

Reviews

HENRI DE LUBAC AND THE SHAPING OF MODERN THEOLOGY: A READER
edited by David Grumett, *Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2020, pp. 404, £19.34, pbk*

Few Catholic theologians in recent times had such a dramatic career as the French Jesuit Henri de Lubac (1896-1991). Religious orders in France were banned from teaching by the virulently anti-Catholic state (with an ex-seminarian as prime minister). So, his Jesuit formation took place largely in exile, in Canterbury, St Helier, and Ore Place, Hastings. Interrupted by service in the First World War (seminarians were not exempt), rising to the rank of sub-lieutenant, and suffering for many years from the effects of head injuries (his colleague Pierre Rousselot was killed in battle). When he returned to study, he resisted the Neo-Scholasticism that was the order of the day by opting for the philosophy of the lay Catholic Maurice Blondel as expounded in his book *L'Action* (1893), regarded as no better than Modernism by Neo-Thomists. The ideas he developed in the 1930s, in the congenial company of friends (including Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Hans Urs von Balthasar), were put on hold as he took part in resistance to the official registration of Jews under the Vichy regime and the prevalent anti-semitism (his colleague Yves de Montcheuil was shot by the Gestapo, he himself had to go into hiding). In 1946 his book *Sur-naturel* appeared, read in professional circles as an attack on the theory of 'pure nature' as taught by eminent Thomists like Cardinal Thomas de Vio, better known as Cajetan, who thus misinterpreted Thomas, so de Lubac maintained. The polemics lasted for more than a decade: supposedly the leader of the exponents of *la nouvelle théologie* (as the most eminent Dominican theologian in Rome dismissively labelled them), he was regarded as 'unsound' (even by many fellow Jesuits). However, in 1960, casually skimming a Catholic newspaper, he found that he had been appointed a *peritus* at the forthcoming Council. He worked on drafts of the Vatican II texts, becoming a friend of the future Pope John Paul II; but his contribution is most evident in the ideas about revelation and ecclesiology shaping the principal documents of the Council. Finally, in the aftermath, de Lubac was bitterly disillusioned by theological trends popularised by young Jesuit colleagues and by such major contemporaries as the Flemish Dominican, Edward Schillebeeckx. In 1983 he was appointed Cardinal by John Paul II: an honour testifying at last to official acceptance of his role in shaping modern Catholicism.

In this splendid anthology David Grumett, who teaches in the School of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh, selects from the wide and diverse range of de Lubac's writings. As he showed in his excellent introductory book *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2007) there was always much more to de Lubac's theology than the quarrel over whether Aquinas taught that our natural desire for God is 'elicited', as opposed to 'innate', arising from knowledge of Christian revelation and thus already 'supernatural'.

Dominicans (and many of his fellow Jesuits) were outraged by de Lubac's claim that Cajetan's (and for them Suarez's) interpretation of Thomas was misbegotten. At Blackfriars, Oxford, Victor White, in a critical notice in *Dominican Studies* (1949), held that de Lubac's conclusions are 'not historical but purely theological' — 'This may be excellent Platonism', he places Thomas in the line of 'his beloved Cappadocians', but it is not what Thomas taught — yet, Fr Victor's assessment of de Lubac's 'disturbing intrusion' is overwhelmingly positive. 'Unsound' as he finds the account of Aquinas and his 16th-century commentators, he endorses the critique of a prevalent Neo-Scholastic dualism of grace and nature that risks making Christian revelation seem an extrinsic and alien, arbitrary and indeed unnatural intervention. (He even compares de Lubac with Karl Barth.)

In the years 1960/64, at Oxford and then Le Saulchoir, Cajetan was seldom mentioned in any lecture course. Fr Peter Worrall, who died in 1968 at the age of only 50, delighted in reading from the glorious Leonine edition of the *Secunda Pars*, but paid no attention to the accompanying commentary by Cajetan; his doctoral research in Rome at the Angelicum focussed on Thomas's knowledge of the early councils (*RTAM* 1956–7), supervised by Gottfried Geenen, a great patristic scholar.

As Dr Grumett notes (p. 359), along with much else in the excellent 24-page concluding interpretative postscript, there is currently a 'strand of Dominican-inspired scholarship', represented by Lawrence Feingold, robustly criticising de Lubac's claims about Cajetan, in effect renewing the quarrel over what Thomas understood by grace's perfecting human nature. The theory of 'pure nature', bolstered mainly by postulating the *limbo puerorum* as a happy destiny for the unbaptized, has been somewhat undermined by what appears to have been Pope Benedict XVI's dispensing with limbo. Actually the most creative study of de Lubac's *Surnaturel* by any Dominican remains the one by the somewhat forgotten French theologian Marie-Joseph Le Guillou (*RSPT* 1950).

Dr Grumett's introduction to his choice of texts runs to 60 pages, immensely readable and informative. Of course we have a chapter 'Grace and Nature' (pp. 195 ff), setting out in accessible and non-polemical fashion, de Lubac's claim that the dualism which he exposed was not just an academic theory but was deeply entrenched in ordinary everyday Catholic sensibility - in its way an instance of the alienation of church and state from one another that was the legacy of the Revolution (the chapter concludes by quoting Victor White's critical review, see p. 224 footnote 84).

Otherwise, the choice of readings quite deliberately works to make us engage with topics from the extensive corpus of de Lubac's *oeuvre* (50 volumes in progress). First, with 'The Discovery of God' (pp. 67ff), we have what he somewhat disingenuously claimed not to be an alternative to the Neo-Scholastic apologetics in use when he was at school and still when he was writing: it looks as if it had been taken on board by the authors of the *Universal Catechism* (1992). This chapter is followed by 'The Christian Faith' (pp. 95 ff), material structured on the Creed, originating in discussions with youth chaplains around 1960: an attempt to counter the secularism that he assumes attracts young people as they drift away from Catholic practice. Next comes 'The Church' (pp. 120 ff), always one of the central themes in de Lubac's work: *Corpus Mysticum* (1944), *Catholicism* (1947), and *The Splendor of the Church* (1953: the silly title of the translation, he thought), resonate in *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* — not that he copied anything of his own in drafts which he worked on, it is rather that almost everyone involved had appreciated these books and indeed took them as foundational. Chapter 5 deals with 'The Eucharist and Scripture' (pp. 237 ff): as the Church makes the Eucharist, the Eucharist makes the Church; de Lubac's scholarly research into late patristic and early medieval commentaries on the Mass perhaps directed him to undertake his massive study of pre-modern biblical exegesis (not that many theologians have followed him in this regard). Then, in Chapter 6 - 'Buddhism' (pp. 316 ff) - we have de Lubac's surprising interest in the 13th century True Pure Land sect in Japan. anthology that does justice to one of the 20th century's greatest Catholic theologians.

FERGUS KERR OP
Blackfriars, Edinburgh

HERBERT McCABE: RECOLLECTING A FRAGMENTED LEGACY by Franco Manni, Foreword by David B. Burrell, CSC, *Cascade Books*, Eugene, OR 2020, pp. ix + 282, £ 30.00, pbk

Almost anyone who deals with philosophy and theology, especially in the line inaugurated by Saint Thomas Aquinas, will be sincerely grateful to Franco Manni for writing this book. Although it is unusual to begin a review with an appreciation, I felt that it was only right in the case of a monograph dedicated to Fr. Herbert McCabe OP (1926-2001). Beyond the praiseworthy work of his literary executor, Fr. Brian Davies OP, there are still very few publications dedicated to Fr. McCabe's thought, giving the unfounded impression of its irrelevance. Manni's monograph interrupts the litany concerning the 'underrated Dominican theologian' and shows, through a meticulous work of recollection, the reasons for giving Fr. McCabe his due.