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Andrew Dean Swafford, *Nature and Grace: A New Approach to Thomistic Ressourcement.*

Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2015. Pp. xiv + 205. Pb. £20. ISBN 978-0-2271-7502-6.

How we conceive the relationship between nature and grace has wide implications for how we see basic aspects of theology and faith. How far can reason carry us, and when does revelation take over? Should secularism be accommodated or combatted? Do other religions allow access to some measure of divine truth, or may this be found only through explicitly acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord? The first possibility in each of these three topics suggests a significant role for nature, while the following alternative indicates greater reliance on grace.

In recent decades the name of Henri de Lubac has been synonymous with a view of grace going all the way down. Whereas scholastic theologians tended to define and defend a zone of 'purely natural' human activity that they saw as governed by acquired reason and virtues, the French Jesuit and his confreres were inclined to view every domain of activity as dependent upon, and completed by, the infused grace of God.

In this lucid but demanding exposition, Andrew Dean Swafford assesses the recent Dominican-inspired pushback by Laurence Feingold and Steven A. Long against de Lubac's critique of the idea of pure nature. For de Lubac, by enabling a self-sufficient zone of human activity to be demarcated, the idea paved the way for Enlightenment exaltations of human autonomy. However, in the view of its new generation of defenders, the idea of pure nature makes possible the proper recognition of the freedom possessed by humans, as created beings, to perform good works without these somehow entailing or demanding grace.

The study originates in a doctoral thesis supervised by Fr Edward Oakes, whose influence is sometimes obvious. This accounts for many very long footnoted excerpts, which sometimes almost fill the page. Swafford's distinctive contribution to the debate is the case, advanced in chapter 6, that the 'Ressourcement Thomism' of the German theologian Matthias Scheeben (1835–88) mediates the opposing positions of de Lubac and his detractors. For Scheeben, the incarnation provides the foundation of supernatural grace, prolonging the procession of the Eternal Son and the spiration of the Holy Spirit. This, he suggests, entails the hypostatic indwelling of the Spirit in believers and the communication of properties from Christ to believers (pp. 185, 188), culminating in a nuptial union that is consummated in the Eucharist.

However, this Christology seems to pose more questions than it resolves. Swafford also quotes the language of coming together, and of uniting 'in some fashion' (pp. 191–2), to describe the relation that the incarnation establishes between Christ and humankind. Such vagueness suggests that he might not be entirely happy, and for good reasons, with Scheeben's notion that Christ's divine nature unites with the entire human race in exactly the same way as with the human Jesus. In any case, the lack of resolution that is here apparent shows that the theoretical questions about the divine–human relation continue to exist, and are equally challenging, in christology as in the grace–nature debate. It is insufficient simply to transpose them from one into the other and then to appeal to the notion of mystery.

The argument that scholasticism and *nouvelle théologie* are not as far apart as is typically supposed is persuasive. In the French context in particular, neo-Thomism may be better viewed as a mediating position between Jansenism, with its extremely pessimistic anthropology, and the more positive and humanistic *nouvelle théologie*. This is because neo-Thomism pictures humankind as oriented to the divine in its spiritual aspect, although not in the same way in its natural aspect. But this historical trajectory also suggests that the whole pure nature debate should be situated in the context of de Lubac's Augustinianism, which was at least as important to his development as a

theologian as Thomism. Augustine saw humans as radically dependent on divine grace, and his theology was less susceptible to the scholastic distinctions that were the inevitable outcome of Aquinas's various accommodations to the secular philosophy of Aristotle. The grace–nature debate cannot be appraised solely through the lens of Thomism.

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