection, the rigid conditions which must be fulfilled before a doctrine can be established from the authority of the Fathers have received a magisterial exposition in two articles by H. Lennerz, S. J., "Consensus Patrum in interpretatione Mariologica Gen. 3:15?," *Gregorianum*, XXVII (1946), 300-18; "Duae quaestiones de bulla *Ineffabilis Deus*," *Gregorianum*, XXV (1943), 347-66.

⁷¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁷² *Loc. cit.*

founded on an unworthy and too anthropomorphic notion of God. The necessity, then, must be an inner compulsion of God's love; P. de Lubac, it is true, does not use the word necessity, although to P. Malevez it seems to follow logically from the theocentric argument for his theory on page 492.⁷³

If then there is absolutely no exigency on the part of man, and God, nevertheless, cannot but destine man to the beatific vision by means of an internal call identified with the natural desire, how can such an act on God's part be termed, in any true sense of the word, love? How reconcile such an act with God's absolute freedom from all necessity?⁷⁴ How avoid the pit-falls of optimism? P. Malevez summarizes these difficulties as follows:

If God transcends all definable necessities, by what right does our human thought proclaim laws binding upon His creative act? Should not the creative act be free, even liberty itself, not only in fact—God freely created—but also in its mode and measure—God could have created man in the state of pure nature? A proposition, which, far from doing any injury to the Creator, could well be nothing else than homage to His grandeur.⁷⁵

In connection with the note of optimism concerning God's creative and salvific activity which P. Malevez seems to detect in P. de Lubac's explanations, the appellation, "Franco-Belgian Neo-Platonism" applied to him and his colleagues⁷⁶ may here be mentioned. Whether this designation is justified or not, it is quite obvious that they are favorably inclined toward those Greek Fathers who were certainly subjected to Neo-Platonic influences.⁷⁷ In his review of P. Daniélou's, *Platonisme et théologie mystique*, M. Richard, after stating the author's conclusions that Gregory of Nyssa is entirely removed from any question of compromise with Platonic philosophy and that the Platonism in his writings is nothing more than a literary garment, an accident, a system of symbols, makes the following observation:

We do not dare to follow him thus far and we fear that his thesis will leave a slightly different impression with his readers. . . . It still remains that in the Bishop of Nyssa one discerns a Platonic spirit, characterized notably by an absolutely optimistic view of creation, which one must always keep foremost in mind, if one wishes to understand him.⁷⁸

P. de Lubac's theory, at least fundamentally, was proposed by Dom Anselm Stolz, O.S.B., in 1940. This book was criticized severely in a review

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷⁶ Malevez, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁷⁷ Cf. the titles of *Sources chrétiennes*.

⁷⁸ M. Richard, *Mélanges de science religieuse*, II (1945), 193 f.

⁷⁴ Cf. Vatican Council (*DB*, 1805).

⁷⁵ L.-B. Gillon, *op. cit.*, p. 604, note 2.

by B. Schultze, S. J., by means of a series of questions.⁷⁹ In his conclusions and attempts at systematization, however, P. de Lubac goes far beyond any other theologian. In the past few decades there has been an increasing number of theologians who admit and defend strongly a natural desire for the beatific vision; all of them, however, hold that this desire is both inefficacious and conditional, and, as a corollary, maintain that the state of pure nature with a natural destiny is entirely possible. The uniqueness of P. de Lubac's position consists in his insistence that the desire is absolute and in his consequent negation that the state of pure nature is possible.

One of his colleagues, Henri Rondet, S.J., dean of the theological faculty of the Jesuit Scholasticate at Lyon-Fourvière, whose proposed work, *Le péché originel et l'état primitif de l'homme*, is anticipated eagerly by theologians who sense the difficulty of any satisfactory explanation of original sin and redemption in P. de Lubac's theory of the supernatural, writes thus of *Surnaturel*:

The history of the notion of pure nature has been magisterially unravelled by P. de Lubac. He exorcises the idea of a nature which, once created by God, could be self-sufficient and would have no need of its Creator's aid. It seems to us that some precisions should still be added, beginning with the distinction between the relatively and absolutely supernatural. I persist in believing that the latter, to be expressed properly, supposes that, at least anthropomorphically, the possibility of pure nature should be spoken of.⁸⁰

One wonders whether P. de Lubac's exorcism of the idea of a created spirit completely self-sufficient and autonomous may not be the exorcism of a phantom. Whatever may have been the concomitant deficiencies of some theologians who in the past have held the possibility of a state of pure nature, certainly no modern theologian conceives it in a way which leaves man in any manner independent of God. There is no necessary connexion whatsoever

⁷⁹ A. Stolz, *Anthropologia Theologica* (Friburgi, Brigisgoviae, 1940), pp. vi, 198; B. Schultze, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, VII (1941), 527-29.

⁸⁰ H. Rondet, "La grâce libératrice," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXIX (1947), 124. In this whole problem raised by P. de Lubac, and in the question of the most profitable lines of research for a definitive solution, the connection between the supernatural order and a satisfactory theological explanation of original sin must always be kept in mind. Therefore the following statement of J. Beumer, S. J., is extremely pertinent: "In diesem Lehrstück [original sin], und dasselbe gilt von einigen wenigen anderen, ist es das Verdienst der scholastischen Theologie Dunkelheiten in der patristischen Literatur aufgehellt und Einseitigkeiten überwunden zu haben. Die Scholastik ist gegenüber der Patristik meistens ruhige Fortsetzung, aber hie und da musste auch mit Altvertrautem gebrochen werden, was erst allmählich unter grossen Schwierigkeiten gelang" ("Zwischen Patristik und Scholastik," *Gregorianum* XXIII [1942], 343).

between this doctrine and a secularized and irreligious society.⁸¹ One cannot help thinking that a more realistic reason for the laicization of Europe than a supposed weakening of the obligation to accept the supernatural due to the doctrine of pure nature, could be found rather in the loss of faith in God and in the absolute teaching authority of His Church, which imposes on all men the obligation to accept the supernatural solely because of the externally revealed word of her Founder.

These and similar views opposed to P. de Lubac's theory of the supernatural are not merely personal, but are contained in perhaps the outstanding theological work of this decade—a book which breathes forth a religious atmosphere and a lofty spirituality unparalleled in modern times.⁸² Yet, E. Mersch, S.J., to whom we refer, devotes many pages of his first volume to a consideration of man in a natural state with a natural destiny: "Natural eschatology, we say; because it envisages man from the point of view of a finality which is purely natural, which does not exist, which is only possible, but which aids in comprehending supernatural finality."⁸³ Then, later on, speaking of the purely natural destiny of man, which he holds to be completely possible, Mersch states:

It is not the beatific vision whose splendor human intelligence is incapable of supporting. Its essential imperfection does not prevent its being absolutely satisfying and beatifying for human nature, because it corresponds exactly to the essential imperfection of human nature. To represent the supreme natural knowledge of God as a degraded form of the beatific vision is to grant at once too much and too little; too much, because the natural end is essentially inferior to the supernatural destiny; too little, because, at its own level, it is more complete and more naturally satisfying.⁸⁴

⁸¹ De Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 183: "N'a-t-il [the system of pure nature] pas réalisé, de la nature au surnaturel, une séparation qui devait finalement être meurtrière?"

⁸² Émile Mersch, *La Théologie du Corps Mystique*, 2 Vols., Bruxelles: L'Édition Universelle, 1946, pp. xlii & 383, 402.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, I, 146.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 155: "Ce [the supreme natural knowledge of God after death] n'est pas la vision béatifique, l'intelligence est incapable d'en supporter l'éclat. Mais c'est une vision tout de même: vision de l'oeuvre de Dieu. Son imperfection essentielle ne l'empêche pas d'être absolument satisfaisante et béatifiante pour la nature humaine, parce qu'elle correspond exactement à l'imperfection essentielle de la nature humaine. Se représenter la suprême connaissance naturelle de Dieu comme une forme dégradée de la vision celeste, c'est lui donner à la fois trop et beaucoup trop peu. Trop, parce que la fin naturelle est essentiellement inférieure aux destinées surnaturelles; trop peu, parce qu'à son niveau, elle est plus complète et plus 'naturellement' satisfaisante." It may not be without profit to point out that these views on the possibility of the state of pure nature carry with them the authority of one who is surpassed by very few, if any, theologians of this century in his deep and extensive knowledge of patristic literature.

Again, in the second volume, Mersch holds that the absolutely supernatural, whether in the case of the divinization of Christ's human nature through the hypostatic union or in the case of the divinization of human nature through grace, "has its total and exclusive reason for existence in God alone: while, by itself it is nothing, God unceasingly effects its existence; or again, if one prefers, it is produced from nothing, in this sense, that even when it is drawn forth from the obediential potency of the creature, nothing of the same order preexisted in the creature."⁸⁵ Here, and constantly, Mersch equates, as far as gratuity is concerned, the hypostatic union and divinization by grace. The latter is no more grounded in the essence of a spiritual nature than the hypostatic union is founded on some appeal or desire of Christ's human nature.

By comparing these citations with P. de Lubac's theory of the supernatural, one can readily recognize the momentousness of the problem raised by the latter. If his contentions are true, by his very spiritual nature conferred in the gift of creation man belongs to a class of divine beings, whose only destiny must be that intuitive vision of divinity which is the sole source of happiness for an infinite and triune God. If, on the other hand, with Mersch, one considers man, as presented by Catholic teaching to be an essentially imperfect being, whose elevation to divine life is completely contingent and need never have been given, then certainly it would be monstrous pride and utterly irreligious for man by his own devising to elevate himself dizzily above his native lowliness, and class himself, once granted the gift of spiritual existence, with God as opposed to the rest of nature. If this second concept of the supernatural be correct, the only religious attitude possible is one of complete adoration of the loving God, who has entered into the depths of our lowliness and raised us up to His divinity, when He could have left us in our natural condition of servants instead of making us sons and heirs of His infinite riches.⁸⁶

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⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 183: "En plus, il [the absolutely supernatural] a sa raison d'être totale et exclusive en Dieu seul: alors que, par lui-même, il n'est rien, Dieu fait sans cesse qu'il soit. Ou encore, si l'on préfère, il est produit de rien, en ce sens que, même quand il est tiré de la puissance obédientielle de la créature, rien du même ordre ne préexistait en celle-ci."

⁸⁶ The importance of the problem raised by P. de Lubac demands an immense amount of study and further discussion. In these anticipated studies, it will be well to keep in mind the following wise statement of P. Malevez: "Le système de la 'nature pure' ne s'impose pas au nom du dogme, admettons-le. Mais celui qu'on lui oppose [P. de Lubac's theory] ne s'impose pas davantage: opinions d'école entre lesquelles la spéculation théologique, ou, si l'on préfère, la philosophie chrétienne de l'esprit décidera" (*op. cit.* p. 24).