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Henri de Lubac: Panorama and Proposal

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Abstract

This overview of de Lubac's work considers his background in French Catholicism at the opening of the twentieth century; the intellectual currents a-swirl in his formative years; his own education in Jesuit institutions; the mosaic of his highly disparate writings, and the broad lines of his 'career' as priest and cardinal. This 'panorama' is complemented by a proposal, intended to illuminate the 'mosaic' referred to: the author's suggestion is that unity – in a variety of analogical senses of that word – constitutes the key to de Lubac's entire enterprise.'

Keywords

De Lubac, French Catholicism, Society of Jesus, *ressourcement*, unity

Background

Henri Marie-Joseph Sonier de Lubac was born in February 1896 at Cambrai in northern France at a time of growing conflict between Church and State.[1] In 1899 a 'laicist' Republican government, under Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau, launched a campaign against the regular clergy in the belief that an effective attack on clerical influence was a necessity for a modern State.[2] (The royalism Religious inculcated in their charges was probably the more pressing concern.) The teaching Congregations wielded most influence, and it was they who would

[1] De Lubac favoured a biography of his books not his person. But owing to *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits* (Namur, 1989; 2nd edition, 1992), and the posthumous essay 'Mémoire sur mes vingt premières années', I, in *Bulletin de l'Association Internationale Cardinal Henri de Lubac,* 1 (1998), pp. 7–31, the rather meagre information about his life in Herbert Vorgrimler's 'Henri de Lubac', in R. van der Gucht and H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Bilan de la théologie au XXe siècle* (Tournai, 1970), II., pp. 806–820, probably the first overview (to that date), had expanded somewhat by the time of Rudolf Voderholzer's concise but very serviceable study, *Henri de Lubac begegnen* (Augsburg, 1999; English translation, *Meet Henri de Lubac. His Life and Work* [San Francisco, 2008]).

[2] M. O. Partin, *Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes and the Church: the Politics of Anticlericalism, 1899–1905* (Durham, NC, 1969).

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bear the brunt of the attack, which began with the legal declaration of their subordination to State supervision in 1901, and came to its climax under the succeeding government of Emile Combes when in the course of 1903–4 some ten thousand schools run by Religious were closed. Late in 1904, Combes introduced a bill providing for the rigorous separation of Church and State. Echoes of Combesian polemic would reverberate thirty years later in the introduction to de Lubac's *Catholicisme*.[3] After a fierce debate, the bill became law the following year.[4] The Church's buildings and other properties were confiscated though provision was made for the (gratuitous) 'lease-back' of churches, seminaries, and presbyteries by elected lay committees. The separation was denounced in no uncertain terms by Pius X in his encyclical *Vehementer nos* of February 1906, and in a document from some few months later, *Gravissimo officii,* the Pope rejected the lay committees notion as incompatible with the hierarchical ordering of the Church. The expulsion of some twenty thousand Religious was not taken pacifically in certain places. There was violence at Nantes, for example, and Lyons. De Lubac's father, a banker, received a criminal sentence for striking a counter-demonstrator during the seizure of the Capuchin Franciscan house at Lyons – which was why it was thought desirable for the family to move out of the area to the far north.[5]

French Catholics had perforce to seek some form of peaceful coexistence for the future. If in many parishes it was, except in a monetary sense, 'business as usual' – rather than expelling priests by the use of force, the government often preferred to leave them in place as 'occupiers without legal title',[6] the overall position was undoubtedly uncomfortable. The Church had lost the financial wherewithal for educating her clergy, at any rate in the numbers hitherto customary. Catholicism had also lost the cachet which earlier invested it as the official religion of France. The nascent class of ideologically secular school-teachers was unremittingly and influentially hostile. On the other hand, a new liberty of action reigned. 'With the *maire* and the prefect powerless to object, Catholic organizations had a free rein.'[7]

[3] The Christian is socially useless, preoccupied with individual salvation, unlike 'modern man', who seeks to draw the good from the 'world and its laws': *Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du Dogme* (Paris, 1938), p. VIII, where de Lubac is quoting from G. Séailles, *Les affirmations de la Conscience moderne* (Paris, 1906, 3rd edition, pp. 108–109. (N.b. in subsequent citation of de Lubac's works, the place of publication is Paris unless noted otherwise.)

[4] J. M. Mayeur, *La séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat* (Paris, 1966).

[5] A disclosure by Georges Chantraine, S. J., one of de Lubac's closest collaborators in the younger generation: see R. Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., p. 25.

[6] R. Aubert, 'The Local Churches of Continental Europe', in idem., et al., *The Christian Centuries, 5. The Church in a Secularised Society* (London, 1978), p. 77.

[7] Ibid., p. 78.

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This was just as well, since the Church had now to improvise new ways of obtaining a presence to French society, especially in matters of religious education and social action. At the Instituts catholiques in Paris, Lyons, and Toulouse, and in such emerging journals as *Le Bulletin de la semaine* and *La Quinzaine*, the need of the hour was perceived to be an *aggiornamento* of Christian doctrine in the light of new knowledge, so as to prevent the incarceration of Catholicism in a sectarian ghetto. In this context, the efforts of doctrinal Modernists, concerned to secure for Catholic scholarship (notably, exegetical) an autonomy vis-à-vis the magisterium, and, less damagingly, of 'social Modernists', seeking an autonomy for the Catholic laity qua citizens vis-à-vis the episcopate, were by no means always helpful. They triggered the formation of a climate of anxiety on soil well-prepared by the perceptible advances of State-approved religious indifferentism. Would accommodation to the contemporary lead to loss of substance for the faith? These fears must be taken into account in order to understand the response of ecclesiastical officialdom, both at the time of Modernism and in the crisis over the 'new theology' of the late 1940s and 50s.[8]

The Influence of Blondel

It is here we must situate seeming over-reactions to a paradigmatic figure who greatly influenced the young de Lubac: Maurice Blondel. The Blondelian source of much in de Lubac's outlook has been so fully demonstrated that some account of him seems unavoidable at this point.[9] In his 1893 *L'Action* and the succeeding 1896 'Letter on Apologetics', Blondel's aim was not so much to 'modernise' Catholic doctrine as to evangelise secular humanism on behalf of the Church.[10] Analyzing the factors involved in *action*, a series of entailments which the philosopher qua philosopher could recognize led inexorably, Blondel argued, to raising the issue of the Christian claim.[11] He rejected the apologetics in possession, which took positive data and sought to reconcile them with Neo-Scholastic theses, on the ground of the lack of homogeneity between physical hypotheses and metaphysical explanations. And in any event, as was generally

[8] E. Fouilloux, *Une Eglise en quête de liberté. La pensée catholique française entre Modernisme et Vatican II, 1914–1962* (Paris, 1998).

[9] A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac: teologia e dogma nella storia. L'influsso di Blondel* (Rome, 1990).

[10] For his work as an antidote to Modernism, not its continuation, see G. Larcher, *Modernismus als theologischer Historismus. Ansätze zu seiner Überwindung im Frühwerk Maurice Blondels* (Frankfurt, Berne, Las Vegas, 1985).

[11] M. Blondel, *L'Action. Essai d'une Critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique* (Paris, 1893).

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agreed, faith cannot simply be the result of logical demonstration. So how might one construct a philosophical apologetics that would really be an apologetics and yet truly remain philosophical? In effect, Blondel re-formulated that question in terms that suggested the germ of a reply. How does the supernatural come to impose itself as an inescapable need from which we cannot prescind? Concern for the unity (but also distinction) of natural and supernatural is one of the many forms which unitive thinking will take in de Lubac's career. I shall return to this in my concluding 'proposal'.

To Blondel's mind, merely to say that reason provides proofs for God's existence and Scholasticism a rational exposition of Christian doctrine did not suffice. For what of those who do not accept the presuppositions which underlie the use of reason in question, or reject the principles at work in the Scholastic manner of thought? There come to mind, for instance, those influenced by the putative founder of modern philosophy, Immanuel Kant, and his countless epigones. And if, as was sometimes insinuated by Scholastic spokesmen, the natural and supernatural exist on two levels that are not only distinct but separate, no genuinely philosophical apologetics for *supernatural* religion can in any case be achieved. Contemporary secular opinion, Blondel wryly noted, is only too happy with the prevalence of this mind-set in the Church. That opinion wants to acknowledge no heterogeneity within the human act, nothing immanent to spiritual action in knowing and willing that is not simply human. At the same time it rejects every form of the idea of transcendence, and notably the notion of divine intervention in the world's affairs. In this context, Blondel's attempt to show that an opening to Christianity is immanent within modern philosophy and crowns the hitherto concealed aspirations of the natural order was daring indeed. It could expect critics from without – and from within.

In his master-work *L'Action*, analysis of the self and its conditions of being – notably, how the will becomes aware of itself and its own inescapable demands – disengages step-by-step the idea of the supernatural.[12] All action implies in some way a self-opening to the universal. It entails an implicit metaphysics. Specifically, it involves the apprehension of an ideal order imposing an absolute duty. In Blondelian idiom, action exhibits the mystery of the impotence that the infinite aspiration of the heart contains. Blondel drew two conclusions: first, the natural order cannot be self-sufficient, and secondly, non-advertence to the need for something more is out of the question. Of itself, the will possesses neither its own principles nor its own end, and yet its own reality calls out for the Absolute. We are

[12] For a fuller description of that analysis, see A. Nichols, O. P., *From Hermes to Benedict XVI. Faith and Reason in Modern Catholic Thought* (Leominster, 2009), pp. 157–163.

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forced to want to become what we cannot expect of ourselves, and so the supernatural is in different senses both absolutely impossible and unconditionally necessary.

While this may be called as much or more a practical (or impractical!) conclusion as an intellectual one, the idea of God is nonetheless its inevitable completion. This is a 'supernatural' whose formal notion is drawn *de facto* from historic Christianity though it is not taken *de iure* from there. Blondel has made no appeal to faith. Such an appeal would appear inevitably to fail in the forum of philosophy as such. Nor has he shown any desire to turn Christianity into a philosophical gnosis that would deny revelation its rights. If there is divine revelation it will, by definition, occur independently of human initiative and, doubtless, be able freely to furnish its own rationale. Still, as philosophers we cannot exclude the possibility that the quest for the Absolute may uncover something analogous to what Christian revelation proposes. In that case, it is surely legitimate to confront revelation with the needs of our will to discern in what degree it can fill the bill.

In the 'Letter on Apologetics',[13] writing explicitly for believers, Blondel repeats that, by itself, philosophy can neither negate nor affirm the reality of the supernatural.[14] It can only maintain the supernatural's theoretical necessity and natural inaccessibility. Although theological doctrines have a quite different bearing from philosophical, for the two gnoseological levels differ utterly, there is also, nonetheless, a strict connexion between them. Between the philosophical and the religious problem a continuity holds good: concern with the outcome of human agency is common. So Blondel denounces both the confusion of domains and their false separation. The theologian must make the revealed truth shine out in its fullness, and leave the rest to others (including philosophers) who have their own competence, some of which may be useful to the faith. Taken in the abstract, a variety of cognitive vehicles could, no doubt, be serviceable. But in the concrete circumstances in which the Church finds herself, Blondel concludes to the need for a truly 'integral' philosophy (such as his own) if Catholicism is not to be excluded from the world of modern thought.[15] Imprudent separation of what should be taken unitively together, a cardinal vice in the Blondelian universe, will be anathema to de Lubac as well.

In their concern to re-unite the increasingly separated worlds of lay culture and Church, Blondel's disciples sought to overcome an

[13] M. Blondel, 'Lettre sur les exigencies de la pensée contemporaine en matière d'Apologétique', reprinted in *Les premiers écrits de Maurice Blondel*, II (Paris, 1956), pp. 5–95.

[14] See A. Nichols, O. P., *From Hermes to Benedict XVI*, op. cit., pp. 177–181.

[15] A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac: teologia e dogma nella storia*, op. cit., p. 32.

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excessive intellectualism in the Scholastic method as it had developed.[16] This too would be included in de Lubac's programme. Negative responses from the School led Blondel to attempt an integration of his approach with some characteristic findings of the Scholastic treatise *De fide*. More especially, he sought to link the presence in us of the idea of the supernatural, and the initial orientation of awareness that prepares the gift of faith and welcomes it once received, to the classic propositions of that treatise about the *pius credibilitatis affectus* and the necessity of prevenient grace. Here Blondel found, as he thought, a predecessor in the work of the Redemptorist Victor-Auguste Dechamps, archbishop of Malines and one of the architects of the First Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on faith. De Lubac's confrère and erstwhile pupil Xavier Tilliette would deem it 'impossible to overestimate' the impact of Blondel's method against the background of Dechamps' apologetics, emphasising as these did the union in faith of the 'interior fact' of the state of the heart with the 'exterior fact' of the promulgation of the Gospel, in the early formation of de Lubac's mind.[17] Writing in *Annales* under the pseudonym 'F. Mallet',[18] Blondel had made some headway in pointing up connexions when the blow fell which closed *Annales de philosophie chrétienne*, the journal of which he was proprietor, and imposed ecclesiastical penalties on its editor, a far more visceral critic of Scholasticism, the Oratorian Lucien Laberthonnière.

It fell to two Jesuits, brothers by blood, Auguste and Albert Valensin, to defend the historical and theological legitimacy of Blondel's approach; both men would figure at different points in de Lubac's life. In their contributions to the prestigious *Dictionnaire apologétique de la Foi catholique*, the Valensins noted how one major difficulty Blondel's critics had identified depended on viewing the Blondelian 'supernatural' from the standpoint of a hypothetical 'pure nature' which, in concrete terms, has never existed. By speaking of the 'necessity' of the supernatural was he not fatally compromising

[16] R. Aubert, *Le Problème de l'acte de foi. Données traditionelles et resultants des controverses récentes* (Louvain, 1958), pp. 224–225. Such Blondelians would be pleased by much recent interpretation of Thomas Aquinas in what has been called, perhaps over-optimistically, the 'Fourth Scholasticism', for, as has been remarked, in its spiritual and affective emphases it often likes to read Thomas as if he were Bonaventure.

[17] X. Tilliette, S. J., 'Henri de Lubac. The Legacy of a Theologian', *Communio* XIX. 3 (1992), pp. 334–335.

[18] 'F. Mallet' (= M. Blondel), 'L'oeuvre du cardinal Dechamps et la méthode de l'apologétique', *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* 151 (1905), pp. 68–91; idem., 'Les controverses sur la méthode apologétique du cardinal Dechamps', ibid., 151 (1906), pp. 449–472; 625–646. Lightly re-written, these reappeared in M. Blondel, *Le problème de la Philosophie catholique* (Paris, 1932), pp. 59–123. There is a cameo description of Dechamps' 'providential method' in A. Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (London, 1971), pp. 191–192.

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the gratuity of grace? This was a foretaste of de Lubac's own difficulties to come.

For Auguste Valensin, Blondel's approach was justified by the fact that human beings may be not only supernaturally alive, through sanctifying grace, or supernaturally dead, through its rejection, but in what might be called a transitional condition, hovering between life and death. To change the metaphor, they may be anxious travellers in whom God is at work by prevenient 'actual' (as distinct from 'habitual') grace, indicating to them at various junctures, and in a manner more or less obscure, their need for the supernatural. To such anxious travellers, claimed Valensin, was Blondel's apologetic addressed.[19]

Albert Valensin admitted that to speak of an *exigence* ('demand') for grace in the full or rigorous sense of that word 'demand' would lead to the confounding of grace and nature. He argued, though, that Blondel had in mind a nature that was already grace-pervaded. True, the question of how to inter-relate the two orders then recurs. The only acceptable solution, wrote this other Valensin, in good Scholastic style, must be in terms of the idea of the 'obediential potency', nature's capacity to receive grace and be raised to a higher power, a higher plane.[20] That was a concept whose importance had recently been signalled by two other major players in the theological life of French Catholicism, the Dominican Antonin-Dalmace Sertillanges and the Jesuit Pierre Rousselot, though a great deal turned, and turns, on its fine-tuning.[21] For Albert Valensin (whom de Lubac would eventually succeed as professor of fundamental theology in the Institut Catholique of Lyons), the relation between human nature and the supernatural is an indirect one, it is a matter of 'inefficacious desire', and this is what the Blondelian analysis undertakes to explore. The overall view of the Valensin brothers – Blondel had described concretely existing humanity in a fashion in no way contrary to Church teaching – was diametrically opposed to those who considered *L'Action* essentially a philosophical anthropology of a sort that led to conclusions incompatible with orthodoxy. The notion that the supernatural is given in, with, and under the natural, though it may take a dialectical phenomenology to uncover it, might put informed readers in mind of mid-nineteenth century *Güntherianismus*. Anton Günther had regarded 'spirit', *Geist*, as the supernatural dimension of

[19] A. (Auguste) Valensin, 'Immanence (méthode de)', *Dictionnaire apologétique de la Foi catholique*, II (Paris, 1924, 2nd edition), cols. 580–584.

[20] A. (Albert) Valensin, ''Immanence, méthode de – Examen', ibid., II (Paris, 1911), col. 594.

[21] For this important concept, see L. B. Gillon, 'Aux Origines de la "puissance obédientielle"', *Revue thomiste* 47 (1947), pp. 304–310.

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the human bonded to the body-soul composite of the *Naturmensch*.[22] Suggestively, both thinkers have occasionally received the *sobriquet* a 'Catholic Hegel', 'our Hegel'.

Formation and First Writings

The Catholicism of de Lubac's family was deep-rooted. Though aristocratic, his parental culture was, he remembered, essentially based on Christian tradition and piety. From 1905, when the family moved to Lyons, his education was indebted to Jesuit schools. This sounds hard to reconcile with the account of the Church-State crisis given above. But in 1901 – by contrast with an earlier, more dramatic if also temporary, dissolution of Jesuit houses under the 'Ferry decrees' of 1880 to 1885 – the Jesuits behaved cannily in the face of the new laws. True, many went into exile – in the 1880s, and now for a second time, this was the origin of the French Jesuit houses of formation in the Channel Islands and on the English mainland. (Similar substitute training centres existed in the Low Countries, for demand was high: as many as a third of the ten thousand Jesuits world-wide were French.[23]) But wherever possible, the fathers of the Society put their colleges, whose teaching staff was rarely *exclusively* Jesuit, into the hands of so-called *sociétés civiles propriétaires*, thus guaranteeing, in many cases at least, the survival of not only the physical fabric but also the ethos.[24] Transmission of the latter was aided by the discreet presence of Jesuit spiritual directors living off-site. (One such, Eugène Hains, would play a pivotal role in de Lubac's discovery of a vocation.[25])

At the Jesuit college of Notre Dame de Mongré, at Villefranche-sur-Saône, and subsequently at Moulins Bellevue, de Lubac acquired an excellent formation in languages and rhetoric as well as a disciplined spiritual life, and emerged, as his fellow Jesuit Georges Chantraine put it, rooted in the soil of his country and the Church but also a fervent humanist, eagerly interested in everything that might count as authentic humanity.[26] Not for nothing were his favourite authors Péguy and Claudel, to whom that description could also

[22] A. Nichols, O. P., *From Hermes to Benedict XVI*, op. cit., pp. 56–58.

[23] J. Lacouture, *Jésuites. Une multibiographie. II. Les Revenants* (Paris, 1991), p. 250. For a less impressionistic account, see D. Avon – P. Rocher, *Les Jésuites et la société française [XIX-XXe siècles]* (Toulouse, 2001).

[24] J. Lacouture, *Jésuites. Une multibiographie. II. Les Revenants*, op. cit., p. 285.

[25] R. Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., p. 27.

[26] G. Chantraine, 'Esquisse biographique', printed as a substantial introduction to the French translation of Hans Urs von Balthasar's study of de Lubac: *Le Cardinal Henri de Lubac* (Paris-Namur, 1983), pp. 11–12. Chantraine would greatly expand this material about the youthful de Lubac in *Henri de Lubac. I: De la naissance à la demobilisation [1896–1919]* (Paris, 2007).

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apply.[27] He was briefly enrolled in the Law faculty of the Institut Catholique at Lyons before entering the noviciate of the Jesuit Province of Lyons at St Leonard's on Sea, in the unlikely setting of a stolid English watering-place, in October 1913. Here he encountered Auguste Valensin – and therefore, in a certain sense, Blondel.[28] Looking back, de Lubac would judge Valensin a superlative mentor, paying him the enormous compliment of editing his posthumous works in seven volumes,[29] along with three further volumes containing Valensin's correspondence with Blondel.[30]

The beginning of de Lubac's formal studies – humanities (a specialty of Jesuit formation reflecting the Society's Renaissance origins), followed by philosophy and theology – was postponed by the onset of the Great War, when he saw action in a highly specific sense of that word. He was seriously wounded, to lasting physical effect. With slightly uncanny symbolism, one injury was sustained at La Côte des Huves les Eparges where Rousselot had been killed two years previously in 1915. Discussion with an unbelieving comrade suggested a project later realized as *De la connaissance de Dieu* (1945), a work that attracted criticism for relying excessively on a pre-rational awareness of God and presenting the traditional proofs of God's existence as something rather softer: *voies*, 'ways'. Did this do reason justice? Aquinas too had spoken of *viae* but with somewhat tighter argumentative formulae in mind. He was not likely to have contrasted *voie* with *preuve*.[31] Thomas did, however, avoid calling the 'ways' *demonstratio*, as was pointed out a few years later by the unflaggingly Thomistic Jacques Maritain.[32]

With the Armistice, serious study began: initially, for a few months, at Canterbury where at Easter 1920 he made his Jesuit vows. Between 1920 and 1923, de Lubac pursued philosophical studies at the Maison

[27] *Claudel et Péguy* (1974), co-written with Jean Bastaire, is more a chronicle of their relations (or lack of them) than a presentation of their substance.

[28] A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac* (Cinisello Balsamo, 1994), p. 45. This excellent overview must not be confused with Russo's other, earlier, study, with the same title but a differentiating sub-title, which concerns exclusively the issue of the Blondel-de Lubac connexion. See note 9 above.

[29] *Auguste Valensin. Textes et documents inédits* (1961).

[30] *Maurice Blondel et Auguste Valensin. Correspondence commentée* (1957–1965), 3 vols.

[31] See the (syntactically) oddly entitled J. R. Pambrun, *The Presence of God: A Study into the Apologetics of Henri de Lubac* (Toronto, 1978); also P. Valadier, 'Dieu présent. Une entrée dans la théologie du Cardinal de Lubac', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 3 (1992), pp. 345–358.

[32] J. Maritain, *Approches de Dieu* (Paris, 1953), where Maritain denied that the five ways give evidence of the divine existence itself or of the *actus essendi* which is in God and which God is. They give evidence only of the fact that the divine existence must be affirmed, or of the truth of attributing the predicate to the subject in the assertion, 'God exists'.

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Saint-Louis on Jersey; the principal 'Ile anglo-normand', it was halfway to home. Here, in company with Auguste Valensin, de Lubac engaged seriously with the seminal writings of Blondel as also with the works of Rousselot who has to be accounted a comparable influence on his early mind.[33] He read too St Irenaeus's *Against the Heresies* and the Jesuit Léonce de Grandmaison's book-length article 'Jésus Christ' in the *Dictionnaire apologétique*, both foundational for his theological thought.[34] Jersey, he thought in retrospect, had been the true seed-bed of his flowering as a Christian mind.[35]

Withdrawal from teaching schoolboys had meant that the more academically gifted French Jesuits could now give themselves exclusively to the intellectual life. These were for them golden years.[36] Still, caught between their philosophical and theological tradition, Suarezianism, and the now papally recommended Thomism, there were also difficulties. This was not only a question of intellectual identity (de Lubac's enthusiasm for a personal card system of Thomas-citations was mildly mocked). It was also a matter of intellectual innovation. In the early 20s, the General of the Society issued warnings against Rousselot's theory of the 'eyes of faith' – 'eyes' that, for Rousselot, 'saw' a pattern non-believing observation would never find. This was a theory too subjective, so it was said, to be an adequate basis for apologetics.[37] The fourth *cahier* of the Louvain Jesuit Joseph Maréchal's *Point de départ de la Métaphysique*, a founding text for 'Transcendental Thomism', failed to pass the Jesuit censors owing to its *Rousselotisme*.[38] Did desire for the beatific

[33] In a letter of 5 March 1967 to the Rousselot scholar Father John McDermott, de Lubac named Rousselot the chief influence on his early philosophical outlook: see J. M. McDermott, S. J., 'De Lubac and Rousselot', *Gregorianum* 78. 4 (1997, = 'Colloque Henri de Lubac à l'occasion du centenaire de sa naissance [1896–1996]'), p. 735. McDermott does not challenge, though, the thesis of the 'great influence' of Blondel which he regards as 'proven' by Russo's study.

[34] H. Vorgrimler, 'Henri de Lubac', art. cit., p. 808. (De Grandmaison was a figure who, like Blondel, sought a third way beside Modernism and Integrism and suffered as a consequence slings and arrows from all directions. See J. Lebreton, *Le Père Léonce de Grandmaison* (Paris, 1932); idem., 'Le Père Léonce de Grandmaison, son oeuvre scientifique', *Recherches de science religieuse* 17 (1927), pp. 385–413.

[35] A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., pp. 54–55.

[36] J. Lacouture, *Jésuites. Une multibiographie. II. Les Revenants*, op. cit., p. 291.

[37] It appeared eventually as *Le système idéaliste chez Kant et les post-kantiens* (Bruges-Paris, 1947); for *Rousselotisme* see W. Ledochowski, S. J., 'Principal Theses of the Position of Pierre Rousselot', in P. Rousselot, S. J., *The Eyes of Faith, and Answer to Two Attacks* (English translation, New York, 1990), pp. 114–115.

[38] Maréchal's influence may be detected in the way that in the theology of God de Lubac sought to balance the role of negative theology by the insistence that 'in every act of knowing something that is, God is also known as the ultimate ground of being; in every positive act of the will, God is also affirmed as the highest and ultimate good': R. Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., pp. 142–143. 'Conation' – reaching out, proleptically in acts of the intellect, dynamically in acts of will – is key to Transcendental Thomism's version of demonstrating divine existence.

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vision *define the nature of the human intellect*? That was the startling question, with implications for the gratuity of the supernatural order, raised by Rousselot's 1908 *L'intellectualisme de saint Thomas*. Granted the affinity of Rousselot's problematic to that ascribed to the author of *L'Action*, it seems the more surprising de Lubac was allowed his intensive perusal of Blondel. Later he would cite Maréchal and Rousselot together with Blondel as the main sources of his early intellectual inspiration.[39]

Certainly Jersey was the location of de Lubac's earliest writings. Eight essays, treated no doubt as student ephemera and printed in amateur fashion in the bulletin of the Jesuit scholasticate *Quodlibeta*, betray a non-Scholastic epistemology for which the concept has value only from and through intuition – though de Lubac had in his sights not so much manual Scholasticism as the positivism for which the real is the objective as captured formulaically.[40] In 'Science et philosophie', an essay co-authored in 1922 with his fellow Jesuit Gaston Fessard, a Blondelian, the ground for philosophy's difference from mathematics and science is given as the inhabiting of all philosophical problems by mystery.[41] Philosophy concerns itself with concrete totalities of which the first to be considered, by 'reflexive analysis', is the human subject, since subjectivity does not equal subjectivism. The data furnished by experience must so be investigated as to make appear that which transcends experience, for the transcendent is the necessary condition of the empirical. A sequel to 'Science et philosophie', unwritten or unfinished, was to have shown how this approach can rejoin the classic solutions of Scholastic epistemology. Instead, the traditional pattern of Jesuit formation intervened: de Lubac was whisked off for an 'active' year as assistant to the prefect of the studies at one of his old schools, the Lycée Mongré at Villefranche.

The French Jesuits in exile showed an extraordinary *penchant* for English seaside-resorts. Returning to Britain, de Lubac found himself, in the years 1924 to 1926, at Ore Place, Hastings – the ironically named 'Seminarium Orense',[42] this time for theology, under the tutelage of, in particular, the professor of sacred Scripture, Joseph Huby, a disciple of Rousselot and de Grandmaison. What Huby sought was a biblically grounded and philosophically acute new apologetics – in long perspective, a very de Lubacian desideratum.[43] At Ore Place,

[39] *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits,* op. cit., p. 16.

[40] A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac: teologia e dogma nella storia*, op. cit., pp. 58–60.

[41] Ibid., pp. 137–153.

[42] The ironic sobriquet should not mask the excellence of its theological culture: see D. Grumett, 'Teilhard at Ore Place, Hastings, 1908–1912', *New Blackfriars* 90. 1030 (2009), pp. 687–700.

[43] For this figure, see P. Duclos (ed.), *Dictionnaire du monde religieux dans la France contemporaine*. I. *Les Jésuites* (Paris, 1985), p. 151.

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de Lubac prepared as a student endeavour the first sketches of what would become, in 1946, *Surnaturel. Etudes historiques*. Making a study of the history of the doctrine of the supernatural was, by de Lubac's own admission, Huby's idea. That such an enquiry would prove detrimental – even fatal – to anti-Blondelian neo-Scholastic 'extrinsicism' on this topic was, in all likelihood, their common surmise.[44]

In 1927 Henri de Lubac was ordained priest. The previous year the Jesuits had returned in force to Lyons, re-establishing their college in the old quarter ('forum vetus') of Fourvières. In 1929 he was snapped up by the Institut Catholique there. De Lubac's 1929 inaugural lecture as professor of fundamental theology reflected the intellectual formation outlined above. 'Apologétique et théologie', for such was its title, sent the message that theology must not be reduced to the level of a positivistic rationalism.[45] A separated philosophy, a separated theology, an apologetics based on 'natural faith' or 'scientific faith': these are all untraditional and bring the Church's learning into disrepute. This is not how Augustine, Möhler, Newman, apologized. Even if apologetics and theology should not be identified, they must be inter-related. De Lubac warned against dividing theology from life by treating dogma as 'a thing in itself, like a revealed block without relation of any sort to natural man, as a transcendent object whose manifestation (as indeed a great part of its content) is governed only by arbitrary divine decree'.[46] As the Author of both supernature and nature, God is the Author of nature *in view of grace*. The supernatural order must not, however, be naturalized, nor the natural emptied of its substance.

Here we may look ahead to de Lubac's 1934 article, 'Remarques sur l'histoire du mot "surnaturel"', in which he testified to the study years when, so it turned out, he had devoured the writings not only of Thomas Aquinas and Augustine but also the Greek Fathers and the French 'spiritualist' thinker Maine de Biran as well as the trio of Rousselot, Maréchal, Blondel.[47] Xavier de Tilliette has warned it would be a mistake to suppose that de Lubac's inspiration came *chiefly* from philosophy, however devout, or apologetics, however theological. The disclosure of the hidden God in saving *mystêrion* and sacramental sign, the God of Scripture and Tradition, was more foundational. De Lubac's emphasis on the divine transcendence, wrote Tilliette:

[44] A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., pp. 56–57.

[45] 'Apologétique et théologie', *Nouvelle revue théologique* 57 (1930), pp. 361–378, reprinted in *Théologies d'occasion* (1984), pp. 47–111.

[46] Cited A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac: teologia e dogma nella storia*, op. cit., p. 66.

[47] 'Remarques sur l'histoire du mot "surnaturel"', *Nouvelle revue théologique* 61 (1934), pp. 225–249, 350–370.

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> aimed above all to detach us from a fallacious humanism, from a rational obsession, which would have paralysed, at the close of philosophy, the mysterious 'beginning of theology', the forgetfulness of Moab, a conversion of outlook and baptism of fire.[48]

Scanning, then, the t*heological* sources, de Lubac found that, while the word *supernaturalis* appears in Thomas's corpus, only with Pope Pius V's 1567 bull in condemnation of Baius (the Louvain theologian Michel du Bay) does it become a technical term, a matter of common parlance in the Schools. That was not, though, he pointed out, the only background. In fourteenth century mystics influenced by Denys and Thomas, 'supernature' means the divine life, whether in God himself or in the divinized creature. Whereas to Gregory of Nyssa, say (de Lubac admitted the story was different with Cyril of Alexandria), this vocabulary served for whatever allows a creature to share in divinity and so can denote even the gifts of intelligence and free will, in a later Latin theology 'supernatural effects' will mean precisely those extraordinary outcomes whose cause is *not* natural: for example, events taking place in a strictly miraculous manner – what the Neo-Scholastics would call *supernaturale quoad modum*. Since the mid seventeenth century, 'supernatural', used without further qualification, has commonly referred to human destiny in the vision of God, but stressing the gratuity of this divinely furnished end to the exclusion of any other consideration. In a decadent Scholasticism, the human spirit is not as such the *imago Dei* but just another natural entity awaiting free divine supernaturalisation, for the 'normal and all-satisfying (*saturant*) end' of the created spirit would not be the vision of God but a 'natural end of an inferior order'.[49] Under the influence of Scotism and (especially) Nominalism, the supernatural became merely what is 'added onto nature', the *superadditum naturae*.[50] In the wake of the Baius controversy, the revelation of the supernatural could even seem a 'disturbing element', intervening in 'the development of our race', a 'supernatural intrusion coming to break a perfect and fortunate equilibrium'. De Lubac concluded there was need for a rediscovery of finality of such a kind that people would realise the supernatural is *not* the adventitious. Rather, we were created for grace. Absent this realization, theology would continue to be the 'unconscious accomplice of separated philosophy and secularism'.[51]

[48] X. Tilliette, 'Henri de Lubac', art. cit., p. 337.

[49] 'Remarques sur l'histoire du mot "surnaturel"', art. cit., p. 357.

[50] Though de Lubac tends to regard this term as characteristic of early modern Scholasticism, the verb *superaddare* is found in exactly the context he has in mind in Thomas's *Summa contra Gentiles* III. 150. To make possible the vision of God 'some supernatural form and perfection' must be 'superadded' to the nature of man.

[51] 'Remarques sur l'histoire du mot "surnaturel"', art. cit., p. 364.

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Here Blondel could help, not only through the analysis made in *L'Action*, but also in the filaments of connexion he had made with 'social Catholicism'. Blondel, who took part in the end-of-century 'social congresses' of the Church in France, had deplored the tendency to withdraw into a purely sacral realm of worship and devotion as *monophorisme*, a sort of practical Monophysitism, which, like the original Christological Monophysite theory, diminished the properly human scope of the divine Flesh-taking.[52] The option for the supernatural, de Lubac came to think, must entail a willingness to co-operate with God's work in the world *in redemptioni communi*.[53] The work of redemption entails re-establishing the lost unity both of man with God and of men with men. The Christian mystery has to realize itself historically and socially. 'Social Catholicism' is a pleonasm; the adjective is redundant.[54] Grace is not given purely in the individual relation of one human being with God. The index of its reception is the measure in which the individual aggregates himself socially as a member of the unique organism of the Church.[55] In the 1934 essay, de Lubac noted that for the neo-pagan founder of *positivisme organisateur*, Charles Maurras, whose movement *Action française* had proved so attractive to patriotic Catholics, supernaturality was merely the Christian way of justifying 'natural laws'.[56] 'Remarques' was not only the harbinger of the continuingly controversial *Surnaturel*. It furnished one at any rate of the seeds for that luxuriant proliferation of a book, de Lubac's supremely influential work, *Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du Dogme* (1938).[57]

The Professor

When de Lubac arrived back in Lyons to begin his teaching career, he coincided with a moment of renaissance in that primatial local church of the 'Gauls'. The Institut catholique's 'Ecole lyonnaise de théologie' was well-matched by a range of complementary institutions and activities: a philosophy institute; *La Chronique sociale*, inspiration (and chronicler) of the annual *Semaines sociales de France*; the initiatives of Cardinal Gerlier, archbishop of Lyons, in the lay apostolate, notably among the young; connexions with the

[52] 'Testis' (= M. Blondel), *Catholicisme social et monophorisme* (Paris, 1919).

[53] Cf. *Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du Dogme* (Paris, 1938), p. 179. The Latin phrase was drawn from the preface of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*.

[54] *Catholicisme*, op. cit., p. IX.

[55] Ibid., p. 51; cf. pp. 32–33.

[56] 'Remarques sur l'histoire du mot "surnaturel"', art. cit., p. 239.

[57] See further P. J. Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, and Action française. The Clash over the Church's Role in Society during the Modernist Era* (Washington, 2009).

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missions through that apostle of an 'inculturated' Indian Church,the abbé Monchanin (on whom de Lubac would later write),[58] and the nearby Jesuit study-house of Lyon-Fourvières whose membership included Fessard as teacher, the young Hans Urs von Balthasar as precocious student. (While de Lubac never belonged to its faculty, in 1934 he took up residence in the building. This was how Balthasar learned from him the need to refer 'beyond Scholasticism to the Church Fathers'.[59]) At Lyons, early Catholic ecumenism was also represented, at reunions organized by one of the movement's heroes, the abbé Paul Couturier.

Replacing Albert Valensin as the only Jesuit in the theological teaching body of 1929–30 (Auguste Valensin was active in its philosophical opposite-number), de Lubac took responsibility for fundamental theology, extending his labours the following year, with Monchanin's assistance, to a new subject: the history of religions. In the climate of theological-philosophical-social-ecumenical openness that characterized the Church at Lyons in this period, de Lubac played his part, along with his colleagues Jean Daniélou and Claude Mondésert, in the inception of the influential series of patristic (and, later, mediaeval) texts called *Sources chrétiennes*, the brain-child of Victor Fontoynont, then prefect of studies at Fourvières. In *Entretien autour de Vatican II. Souvenirs et Réflexions* (1985) de Lubac recalls how this innocent venture was perceived as 'a war-machine against Scholasticism and even the faith of the Church'.[60] The introductions and comments to the Fathers' texts certainly had a wider aim in view: to recover a theology of history, a fuller feeling for symbolism and the place of spiritual interpretation of Scripture, so as to renew theological and spiritual life. Considered as a scholarly project, the series was and remains exceedingly ambitious, with contributors from all over the country (and now far beyond). With the coming of the Second World War and the German invasion, de Lubac would take responsibility for the work in Vichy France, the Dominicans of the 'Paris' Province for the equivalent in the Occupied Zone.[61] In *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits* de Lubac lets fall that *Sources chrétiennes* were intended from the first as an 'instrument of *rapprochement*' with the Orthodox Church.[62]

[58] *Images de l'abbé Monchanin* (1967).

[59] H. U. von Balthasar, *Test Everything, Keep What is Good* (English translation, San Francisco, 1986), pp. 11–12.

[60] I have had access to this in its original Italian form, A. Scola (ed.), *Henri de Lubac, Viaggio nel Concilio – Hans Urs von Balthasar, Viaggio nel Postconcilio* (Milan, 1985), here cited at p. 8.

[61] See C. Mondésert, *Lire les Pères de l'Eglise dans 'Sources Chrétiennes'* (Paris, 1988).

[62] *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits,* op. cit., p. 95.

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The first great fruit of de Lubac's academic work was *Catholicisme*, put together from talks and articles written over the years 1932 to 1936. 'Academic' does not entirely strike the right note. For de Lubac, University-level teaching was not fully distinct from ministerial activity and hence from pastoral and missionary tasks. *Catholicisme's* ninth chapter, for instance, had been a lecture given to (mostly) Chinese students on the topic of the universality of the Catholic Church and Christianity at large; it was a crucial one, bearing the same title as the book itself. But aside from the opening chapter, which, with help from the Fathers, defines redemption as the re-establishment of humankind's unity in God, it was the tenth chapter, on the 'present situation', that set the scene for the work as a whole, despite its position towards the book's close. Judging by, at any rate, the French case, there was, de Lubac found, an unfortunate scission between the Church and the world, Christianity and history, the natural and the supernatural. That was 'unfortunate' because, as the fifth chapter, 'Christianity and History', makes plain, whereas for certain trends in Hellenic paganism and the Oriental religions, humanity has straightforwardly to transcend history, for the Church, by contrast, while the goal is to transcend history, history itself is to prepare for the goal. Irenaeus of Lyons, Augustine of Hippo, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, had found in the Bible virtually a 'discourse on universal history'.[63] They found it because they were looking for it. In Christianity, as they were aware, the Eternal is reached via time, for the Eternal has entered history so as to give time consistency and purpose. *Fuga mundi*, 'flight from the world', can still make sense, but only if the world we are fleeing is that of earthly things qua fallen, and the condition of those who love them sheerly for themselves.[64] De Lubac's vision, as the German Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner wrote in an admiring review, was of 'mankind... [as] a holy unity in Christ and in the Church'.[65]

De Lubac's emphasis on the 'social aspects of dogma' (the sub-title of this book) should not be mistaken for a recipe for collectivism, even though by implication there *is* a socio-political message.[66] The 'personalist' eleventh chapter of the book supplies any corrective that may be needed. For de Lubac, a person is not just an atomic individual but a 'universe' which 'supposes others likewise'.[67] Personhood

[63] *Catholicisme*, op. cit., p. 119.

[64] Ibid., p. 100.

[65] Cited R. Voderholzer, *Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., p. 53.

[66] A harbinger of the book, his essay 'Le caractère social du dogma chrétien', was, significantly, published in the journal of the Lyons 'think-tank' of social politics, *Chronique social de France* 45 (1936), pp. 167–192, 259–283.

[67] *Catholicisme*, op. cit., p. 259. Here, as footnotes 4 and 5 indicate, de Lubac was juxtaposing – and combining – a statement of Jacques Maritain's in *Humanisme integral*

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cannot be volatilized, de-substantialised, either by social analysis or by social forces. The City of God, de Lubac reminded readers, is constructed out of persons, *vivis ex lapidibus*, 'from living stones', in the words of *Urbs beata Jerusalem*, the hymn for the Dedication of a Church at Vespers of the Roman Liturgy.[68]

A summary comment on *Catholicisme* by Rahner's close collaborator Herbert Vorgrimler is well worthy of citation:

> This book inaugurated in the period a new kind of theology. Fully respectful of the originality of the Christian revelation, it integrated everything human in a great movement of charity, without either moralism or sentimentality, surrounding itself with a 'cloud of witnesses', in dialogue with the exegetes of the Body of Christ, such as Emile Mersch and Lucien Cerfaux, the philosophers, like Blondel and Gabriel Marcel, the pagan religions, Buddhism above all, and the non-believers, especially Marxism.[69]

Somewhat more questionable is Vorgrimler's supplementary remark that, 'from that moment on the work embodied the renewal of theology, anticipating what is best in the present-day 'theology of earthly realities'.[70] De Lubac's disclosure in *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits* that the book was inspired by Olympe-Philippe Gerbet's *Considérations sur le dogme générateur de la piété catholique* suggests Vorgrimler may have overestimated the element of self-conscious modernity.[71] Gerbet, after all, who became bishop of Perpignan in 1854, wrote his book while the last Bourbon king to be anointed at Rheims was still (fairly) gloriously reigning.

The communitarianism of *Catholicisme*, we have said, was for de Lubac personalist in character. The struggle for defence of the rights of persons – notably, *Jewish* persons – in which de Lubac was engaged in the 'years of resistance', 1940 to 1944, in the context of the Vichy government's frequently supine attitude to its overbearing German patron, would soon give this insistence concrete form. The troubled history of Jewish-Catholic relations under the Third Republic – the prominence of Protestants, Freemasons and Jews in succeeding Republican and anti-clerical governments did little to mollify a sporadic Catholic antagonism toward the Judaism of the Common Era[72] – set the Vichy regime on a false course. Its self-appointed mission to

(Paris, 1936), p. 17, with a synthesis of comments from Blondel, notably in *L'Etre et les êtres* (Paris, 1936) and the revised edition of *L'Action* (Paris, 1937).

[68] *Catholicisme*, p. 261.

[69] H. Vorgrimler, 'Henri de Lubac', art. cit., p. 811.

[70] Ibid.

[71] O.-P. Gerbet, *Considérations sur le dogme générateur de la piété catholique* (Paris, 1829); cf *Mémoire sur l'occasion des mes Ecrits*, p. 25.

[72] P. Perrard, *Juifs et Catholiques français, de Drumont à Jules Isaac [1886–1945]* (Paris, 1970). One ought also to recognise the tradition of anti-Semitism stemming from the Enlightenment in France: H. Labroue,*Voltaire anti-juif* (Paris, 1942).

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reverse the wrongs suffered by the anti-Revolutionary elements in French society was by no means indefensible. But it was easily ensnared. The misinformation Marshal Pétain received, to the effect that Pius XII would support legislation restricting Jewish liberties, was met by the *Déclaration Chaine*, which recalled with some force the Church's past condemnations of anti-Semitism. Partly written by de Lubac, the 'Declaration' was named for its principal *spiritus movens*, the Institut Catholique's professor of Old Testament and pastor of the University parish. Gerlier sanctioned its anonymous circulation at Lyons; meanwhile the authors published across the Swiss border at Fribourg, with help from the future Cardinal Journet, their *Israël et la foi chrétienne*, giving theological weight to their stance. Outside the Occupied Zone the capital of France was of course Vichy itself, a spa town in the Massif Central, but Lyons was the intellectual capital of the resistance, drawing to itself the leading French Catholic writers still at large in the 'Hexagon': the dramatist-philosopher Gabriel Marcel, the poet Paul Claudel, the philosopher of personalist communitarianism Emmanuel Mounier, and others besides. German pressure on Vichy to release its Jews into the tender cares of the National Socialist regime was a test of the soul for the Catholic Church in those regions, as Fessard pointed out in stirring terms in his *France, prends garde de perdre ton âme*. Of the clandestine *cahiers* (*Cahiers de Témoignage Chrétien*) that went the rounds, rehearsing pertinent themes in an effort to rouse Church resistance to deportations of French Jews, it is difficult now to identify de Lubac's personal contributions. But he gave his own account of the period in a substantial memoir, *Résistance chrétienne à l'antisémitisme. Souvenirs 1940–1944* (1988). At times, de Lubac had himself to change venue rather swiftly, yet he was never in the kind of danger run by his confrère Yves de Montcheuil, shot by the Nazis in 1944 for ministering to students in the (armed) Resistance, *le maquis*.[73] De Lubac's war was a war of literary propaganda.

This was also the time of his writing two very different studies, one looking beyond the Church, one directed to life within it. The first was *Le Drame de l'humanisme athée* (1944) whose message, already indicated in the pre-existent articles from which the book was composed, ran along the following lines: a humanism that disencumbers itself of God's uniquely foundational presence tends to self-destruction. It is probably fair to say that de Lubac's reflections on the value of persons in *Catholicisme* and the anti-Nazism the political situation brought to the fore, combined to

[73] With characteristic modesty, he regarded his posthumous editing of de Montcheuil's writings, like his similar work for Valensin, and his editions of the correspondence of Blondel and Teilhard, as among the 'most useful tasks it has been given me to accomplish', *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 101.

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motivate this enquiry into the intellectual sources of atheist humanism's 'drama'. The tragic error of such humanism lay at its beginning, in the initial option to reject the thesis of the divine image in man. The consequent unilateral declaration of independence of man from God leads to Prometheanism and its upshot in Western history is a catastrophe. Though the book was at he time much translated, in the post-Conciliar period when 'progressive' figures among the French Jesuits (if not only they!) were treating Feuerbach, Marx and Nietzsche as *maîtres à penser*, indispensable intellectual interlocutors if not indeed guides, *Le Drame de l'athéisme humain* was roughly handled. Its author, so it was said, had failed to understand modernity and the resources it could offer. Lines of connexion run out from this work to *Proudhon et le Christianisme* of the following year (the study of a very un-Marxian Socialist), to *Affrontements mystiques*, with its re-engagement with Nietzsche, in 1950, and even to the trilogy of 'Buddhist' works, *Aspects du bouddhisme* (1951), *Le rencontre du bouddhisme et de l'Occident* (1952), *Amida. Aspects du bouddhisme* II (1955), inasmuch as Buddhism could be considered a 'vertical atheism', to set alongside the 'horizontal atheism' of the West. Not that de Lubac's cast of mind was simply critical of the non-Christian alternatives. In *Le Fondement théologique des missions* (1946) he spoke of the evangelical imperative by which the Church must enter into transformative contact with diverse civilizations. Just because she is Catholic – universal – she must assume and complete all *well-founded* human thinking or her mission will be paralysed.

The 1944 work directed ad intra was *Corpus mysticum. L'Eucharistie et l'Eglise au Moyen Age. Etude historique*. Intrigued by a doctoral thesis he examined on Florus of Lyons, de Lubac used a period of convalescence to delve further into the pre-Scholastic Latin writers whom he came to regard as not just preparation for what was to come later. On the contrary, they had an abiding value all their own. In principle, after all, some motifs might well be better embodied in earlier thinkers than in later. De Lubac held that one such motif was the relation between the Church and the Holy Eucharist. These two mysteries are not thought together in High Scholasticism to the degree they are in the Fathers, the Carolingian divines, and their successors up to (but not including) Anselm.[74] Though, to be sure, the High Scholastics appreciate that the unity of the Church is the ultimate goal (*res tantum*) of Eucharistic communion, they do not find the mystery of the Church-body actualized in the sacred action in the way of their predecessors. Concern for the Real Presence had tended

[74] Thinking them together again, the hallmark of Eucharistic ecclesiology, would be understood in an ampler context in the successor movement of the 'ecclesiology of communion'. See M. Pelchat, *L'Eglise mystère de communion. L'ecclésiologie dans l'oeuvre de Henri de Lubac* (Montreal and Paris, 1990).

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to eliminate a fruitful ambiguity in the term 'the body of Christ' (though the ambiguity was retained in many liturgical prayers), just as preoccupation with the ontology of that Presence had muted somewhat its eschatological dimension, the pledge of participation in the 'banquet' of the End. De Lubac put down much of this to a shift in theological culture, 'from symbol to dialectic'.[75] If a symbolic mode of practicing theology is seen as not only outclassed but rendered redundant by a more dialectical mode, then the unifying conception which treated the selfsame reality as at once *plena mysterii* and *plena rationis* cannot stand. And yet, asked de Lubac, is it not significant that the same word (*logos*) denotes both human reason and the Word (*le Verbe*) of God?[76]

Corpus mysticum would incur criticism. Its message ran, there is more to be said about the Mass than the Eucharistic conversion, the source of Presence and Sacrifice, for the Eucharist also 'makes the Church'.[77] To the mind of Augustine and the early mediaeval divines, the Holy Eucharist, itself a mystery, indeed Christ's *corpus mysticum*, figured forth the unity of the Church, Christ's *caro spiritualis*, his 'spiritual flesh'. De Lubac's enthusiastic commendation of such thinking was readily confused with a claim that the theme of the Eucharistic conversion – of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Word incarnate – had been overplayed. He had said nothing of the sort. He had merely asked, 'Could not Eucharistic realism have been assured without the almost total abandonment of symbolism?'[78] If he regretted that Eucharistic devotion had sometimes become 'individualistic', it was because as a consequence the idea of the Church had become 'less and less realist, because less and less mystical'.[79]

With hindsight, some of the anxieties expressed by reviewers – travelling back down this road, could the gains that were made in clarifying the doctrine of the Presence be endangered? – might appear to have validity. But who in the 1940s could have guessed how attenuated would be the sense of the Real Presence in wide areas of the Western Catholic Church by the early years of the twenty-first century? De Lubac's study can be considered a Catholic counterpart to the Orthodox orchestration of that theme by the 'Paris School' Russian exile Nikolai Afanas'ev.[80] In Orthodoxy, has Eucharistic

[75] *Corpus mysticum. L'Eucharistie et l'Eglise au Moyen Age. Etude historique* (1949, 2nd edition), pp. 248–277.

[76] Ibid., p. 264.

[77] Ibid., p. 104.

[78] Ibid., p. 291.

[79] Ibid., p. 292.

[80] *Corpus mysticum* is presented in this light in A. Nichols, O. P., *Theology in the Russian Diaspora. Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanas'ev, 1893–1966* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 166–168. The ampler setting of Eucharistic ecclesiology in the contemporary Greek theologian John Zizioulas, who was at once inspired by Afanas'ev

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ecclesiology jeopardized the sense of what is bestowed in the Holy Gifts? It seems unlikely. And it remains the case that no Eucharistic theology should lack all reference to the thesis *Eucharistia facit Ecclesiam* de Lubac made his own. As he had remarked in *Catholicisme*, the Church herself teaches it – in the words of her Liturgies.[81]

The peace that broke out amid warring nations in 1944–5 was soon followed by the publication of a work that produced a theological war on a smaller, and fortunately unbloody, scale. What made the reaction to the 1946 *Surnaturel. Etudes historiques* especially surprising was that, yet again (as with *Catholicisme* and *Le Drame*), de Lubac was recycling. The first three chapters had already appeared in the Jesuit journal *Recherches de science religieuse* while much of the book's later sections had seen the light of day in an even more conventional periodical, the *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*. De Lubac found there was much to complain of in sixteenth century Scholasticism. The idea that natural appetite cannot refer to anything supernatural had gradually percolated from commentaries on Thomas's *Summa theologiae* to commentaries on that still ubiquitous mediaeval textbook, Lombard's Books of the Sentences. The idea of *potentia oboedientalis*, comparatively minor in High Scholastic thought where it was in common employ for explaining the possibility of miracle, took on major importance as nature's relation to its own assumption by divine act was deemed a mere 'non-repugnance' to divine power. Where de Lubac was on shakier ground was in the claim that, when Thomists spoke of the 'elicited' desire of the natural man for beatitude, this should mean – if they were faithful to the historical St Thomas – the manifestation of innate desire, rather than the bringing forth of desire in a new mode as humans ponder divine effects.[82] But de Lubac was right to say the biblical and patristic theme of man as the image of God could never be reduced

and his critic, made possible a wider-ranging comparison in P. McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh, 1993). That the Eucharistic mystery as a whole, which further comprises Sacrifice, Presence and Foretaste of the Kingdom, is optimally reviewed from this particular standpoint seems doubtful. Relatedness to the Atonement, the context of the institution of the sacrament, can suffer. For the case that the primary perspective should be Sacrifice, see A. Nichols, O. P., 'The Holy Oblation: on the Primacy of Eucharistic Sacrifice', *Downside Review* 122. 479 (2004), pp. 259–272.

[81] *Catholicisme*, op. cit., p. 67, to which numerous illustrations are added on pp. 67–74.

[82] This is the distinction drawn in the exhaustive work of Lawrence Feingold on this subject, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St Thomas Aquinas and his Interpreters* (Rome, 2001). This study provoked the publication of much useful material on this topic in the journal *Nova et Vetera* (the Anglophone, not Francophone, edition). So far as de Lubac is concerned, I single out especially R. Hütter, '*Desiderium naturale visionis Dei – Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas:* Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold's and John Milbank's Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God', ibid., 5. 1 (2007), pp. 81–132, and D. Braine, 'The Debate between Henri de Lubac and his Critics', ibid., 6. 3 (2008), pp. 543–590.

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to the dimensions of an Aristotelean 'nature'. The language of de Lubac's criticism of Cajetan, perhaps the outstanding Thomist of the Reformation era, is, as Antonio Russo noted, markedly Blondelian. What de Lubac rejects in the emergent new consensus about 'pure nature' is 'extrinsicism' and, accordingly, a 'separated' philosophy and theology.[83]

De Lubac's criticisms of the Scholastic, and notably Thomistic, tradition as it had developed were by no means an assault on Thomas himself for whom he retained the highest respect. Since Jersey days he had been working on an exhaustive filing system for Thomas texts, to the amusement of his professors whose tastes were more eclectic. In *Catholicisme*, however, he had said in as many words that no single author can ever capture the whole of revealed truth. In *Surnaturel* he went on to suggest the need for a new synthesis, taking account of the theological forces of the past and the acquisitions of the present. More than its particular claim about the nature/grace relation, this was why the book entered so rapidly the controversial web of *la nouvelle théologie*. Though de Lubac had sought to distinguish the meanderings of theological progress from the linear development of dogma, it could hardly be denied that, at all times, dogma had needed, and utilized, theology. If theological culture was so mutable and relative, could dogma wholly stand? The 'new theologians' were held to have been too sceptical about the value of conceptual knowledge, too credulous about claims concerning its contingent and inadequate character vis-à-vis revealed truth. They exaggerated the instability of the notions in which divine truth was expressed. They were imprudent in asserting that the content of dogma and theology can and must be articulated in concepts drawn from contemporary philosophy:[84] a proposal more associated, perhaps, with Daniélou than with de Lubac.[85]

The 1950 encyclical *Humani generis* brought together critics of de Lubac's particular thesis about nature with critics of the general approach to theological life laid out, or tacit, in *la nouvelle théologie* – even if the question, Did Pius XII have de Lubac specifically in mind? may never be answered to universal satisfaction. In 1959, the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities reported that no censure had ever been issued against him.[86] That he was treated as something of a scapegoat there is no doubt, but the measures taken against him appear to have had their source in the Society itself.

[83] A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac: teologia e dogma nella storia,* op. cit., pp. 140–142.

[84] See, for a characteristic hostile assessment, D. Bonifazi, *Immutabilità e relatività del dogma secondo la teologia contemporanea* (Rome, 1959).

[85] A. Nichols, O. P., 'Thomism and the *Nouvelle Théologie*', *The Thomist* 64 (2000), pp. 1–19.

[86] A. Russo, *Henri de Lubac: teologia e dogma nella storia*, op. cit., p. 193.

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From 1950 to 1959 he was prohibited from teaching, and for some of those years from living in Jesuit scholasticates in whose libraries some at any rate of his books and articles found themselves shunted off open shelves to more secure areas.[87] The second and third of his 'Buddhist' trilogy reflect the veto on publishing any more strictly *theological* works in the years 1950 to 1952. But by 1953, when his *Méditation sur l'Eglise* saw the light of day, this embargo had already been lifted.[88] In the same year, he was given permission to lecture on non-theological subjects, with the curious caveat that no advance notice should be given to the public: a paradox, but not of the pregnant sort he made his own in a genre of sequenced comments rather like the 'Chapters' of the Greek ascetical writers of earlier ages: see *Paradoxes* (1946), *Nouveaux Paradoxes* (1955). In 1956 he was allowed to reply publicly to his critics in a post-face to a revised *De la connaissance de Dieu*, now re-issued as *Sur les chemins de Dieu*.[89] In 1958 Pius XII asked that papal gratitude should be passed on to him (informally) for *Méditation sur l'Eglise*. Finally, in 1959 the Jesuit General invited him to return to teaching.

The years 1956 to 1964 were dominated by research for his great four volume study of mediaeval exegesis. *Exégèse mediévale. Les quatre sens de l'Ecriture* I, 1–2 (1959); II, 1 (1961); II. 2 (1964), which built on an earlier study of Origen's biblical interpretation, *Histoire et Esprit. L'intelligence de l'Ecriture d'après Origène* (1950), sought to reinstate spiritual exegesis as an 'ecclesial sense' of the Bible, not over against the historical sense intended by the authors of Scripture but encompassing it in a wider whole. That was possible because spiritual exegesis was habitually preoccupied by the overall structure of Scripture, whose own axis is the relation between promise and fulfillment. Such exegesis, as practised by mediaeval

[87] De Lubac records that the purge was restricted: see *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 75. It comprised *Surnaturel, De la connaissance de Dieu*, *Corpus mysticum*, and the *Recherches de science religieuse* for 1949 containing at pp. 80–121 the article, 'Le Mystère du surnaturel', which, in 1965, would be recreated in, and give its name to, the book of that title. (The article itself is reprinted in *Théologie dans l'Histoire* II [1990], pp. 71–107.)

[88] Actually written between 1946 and 1949, Hans Urs von Balthasar remarked of this humble and loving reflection on the mysteric reality of the Church that it presented the spirituality which underlay the theology of *Catholicisme*: thus his *The Theology of Henri de Lubac. An Overview* (English translation, San Francisco, 1991), p. 107.

[89] In a detailed studied of de Lubac's revisions, Martin Lenk reached the conclusion that the neo-patristic, paradoxical mode of expression in which de Lubac described the basic relation between the human being and God had been too difficult for those formed in a Neo-Scholastic theological mould to understand: thus his *Von der Gotteserkenntnis: Natürliche Theologie im Werk Henri de Lubacs* (Frankfurt, 1993). Lawrence Feingold speaks, rather, of 'unresolved tensions' touching, more especially, the question, Is the natural desire to see God something sheerly natural or also somehow divine? See his *The Natural Desire to See God according to St Thomas Aquinas and his Interpreters*, op. cit., p. 539.

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writers, furnished, in fact, a theology of history, such as de Lubac had taught his readers to expect in *Catholicisme*, as well as a theology of the Bible itself. The chief message, as he explained in *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits,* was the essential unity of the two Testaments.[90] For readers who lacked the attention span to do the work justice, he produced two years later a concise summary, *L'Ecriture dans la Tradition* (1966). In 1983 the formidable Oxford historian of mediaeval exegesis, Beryl Smalley, would admit in a preface to the third edition of her *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* that someone had overtaken her.[91]

The unfolding of his grandiose synthesis of mediaeval biblical lore was punctuated by three books in defence of his deceased confrère Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In *La Pensée religieuse du Père Teilhard de Chardin* (1962) de Lubac provides a benign interpretation of Teilhard's rather uncertain metaphysical rhetoric, undertaking to interpret him from the spiritual intuitions which surface most plainly in his letters. He denied that evolution plays a redemptive role in Teilhard's scheme, while admitting his attempt to re-articulate doctrine in a scientific (if also romantically poetic) manner is by no means entirely successful. In July 1962, on the publication of de Lubac's study, the Vatican daily *Osservatore romano* published a 'monitum' giving notice of some dangers in de Lubac's advocacy. John XXIII's Holy Office wished to go further, and pronounce a formal condemnation (on both Teilhard's writing and de Lubac's study), but the Pope was opposed. In 1964 de Lubac would bring out a less controversial sequel, *La Prière du Père Teilhard de Chardin*. Re-presenting Teilhard as among the Church's *spirituels* rather than her divines or philosophers did not mean, though, he had given up on him as a Christian cosmologist. The 1966 study *Teilhard, missionaire et apologiste*, based on two lectures given in Rome, presents him not only as a missionary in the line of Paul but an apologist for the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.[92] Looking back from the vantage-point of 1981, however, de Lubac would judge 'Teilhardism', the work of unsubtle interpreters, whether enthusiasts or detractors, 'unworthy of attention'.[93]

[90] See on this R. Voderholzer, *Die Einheit der Schrift und ihr geistige Sinn. Der Beitrag Henri de Lubacs zur Erforschung von Geschichte und Systematik christlicher Bibelhermeneutik* (Freiburg-Einsiedeln, 1998).

[91] B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1983, 3rd edition), Introduction.

[92] *Teilhard, missionaire et apologiste* (Toulouse, 1966). One could also mention *Teilhard posthume. Réflexions et souvenirs* (1977), *L'Eternel feminine, étude sur un texte de Teilhard de Chardin, et Teilhard et notre temps* (1968), and his edition of the Blondel-Teilhard letters: *Blondel et Teilhard de Chardin. Correspondence commentée* (1965), as well as of Teilhard's letters to a variety of other correspondents.

[93] *Mémoire sur l'occasion des mes Ecrits,* op. cit., p. 174.

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The Cardinal

By 1966 Rome was a place de Lubac knew well. After his years in the wilderness, John XXIII rehabilitated him comprehensively by appointing him, in 1960, consultor to the Preparatory Theological Commission of the Second Vatican Council which itself would meet from 1962 to 1965. The friendship he formed with Karol Wojtyła of Cracow, as they worked together in 'Schema 13', the later *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World*,[94] would have an unexpected outcome. Visiting France as Pope John Paul II, the new Pope declared (in 1980), 'I bow my head before Father de Lubac', making him a cardinal in the subsequent Consistory of 1983.[95]

The post-Conciliar years were not especially happy ones for de Lubac. Despite – or because of – his place on the prestigious *Pontifical International Theological Commission*, sections of the French Church, not excluding Jesuits, treated him as yesterday's man. His reservations about such typical phenomena of the post-Conciliar epoch as liturgical revision, or national Episcopal Conferences and their attendant bureaucracies, were well-known. More seriously, behind the multitudinous concerns of late modernity, Churchmen, he felt, were in danger of losing to view what should be at the centre of their field of vision, the mystery of Christ. The loss of a sense of divine transcendence in Western culture had replicated itself in the Church whose own mystery was undergoing occlusion likewise.[96] He had sharp words for Catholics who were indifferent to tradition, or treated it with either 'open contempt or spiteful resentment',[97] deploring especially the 'frightening lack of intelligence and culture' among the clergy, which 'leaves them defenceless before all the most contradictory speculations'.[98] The removal from influence, in the course of the 1950s, of the representatives of *la nouvelle théologie* had not strengthened orthodoxy but left clerics and laity exposed to the neo-Modernist virus.[99] The documents of the Second Vatican Council had suffered hermeneutic distortion to the point that the real Council had disappeared behind a 'para-Council' of the interpreters' own making.[100] In 1965 he resigned from the board of the journal *Concilium* on the ground that the publication did not live up to its

[94] One fruit of this was de Lubac's *Athéisme et sens de l'homme. Une double requête de 'Gaudium et Spes'* (1968).

[95] R. Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., p. 19.

[96] See on this C. J. Walsh, 'De Lubac's Critique of the Postconciliar Church', *Communio* 19 (1992), pp. 404–432.

[97] *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 149.

[98] Ibid., p. 153.

[99] Ibid., p. 364.

[100] 'Concile et Paraconcile', in *Petite Catéchèse sur nature et grâce* (1980), pp. 165–180.

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title. Invited to sign its 1968 'Declaration on the Liberty and Function of Theologians in the Church', he declined in no uncertain terms, commenting subsequently that the theologians in question 'enjoyed in reality every freedom of expression and were in fact looking to impose their own dictatorship'.[101] As with a number of other theologians of the Council who sought to make good its unintended devastation, he transferred his allegiance in 1975 to the rival review, *Communio*.

De Lubac did not receive the barracking that Daniélou – a figure with a far higher, and deliberately cultivated, media profile – suffered for a similar (Church-) political incorrectness. Nor did he rival Daniélou in the latter's copious stream of polemical corrective or therapeutical writing. But the appearance in 1989 of *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits* showed well enough – even better than the interview with Angelo Scola, now patriarch of Venice, published four years earlier as *Entretien autour de Vatican II* – that, like Daniélou, he could respond with acerbity. The previous paragraph, in laying out items from his list of *gravamina*, has drawn on it already. So here it may suffice to recall by way of summary how he made his own these words from a saddened but dignified address by the second pope of the Council, Paul VI: 'We did not expect this phenomenon of intolerant agitation and even subversion devised by the people of our own house'.[102] The long years that passed until de Lubac's death in 1991 at the age of 95 gave him the chance to observe the embryonic transformation worked by Pope John Paul II, as well as to finish numerous projects, putting his literary house in final order.

Under the latter rubric I include his replies to critics of *Surnaturel*. In *Le Mystère du surnaturel* (1965) he built on the 1941 article of that name, with a preface which argued for the (even) greater timeliness of his interventions. Dualism was back with a vengeance *in practice* as 'nature' was increasingly abandoned to the tender mercies of civil progressivism, secularism, historicism, absolute immanentism: a criticism repeated in his 'Gaudium et Spes' book, the 1967 *Athéisme et le sens de l'homme*.[103] The same year, 1965, saw his *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* which expanded upon the first part of the old *Surnaturel* with a further dossier of texts from theological history.[104] The eminent Gregorian theologian Charles Boyer made plain his original reservations stood.[105] Antinomic statements about the mind

[101] *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 367.

[102] Cited ibid., p. 163; the French translation of the Pope's address de Lubac used was published in *Documentation catholique* 1659, for 4–18 August 1974.

[103] *Athéisme et le sens de l'homme*, op. cit., pp. 102, 107.

[104] De Lubac's most committed English champion responded with alacrity: I. Trethowan, O. S. B., 'The Supernatural End: Père de Lubac's New Volumes', *Downside Review* 84 (1966), pp. 397–407.

[105] C. Boyer, S. J., 'Note sur *Le Mystère du surnaturel* du Père Henri de Lubac', *Gregorianum* 48 (1967), pp. 130–132.

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necessarily desiring the vision of God as a free gift might sound fine to de Lubac for whom paradox, familiar in the rhetorical tropes of the Fathers, was an expectant quest for synthesis.[106] They needed careful explanation and qualification to be acceptable to Scholastics, Neo- or even, at times, Palaeo- in orientation.[107] Into the same category of 'reply' may be put de Lubac's *Petite Catéchèse sur nature et grâce* of fifteen years later (1980). It was his last book-length attempt to say again and better what he had meant in *Surnaturel*, and is important for introducing into the discussion Trinitarian and Christological analogies for the kind of union enjoyed by the orders of nature and grace. To speak in this regard of 'circumincession' suggests the disputed question of their interrelation might best be served by reference to the orthodox theology of the Trinity,[108] where the Persons indwell each other. To allude in this connection to the Chalcedonian union as a model for understanding the relations involved was reminiscent of how Etienne Gilson, a strong sympathizer with *Surnatural*, had come to find in Chalcedonian Christology, with its doctrine of the unconfused union of divine and human, the key to the companion issue of the interrelation of the orders of reason and faith.[109]

The crisis in the Church drew from the author of the War-time *Méditation sur l'Eglise* not only directly ecclesiological studies, seeking to correct contemporary unilateralisms, as in *Paradoxe et mystère de l'Eglise* (1967), *L'Eglise dans la crise actuelle* (1969), and *Les églises particulières dans l'Eglise universelle* (1977),[110] but also in-depth enquiries into the faith once delivered to the saints, as in *La Foi chrétienne, essai sur la structure du Symbole des Apôtres* (1969) and *Dieu se dit dans l'histoire, la Révélation divine* (1974), a slimmed down version of his 1968 commentary on the preamble and opening chapter of the Conciliar Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum: La Révélation divine*, of which an expanded edition would be published in 1983. In all three formats, the book is typified, like

[106] *Catholicisme*, op. cit., p. 254.

[107] See for an exploration of the divergence in noetic manner N. Ciola, *Paradosso e mistero in Henri de Lubac* (Rome, 1980). Not all the disagreements, however, were a matter of misunderstanding based on intellectual style. There were and are divergences in historical judgments about texts. Both 'Palaeo-Thomists', i. e. those principally concerned with the exegesis of Thomas's texts, and 'Neo-Thomists', who were more concerned with how the texts were developed in the commentatorial tradition, have had reservations about de Lubac's historical judgment on the issue of natural desire for the vision of God. Apart from the work by Feingold cited earlier, see also A. Vanneste, *Nature et grâce dans la Théologie occidentale: dialogue avec Henri de Lubac* (Leuven, 1996).

[108] *Petite Catéchèse sur nature et grâce*, op. cit., p. 33.

[109] Ibid., pp. 61–62; for Gilson, see A. Nichols, O. P., *From Hermes to Benedict XVI*, op. cit., pp. 147, 237–239.

[110] With *Méditation sur l'Eglise*, analysed in H. Schnackers, *Kirche als Sakrament und Mutter. Zur Ekklesiologie von Henri de Lubac* (Frankfurt, 1979).

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Dei Verbum itself, by Christological concentration.[111] A similarly fundamental text gave its name to the volume *Mistica e mistero cristiano*, appearing in Italian before it saw the light of day in French.[112] The publishing arm of the Italian 'new movement' *Communione e liberazione* thought de Lubac worthy of a collected edition of his writings (planned from 1978) well before the French did (by 1997, the centenary of his birth, only three volumes had appeared out of a projected forty-nine in a collaborative enterprise of the *Association International Cardinal Henri de Lubac* and the Dominican publishing house *Editions du Cerf*: the series remains to date uncompleted).

De Lubac continued to write on figures he found compelling, not least if their influence on ecclesial or theological life was weighty. In *Recherches dans la foi. Trois études sur Origène, saint Augustin, et la philosophie chrétienne* (1979), this included a possibly predictable return to Origen and Augustine, but it also involved branching out to visit a relatively little studied Renaissance figure, the Dominican tertiary Pico della Mirandola, whom he praised for letting the Incarnation throw light on the philosophical quest (an ally, evidently, against 'separated' philosophy and theology): thus *Pic de la Mirandole. Etudes et discussions* (1974). It entailed, too, tracing the long-lasting if subterranean influence of that great heretic of the theology of history, the twelfth century Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore, whom *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore* (1979–1981) identified as the source of the Western cult of social utopias, which was certainly flourishing in the Paris of 1968 and its aftermath. Where Catholic Christians treat such utopias as substitutes for the Kingdom of God, Joachimism was, for de Lubac, a remote cause of the contemporary 'self-destruction of the Church'.[113]

Like many writers, de Lubac was happy to see isolated essays brought together in collected form,[114] and to trace the genealogy of

[111] The emphasis in the Constitution on the mystery of Christ as revelation's essential nexus (the 'mediator and sum-total of revelation', *Dei Verbum* 2) may well be owed to de Lubac's influence. There is an especial consonance with his essay on the development of dogma, indebted to Rousselot's peculiar brand of Christocentrism, 'Le problème du développement du Dogme', *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948), pp. 130–160, reprinted, with an addendum from 1955, in *Théologie dans l'histoire* II (Paris, 1990), pp. 39–70: cf A. Nichols, O. P., *From Newman to Congar. The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 195–213. A compendious study which gives the context is J. P. Wagner, *La théologie fondamentale selon Henri de Lubac* (Paris, 1997), but see more particularly E. de Moulins-Beaufort, 'Henri de Lubac: Reader of *Dei Verbum*', *Communio* XXVIII. 4 (2001), pp. 669–694.

[112] *Mistica e mistero cristiano* (Milan, 1978). The text mentioned was later published as 'Mystique et Mystère' in *Théologies d'occasion* (1984), pp. 36–76.

[113] *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits,* op. cit., p. 161.

[114] Thus his *Théologies d'occasion*, op. cit., and *Théologie dans l'histoire* (1990), 2 vols.

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his own literary production.[115] What was more unusual, and a testimony to his rare generosity of spirit, was the dedication he brought to the editing of the correspondence of others. I have mentioned already the three volume edition of exchanges between Valensin and Blondel. But de Lubac also brought out a two volume correspondence of Blondel with a comparatively minor figure on the edge of the Modernist circle, the abbé Joannès Wehrlé;[116] the letters that went between Fessard and Marcel;[117] two volumes of Teilhard's letters,[118] and Etienne Gilson's periodic communications with de Lubac himself.[119]

A Proposal

De Lubac observed that in so diverse a collection of writings as his own looking for a highly personal philosophical or theological synthesis would be a fruitless endeavour.[120] Unity, however, is an obvious preoccupation throughout[121] – unity of God with man in *Le Drame*, of human beings with each other in and through God in *Catholicisme*, the unity of nature and grace in *Surnaturel* and its later refinements, the unity of Scripture in *Exégèse mediévale*, the Eucharistic unity of the Church in *Corpus mysticum*, her mysteric and social unity in his other ecclesiological writings, the unity of philosophy and theology in *Pic de la Mirandole*,[122] the unity of salvation history in his critique of Joachimism.[123] He uses the Introduction to *Catholicisme* to stake out a claim for the 'deep unity' in which all the 'immense army of witnesses' of Tradition down the ages meet together, 'faithful to the one Church, living by the same

[115] *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits*, op. cit.

[116] *Maurice Blondel – Joannès Wehrlé, Correspondance* (1969).

[117] *Gabriel Marcel – Gaston Fessard, Correspondance* (1985).

[118] *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Lettres d'Egypte* (1963); *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Lettres de Hastings et de Paris* (1965).

[119] *Lettres de M. Etienne Gilson addresses au Père Henri de Lubac et commentées par celui-ci* (1986).

[120] *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits*, op. cit., pp. 146–147.

[121] I owe the essential nucleus of this suggestion to my former student, Mr Robert Staines. It coheres with the view of a specialist: see R. Voderholzer, *Meet Henri de Lubac*, op. cit., p. 111.

[122] De Lubac evokes with evident admiration Pico's attempt to sing a 'song of peace' by harmonizing the elements of truth in various philosophies and religions by treating Christ as both the criterion for intellectual discernment and their real synthesis: thus *Pic de la Mirandole*, op. cit., pp. 297–298.

[123] Joachim's description of the age of the Holy Spirit 'signifies that the time of the Word will have passed', *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore* I (Namur-Paris, 1979), p. 60. Joachim did not realise it, but 'the Spirit was going to be set up against the Church of Christ and, with fatal consequences, against Christ himself. Thus the Spirit, whose reign [Joachim] celebrated in advance, would no longer be the Holy Spirit', ibid., p. 18.

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faith in the same Holy Spirit'.[124] In the perspective thus outlined, his total *oeuvre* may be said to represent Hans Urs von Balthasar's 'missing' transcendental, for Balthasar's trilogy should really have been a tetralogy, with the same analogical imagination set to work on *unum*, the one, as was shown with *pulchrum*, the beautiful, in the theological aesthetics, *bonum*, the good, in the theological dramatics, and *verum*, the true, in the theological logic.

At one level, this concern for *unum* may have been temperamental, fed, perhaps, by the inescapable feeling, for an exiled Jesuit, of the painful duality in the soul of France. But more profoundly, de Lubac had as the cynosure of his overall literary venture, indeed of his life, an unachieved project. It was a book on the mystical to which all else would be related, a work he not only did not write but could not. As he lamented in 1956, the 'centre always eludes me'.[125] That centre was, I propose, the mystical envisaging of the point of convergence of the various unities de Lubac had explored or fostered in his work. It was not surprising it escaped him. How could it be anything other than the ineffable *visio Dei*, source, still concealed in the temple of the Lamb, of all the economic manifestations of God?

For the faith of the Church, it is not the case that in that vision all distinctions are elided in a sea of omnitude. Nor, despite his love of unities, did de Lubac think so. A comparison with a French Catholic thinker of like stature, but closer connected with the Dominican Order than with the Society, may be useful. On the title page of Jacques Maritain's most celebrated book, *Les Dégrés du savoir*, appear the words *Distinguer pour unir*, which we should not be wrong in taking for his ruling maxim. De Lubac's unwritten master-work, I suggest, would have as its spectral title a phrase equally revealing: *Unir, sans méconnaître les distinctions* (he himself preferred the more gnomic – paradoxical? – formula *unir pour distinguer*[126]). As he wrote in a letter to Blondel, citing the latter's 'Philosophical Journey':

> It is in fact when one does not know how to unite things well that one particularly fears confusing them.[127]

[124] *Catholicisme*, op. cit., p. XIII.

[125] *Mémoire sur l'occasion des mes Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 113.

[126] M. Figura, *Der Anruf der Gnade. Über die Beziehung der Menschen zu Gott nach Henri de Lubac* (Einsiedeln, 1979), pp. 212–214.

[127] 'F. Léfevre' (= M. Blondel), *Itinéraire philosophique* (Paris, 1928; republished under Blondel's own name in 1966), cited in *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 189. Compare also his explanation of his modus operandi in *La Foi chrétienne*, his most comprehensive dogmatic work: 'I had sought, with each subject broached, to respect in uniting them [any] two aspects of the real, too often opposed as these aspects are, persuaded as I have always been that such an effort of synthesis is proper to the Catholic spirit', ibid., p. 133.

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There may be disagreement about how successfully de Lubac united things, in pursuit of his lode-star, the *ordo rerum ad Deum* considered as a differentiated unity in the mystery of Christ.[128] For Catholic students, there can hardly be disagreement as to the value of his metaphysical and doctrinal intention.

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[128] De Lubac has no work with a specifically Christological focus and he later thought *Surnaturel* had suffered from its abstractness in that regard. Still, thanks to multiple influences – de Grandmaison, Rousselot, the Greek Fathers, Thomas – Christology can plausibly be presented as the 'mid-point' of his theological vision. See D. Hercsik, *Jesus Christus als Mitte der Theologie von Henri de Lubac* (Frankfurt, 2001), who emphasises the theme of *novitas Christi* de Lubac found at *Adversus haereses* IV. 34, 1: 'this word of Irenaeus of Lyons forms a *Leitmotiv* running through Henri de Lubac's work', ibid., pp. 72–73.

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