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Wood, Jacob W., *To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Desire for God*, Washington, The Catholic University of America Press 2019 (ISBN 978-0-8132-3183-9), xviii + 476 pp., hb \$65

Thomas V. Gourlay

*The University of Notre Dame Australia*, tom.gourlay@nd.edu.au

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The 1946 publication *Surnaturel* by the French Jesuit Henri de Lubac ignited a firestorm of controversy within Catholic theology, one that has dominated the landscape of twentieth-century theology, and which looks to continue well into the new millennium. The debate centred upon what de Lubac referred to as a natural desire for the supernatural, which his book sought to locate in the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas, and which, according to de Lubac, was occluded in the centuries following under the influence of a number of commentators, not least of which was Tommaso de Vio “Cajetan” (1469-1534).

De Lubac’s thesis, the controversial history of which need not be repeated here, saw him spend nearly 10 years “on the bench”, forbidden from teaching and publishing, presumably being the target of the condemnation with Pius XII’s encyclical *Humani generis*, (a condemnation which de Lubac consistently claimed was not applicable to his doctrine, and which of de Lubac wrote, that it ‘reproduces exactly what I said about it two years earlier in an article.’<sup>1</sup>) Later reinstated and brought to participate as a theological expert, or peritus, at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), de Lubac’s doctrine became enshrined in the teaching of the Church in many ways. De Lubac’s standing within the Church in the years subsequent to the Council was such that, in 1983 Pope John Paul II created him a Cardinal in recognition of his service to the Church, a service carried out by means of his theological scholarship.

While De Lubac’s restoration did not end the debate around his thesis, it did take the heat out of the argument for many years. With the publication of a number of theses since the early 2000s the heat has been returning and unresolved questions pertaining to De Lubac’s thesis

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<sup>1</sup> Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac reflects on the circumstances that occasioned his writings* (San Francisco: Communio Books, 1993), 71.

regarding a natural desire for the supernatural has again become a growing point of controversy. It is into this, now very live discussion that Jacob Wood speaks into in his latest from CUA Press. Working from an acute understanding of precisely what is at stake, Wood points out in the introduction to his new book on this topic:

Each side of the debate accuses the other of being responsible for modern man's, and modern society's, estrangement from God. Neo-Thomists accuse de Lubac of compromising the integrity of nature by denying that nature has a natural end, of compromising the gratuity of grace by denying that nature is passive toward grace, and of compromising the integrity of human nature and of human community by allowing human individuals and communities to see their perfection as a debt which God is obliged to pay them. Radical Orthodoxy accuses Neo-Thomism of compromising the integrity of nature by denying that nature has a supernatural end, of compromising the gratuity of grace by denying that divine influence infuses into nature a natural desire for a supernatural end, and of compromising the integrity of human nature and human community by allowing human individuals and communities to see their own achievement of perfection as competitive with God's gift thereof. This is a disadvantageous situation for the Church. If the Church is to continue to preach Christ crucified to the world today, then in her attempt to describe the situation of man before the crucified God, she cannot risk making the grace which flows from the cross superfluous. (27)

This is precisely what Wood seeks to untangle in his meticulous work, *To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Desire for God*. The work is tour de force of historical theology, traversing the intricate details of Thomas' developing thought in connection with his three major theological syntheses, the *Commentary on the Sentences*, the *Summa contra Gentiles*, and the *Summa Theologiae*. In each case, Wood establishes 'the historical setting of Thomas's teaching on natural desire, the broader set of concerns within which he was thinking about it, the principal interlocutors with whom he was thinking about it, and the way in which he developed his thinking about it since the last time he had considered it, insofar as our current knowledge of thirteenth-century figures will allow.' And then, '[h]aving told the story of how Aquinas's thought on nature, grace, and the desire for God developed, it will then offer a rereading of de Lubac's thought and that of certain pivotal figures from the Thomistic tradition in light of that story.' (30-1)

Wood's central thesis is that de Lubac's doctrine is situated firmly within the Aegidian tradition of Thomism that emerges from Giles of Rome and the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine. According to Wood, de Lubac, following Giles and later authors from within this tradition, 'correctly imputes to Thomas the idea of a natural desire for the vision of God, he mistakenly imputes to Thomas the view that nature is somehow active with respect to grace', (35). Regardless then, of what one might then think of de Lubac's thesis, according to Wood, it is one that is aligned to a tradition of Thomism that is certainly legitimate and which can be engaged as such.

That being said, one area that the book would likely benefit from would be a more thoroughgoing treatment of the influence of both Maurice Blondel and Pierre Rousselot on de Lubac's thinking in this regard. While Blondel does warrant a mention in the work, it is only tangentially and only as yet another representative of Aegidian Thomism, (which is an odd claim considering that Blondel did not read Thomas until much later in his career). Rousselot however, is nowhere to be seen in the book, a lacuna that most certainly needs to be addressed. The difficulty here would be that such a treatment might undermine elements of the argument which situates de Lubac amongst the Aegidians, instead demonstrating de Lubac's use of the Aegidians to shore up his flank from the attack of those who prefer their Thomism in two tiers. Regardless, Wood's mastery of the Thomistic source material, as well his thoroughgoing familiarity of the commentarial tradition, including the Augustinian Thomist Aegidian tradition, which de Lubac so heavily cites in his *Surnaturel*, makes his thesis a compelling one, and one which perhaps pours some cooling water on a theological firestorm that looks as though it could erupt again in this century. This book will likely be at the centre of scholarly debate around the natural desire for the supernatural for some time to come.

de Lubac, Henri. *At the Service of the Church: Henri De Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances That Occasioned His Writings*. San Francisco: Communio Books, 1993.