

Good Extrinsicism: Matthias Scheeben and the Ideal Paradigm of Nature-Grace Orthodoxy

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Gigantes erant temporibus illis.

THERE are two competing narratives that most strongly have marked modern theology in its quest to interpret the history of theologies of grace and nature. Both of these narratives posit a dichotomy of extremes, so to speak, through which orthodoxy must pass. On the one hand there is the influential narrative of Karl Barth, who posits a vision of grace-nature orthodoxy that is Reformed, and that claims to pass between the extremes of liberal Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. On the other hand there is the narrative of Henri de Lubac, who posits a vision of grace-nature orthodoxy that purports to be Augustinian, and that passes between the extremes of the naturalist extrinsicism of Cajetan and Suarez on the one side and the integralist views of Baius and Jansenius on the other. These two visions attempt conceptually to do different things and in fact are in some fundamental ways deeply opposed to each other. Thinkers of the generation that followed Barth and de Lubac were deeply influenced by one or both of them; those subsequent thinkers sought in various ways to maintain a *via media* between truths found in their respective theories. We see this notably in the writings of Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Gottlieb Söhngen, and Joseph Ratzinger. Nevertheless, what I would like to do in this essay is to introduce briefly the respective views of Barth and de Lubac in order to compare them in turn with the grace-nature paradigm of the young Matthias Joseph Scheeben, in his early work, entitled *Natur und*

Gnade.¹ (This work was published in 1861 when Scheeben was twenty-six.) What, according to Scheeben, are the extremes to be avoided in the domain of the doctrine of grace-nature relations, and how should we understand the history of orthodoxy? What I will argue is twofold: First, Scheeben has a more profound and comprehensive vision of the composition of orthodoxy in this domain than either Barth or de Lubac. Second, his scholasticism is not a deficit, hindering his capacity to articulate an insightful narrative history of orthodoxy, but is rather the presupposition of its success.

I

When speaking about the relations of grace and nature, is not possible to map the concerns of Karl Barth and Henri de Lubac onto one another in an isomorphic way. Each of them was profoundly affected by the two world wars of twentieth-century Europe, and each was confronted by the challenge of the secularization of his own native culture, a concern expressed particularly though not exclusively through the composition of academic theology. Yet one was a Catholic and a Jesuit writing in France in the wake of the Modernist controversy as well as the rise and fall of *Action Française*, while the other was German-speaking Swiss, teaching initially in Germany and influenced by the internal conflicts of nineteenth-century Protestantism as well as the rise of National Socialism. Both were concerned with the challenge of post-Enlightenment “modernist” interpretations of Christianity, the response to modern “philosophical anthropologies,” the politics of fascism and socialism, and the relation of Church to culture filtered through the discussions of nature and grace. Here I wish to focus in a necessarily selective and determined way on the narratives of grace-nature orthodoxy that each one articulated and in particular upon the way each understood the truth to lie in between two extreme errors to be avoided, or between a respective Scylla and Charybdis. Such a comparison helps bring to the forefront some illustrative differences between the two figures.

First, take Karl Barth. We can readily hone in on the interpretive paradigm of nature and grace that he formulated in the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, published in 1932.² This is the early mature period of

¹ The critical edition of the work is found in volume I of the *Gesammelte Schriften: Natur und Gnade* (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1949), edited by Martin Grabmann. All citations from the work in English are taken from *Nature and Grace*, translated by Cyril Vollert, S.J. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).

² Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik I: Die Lehre von Wort Gottes 1* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1932). I will refer to the English translation by G. W. Bromiley: *Church Dogmatics I:1* (London: T & T Clark, 2003).

Barth's thinking, at the time of his debates with the Jesuit philosopher Erich Przywara regarding the analogy of being, as well as his rejection of the Lutheran theologian Emil Brunner's natural theology, and his strong criticisms of Georg Wobbermin and others who were the inheritors of nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism.³ In this first volume of the *Dogmatics*, Barth is clearly seeking to articulate what he takes to be a distinctly Reformed understanding of the relationship of grace to nature and of faith to reason over and against two competitors whom he identifies as extremes along a spectrum, but who both share a common error as well, one which Barth wishes to detect and diagnose critically. On the one hand, Barth identifies in Roman Catholicism an institutionalized, dogmatic understanding of Christian revelation that is maintained in a unified fashion by recourse to the instrumentality of the Church's magisterium (a society of human persons), and that therefore posits the capacity for ongoing human mediations between man and God.⁴ These mediations are themselves possible, according to Barth, only if one maintains an excessively optimistic and in fact dangerous sense of over-reliance upon the natural powers of human nature to cooperate with grace in a habitual fashion, by human initiatives.⁵ That is why Barth interestingly connects the theology of the Virgin Mary's sanctification, the guidance of the Vatican's authoritative magisterium, and the use of natural theology within dogmatic theology as three instances of a unified Catholic error with respect to the relations of nature and grace, an error he describes somewhat imprecisely under the rubric of the *analogia entis*, the analogy of being.⁶ Nature is so analogous to God and to God's grace that it possesses within itself a sufficient set of conditions with which to cooperate with grace, whether in the domains of merit in the saints, in episcopal and papal authority, or in the practice of philosophical theology. Or so Barth understands things.

³ On this context, see the essay of Bruce L. McCormack, "Karl Barth's Version of an 'Analogy of Being': A Dialectical No and Yes to Roman Catholicism," in *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Anti-Christ or the Wisdom of God?* ed. Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 88–144, as well as McCormack's study *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I:1, 67–68, 75, 257–61.

⁵ See especially, *CD* I:1., 68.

⁶ *CD* I:1., xiii, 40–42 (where Barth cites Scheeben in this context), 69 (where Scheeben is again cited), 119–20, 239–40. In *Church Dogmatics* I:2 (originally published in 1938) trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 144–46, Barth explicitly analyzes Catholic Mariology in terms of the Catholic doctrine of cooperative sanctifying grace and the *analogia entis*. He repeatedly cites both Scheeben and Aquinas in this context.

On the other hand, there is the extreme error of a modernist Protestant reinterpretation of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, reduced to or reinterpreted as a truth about human religious anthropology. Christ is a symbolic cipher for a religious dynamism within man by which he seemingly inevitably aspires to union with God. From Schleiermacher to Ritschl to Herrmann and Harnack, liberal Protestantism has in various ways diminished the distinction between grace and nature, opening man's nature from within by way of a native religious sense, toward a transcendent goal of union with God.⁷ Christ is the religious man who represents the fulfillment of this natural human aspiration, himself a sign of God's presence in human history drawing all persons into union with the divine, or of this dynamic process coming to its intrinsic fulfillment. For this tradition, of course, the aforementioned institutionalization of Roman Catholicism represents an arbitrary human attempt to control the divine in exceedingly ascriptural, dogmatic, and unreasonably overly institutional terms. For the Catholicism of Barth's time, the modernist reinterpretation of liberal Protestantism represented a naively naturalizing form of religion that eclipsed and ignored the revelatory and supernatural content of Christianity as such. For Barth, however, both traditions have in common that they overestimate the capacities of the human in relation to the divine and the capacities of nature with respect to grace.⁸ Over and against both the liberal Protestants and the Roman Catholics, Barth wishes to reaffirm the gratuity and transcendence of the grace of Christ (a Reformed *sola gratia*) in the face of what he takes to be a Pelagian exaggeration of the innate capacities of human nature.⁹ Correspondingly, then, he articulates his version of a distinctly Reformed epistemology; in his version, we are given knowledge of God ever only through grace alone, in rejection of any purported "natural theology," and this against Emil Brunner, his compatriot in the re-appropriation of classical Protestant scholasticism.¹⁰ He claims also against Brunner that there

⁷ See *CD* I: 1, 20, 36–38, 62, 252–54.

⁸ *CD* I:1, 67–68, 75, 257–61. Barth makes explicit in these texts his comparisons of the Roman Catholic magisterium and "Protestant Modernism" as two extremes in the same genera: "... one can scarcely fail to see the inner connexion between the Roman Catholic view and the Modernist view. The assertion of fellowship between God and man in the form of an operation beyond the juxtaposition of the divine and human persons, beyond the act of divine and human decision, is at least common to both even if one has to remember that this synthetic operation is regarded as man's work on the side of Modernism and as God's on that of Roman Catholicism" (68).

⁹ For the ascription of the title see *CD* I:1, 200.

¹⁰ *CD* I:1, 27–36.

is no natural “point of contact” in the human person in which grace might find a native home, but that grace alone must always actually create (by a grace wholly extrinsic to human nature) the capacities for our personal response to God.¹¹ Likewise, Barth also condemns repeatedly all appeals to human religion as a dimension of Christianity, against the naïve humanism he perceives alike in both liberal Protestantist “philosophies of religion” and in Roman Catholic sacramental liturgy.¹²

Henri de Lubac composed his famous paradigmatic analysis of the history of grace-nature theologies in the ten years that followed the publication of Barth’s first volume of the *Dogmatics*. His writings of this period were worked together into the composite and well-known book of 1946, *Surnaturel*.¹³ It must be said that de Lubac’s vision of the history of doctrine certainly does not map smoothly onto that of Barth’s. There is not a very deep concern to see, in German liberal theologies of the recent precedent age, the origins of a new Pelagianism. Nor does de Lubac engage in any discussion or diagnosis of Catholic or Protestant versions of liberal “modernism” as they were manifest in the controversies of early twentieth-century France.¹⁴ Rather, the work of de Lubac begins from the consideration of the theology of Michael Baius (1513–89), the Belgian theologian of Reformation-era Louvain, whose work was originally condemned by Pope Pius V.¹⁵ Baius’s teaching gave impetus to the eventual rise (a generation later) of the Catholic heresy of Jansenism. De Lubac demarcates Baius’s theology as one historical extreme and portrays it as embodying an error that a healthy grace-nature orthodoxy must seek to avoid. Writings of Baius were condemned by Pius V in 1567 for, among other reasons, the notion that the distinction between grace and nature in human beings obtains only as a result of the original human fall from grace. Prior to the event of original sin, or original rupture from God, there was a kind of integration, or identity of grace-nature unity, such that human beings not only were naturally ordered toward the life of God but

¹¹ CD I:1, 426, 462.

¹² CD I:1, 36, 203–4. This is a theme in Barth’s early work. See especially CD I:2, 297–325.

¹³ Henri de Lubac, S.J., *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946).

¹⁴ The Protestant “modernism” that Barth wrote against was not seamlessly cordoned off from the Catholic group of thinkers whose works evoked that same title. On the contrary, the context for the 1907 Encyclical of Pius X *Pascendi dominici gregis* suggests that the letter intends to warn Catholic scholars regarding ideas stemming from both German and French Protestant theologians. See Pierre Collin *L’Audace et Soupçon—La Crise du Modernisme dans le Catholicisme Français* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1997).

¹⁵ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 15–37.

would have naturally merited heaven by their “ordinary” actions of charity.¹⁶ “The integrity of the first creation was not the undeserved exaltation of human nature, but its natural condition.”¹⁷ De Lubac wishes to distinguish clearly his position in contrast to the theological anthropology of Baius as an extreme to be avoided. The human person, in his or her created nature, is distinct from the grace he or she obtains in view of eternal life, and this is the case both prior and subsequent to the mysterious event of original sin.¹⁸ Divinization is not natural to the human race.

On the other extreme, however, there lies the scholastic theology of nature and grace formulated near the time of Baius and Jansenius, principally represented in the works of Cajetan and Suarez, two influential authors whom de Lubac associates in this regard.¹⁹ This extreme is characterized by an appeal to a theory of pure nature over and against the integralism of Baius. Human nature, for Cajetan as for Suarez, has its own intelligible, purely natural end that is distinct from the gratuitous supernatural destiny to which human beings are called by grace.²⁰ (De Lubac famously claims that such a viewpoint is alien to both Augustine and Aquinas.)²¹ Therefore there is an intelligibility to human nature without reference to grace and the corresponding theoretical possibility of a purely natural state of being that is integral in some sense in itself without reference to the economy of salvation. The human person characterized in this way can be understood philosophically without reference to the supernatural order. Consequently, grace is now extrinsic to the constitution of the human person’s teleological fulfillment as such.²² Such nature-grace extrinsicism, it is said, prepares the groundwork for an eventual Enlight-

¹⁶ Henrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (1954 edition), 1001 and following.

¹⁷ Condemned proposition 26 (Denz., 1026, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* [Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto, 1955]).

¹⁸ De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 30–32: Here, interestingly de Lubac cites Scheeben’s critique of Baius approvingly: “Baius calls natural . . . what is in reality supernatural. By this alone he implies not that that which is already determined is elevated to a superior form, but that that which has no form in itself receives one by grace” (32, trans. mine).

¹⁹ On the conjoined criticisms of Cajetan and Suarez, see *Surnaturel*, 101–28; 226–92. De Lubac mentions a host of others, but he clearly wishes to challenge the modern scholastic traditions of the Dominicans and the Jesuits alike, and he does so in part by underscoring a perceived set of problems common to these two authors.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 117–24.

²¹ See, however, the alternative interpretation of Aquinas offered by Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010).

²² De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 437

enment secularization that sees revelation and grace as something alien to the basic natural good of man.²³ The integralism of Baius and Jansenius collapses the formal distinction of nature and grace into one another problematically, thus failing to respect the gratuity of the supernatural order. The extrinsicism of Cajetan and Suarez, meanwhile, divorces or separates human nature's teleological realization from the mystery of the supernatural. The only way to navigate between the extremes is by making a distinction. Against Baius, human nature is formally distinct from the mystery of supernatural grace. Against, Cajetan and Suarez, however, human nature is intrinsically and innately ordered toward the supernatural as its unique final end.²⁴ By grace the human person is fulfilled gratuitously in that incipient desire for God that animates the human heart innately by virtue of its nature as created spirit.²⁵

It is clear that Barth's grand meta-narrative of nature-grace orthodoxy and de Lubac's do not overlap perfectly well. In fact, they contain noteworthy points of direct contrast and radical incompatibility, as well as interesting places of potential alignment. Both are motivated in part by a distaste for the vision of high scholasticism, at least the Thomism of the Counter-Reformation commentators and their modern inheritors. Both appeal in diverse ways to classical Augustinian principles, as re-read through the Reformation/Counter-Reformation period. Both distrust any appeal to an autonomous order of nature and suspect all such appeals of incipient Pelagianism. The differences, however, are more illuminating.

Barth alone, for instance, is really interested in the "bad intrinsicism" of nature-grace *identification* in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century liberal Protestantism/modernism. More to the point, in reacting against this tradition in a distinctly Reformed way, he denies any real point of contact specific to human nature, even one by which that human nature *in se* would *potentially* be subject to elevation to the order of grace (even in the sense of a Thomistic *obediential potency*, which de Lubac would consider far too minimalist and which he criticizes in Cajetan). Barth is far more extreme in this respect than Suarez or Cajetan. Consequently, it is clear that Barth's early theology would tolerate no appeal to an "innate" or "intrinsic" appetite for the supernatural of the kind identified by de Lubac. Any such appetite would have to be re-interpreted Christologically as the result of the actualizing (i.e. non-habitual), extrinsic work of the Holy Spirit of Christ in the human person. Consequently, it would be possible from the Barthian point of view to associate by analogy de Lubac

²³ Ibid., 153–54, 174–75.

²⁴ Ibid., 433.

²⁵ Ibid., 456–57, 485–88.

and Schleiermacher, no matter how distasteful this might seem to Catholic thinkers. Nature, for both thinkers, is always, already on the way toward religious union with God.²⁶

Meanwhile, de Lubac alone is worried about the kind nature-grace identification of Baius and Jansenius that would bear points of contact with the thought of Luther: an absence of a clear distinction between grace and nature prior to the fall, wed to a doctrine of nature's total depravity after the fall, especially in light of the loss of divine charity. Because of the *prior* identification (before the fall), the fallen state is a maimed state of nature (nature without grace is hardly recognizable), where the natural integrity of the person is radically compromised. The natural powers of the soul are radically disrupted. The mind is always darkened with regard to knowledge of God, and the faculty of the will is always necessarily motivated by selfish acts. Grace comes, then, to such a fallen human nature in an utterly extrinsic fashion. It is an alien presence that would seek to rehabilitate a humanity radically turned away from the goodness of God. De Lubac could readily see in Barth a continuation of this kind of anthropological pessimism found in Baius and Jansenius (Catholic cousins of Luther and Calvin) and could associate this form of thinking with a "bad extrinsicism" that fails to acknowledge sufficiently the inalienable intrinsic orientation of human nature toward God, even in the fallen state.

What is clear from these brief observations is that the true theological "combative interlocutor" for each of the two thinkers in question is quite different. For one thinker (Barth) it is really liberal Protestantism and modernism which require refutation, while for the other (de Lubac) it is modern Catholic scholasticism and secularism (simultaneously in some sense, since he interprets secularism to be a form of scholastic rationalism).²⁷ Neither thinker, however, has a paradigm of explanation that allows the ideas of the other to be accounted for sufficiently, or that proposes a thorough analysis of the ideas that the other presents as

²⁶ Suggestions of such an argument appear in Jürgen Mettepenningen's *Nouvelle Théologie—New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), which claims (appreciatively) that there is a formal continuity between the nineteenth-century Catholic movements affiliated with the rise of "modernism" and the work of de Lubac and his contemporaries.

²⁷ De Lubac's refutations of Baius are attempts to distance himself from radical forms of Augustinianism that would undermine a sufficient sense of the distinction of grace and nature, whereas Barth's refutations of Roman Catholicism—while sincere—are an attempt to distance himself from liberal Protestant accusations of crypto-Catholicism. In other words, each thinker, in his criticisms of his opponent's perceived enemy, is really trying to protect himself against accusations from his opponent that would identify him with that perceived enemy.

normative. And yet both narratives continue to run parallel in modern theological circles, where each is continuously rehearsed as *the* central paradigm for interpreting the tasks of modern theology (and sometimes the two are so rehearsed simultaneously, as if they were compatible). The contrasts between the two suggest not only that they are intrinsically opposed but also that neither offers a fully comprehensive explanation of grace-nature orthodoxy.

Of course, strategies of reconciliation exist. The most noteworthy are the contrasting theories of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Rahner wishes, against de Lubac (and no doubt with some overtures to German Lutheranism), to safeguard some stronger measure of the gratuity of grace to nature, while he reacts against what he takes to be the excessively naturalizing tendency of scholastic conceptions of nature.²⁸ This leads him to reconsider nature not as inherently ordered toward the supernatural (by virtue of its own intrinsic principles) but as “always, already” ordered toward God by the ever-present “structural” gift of the supernatural-existential: a gratuitous grace that changes nature from within “from the beginning,” so that no pure nature ever exists, but only nature ordered or oriented toward God. Balthasar, meanwhile, in his *The Theology of Karl Barth* re-reads de Lubac and Barth in light of one another.²⁹ His interpretation is ingenious, because it identifies a potential but hidden place of overlap between the two thinkers: the critique of *natura pura* in de Lubac and the critique of natural knowledge of God in Barth. Barth argues that the intelligibility of creation (reality as analogically related to God) is perceptible only in light of the covenant of God with man in Jesus Christ. Therefore human nature, too, is ultimately intelligible only in light of Christ. Balthasar merges aspects of this idea with the de Lubacian anthropology of *Surnaturel*. Only because God is man in Christ can we discover the true nature of man, which is that characterized by the natural desire for God. The gratuitous extrinsicism of Christ who has been given by the Father illumines the world so that we can see in grace that we were “always, already” naturally (intrinsically) made for supernatural union with God in Christ. De Lubac’s “point of contact” is reformulated and reread in light of Barth’s Christocentricity.

As is well known, these two solutions contrast with each other. Balthasar saw Rahner as one who was implicitly naturalizing the world

²⁸ See Karl Rahner, S.J., “Nature and Grace,” in *Theological Investigations* IV, trans. Kevin Smyth (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 165–88.

²⁹ See especially Hans Urs von Balthasar’s *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward Oakes, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 267, 295–302, 327–34.

of grace (finding grace in a human existential anthropology to the detriment of finding grace in Christ and in the Church's revelation). Rahner suspected Balthasar of a Christological Gnosticism that introduced eccentric speculations into Trinitarian theology while it retreated into an overly fideistic methodology that failed to engage sufficiently in the existential and historical perspectives of his age. Whatever the merits of their mutual criticisms, it seems in retrospect that neither of them devoted sufficient attention to the question of the irreducible structures of human nature that exist in distinction from the mystery of grace, and indeed that exist in distinction (but not separation!) even from the mystery of the Incarnation as such. Just to ask one indicative question, for instance, what real theory of natural law or virtue ethics can be found in either of these thinkers? In keeping with their respective theories of nature and grace, how could one articulate a genuine moral theology, especially one that takes sufficient account of the rational intelligibility of the natural law? Like de Lubac and Barth before them, Rahner and Balthasar both underestimated the dangers of integralism: the collapse of the orders of nature and grace into one another. They fear that the affirmation of an autonomous natural order will lead inevitably to a loss of our sense of the need for grace. However, their theologies also pay too little heed to the structure of nature, in its integrity or relative intelligibility, and correspondingly tend to subsume nature prematurely and thus unconvincingly into the world of the supernatural.

Alasdair MacIntyre has argued in a number of places over the course of the last few decades that the medieval tradition of philosophy and theology afforded a kind of poise and balance that has since been eviscerated and that has given way to a fragmented presentation of singular truths, often juxtaposed or contrasted, when in fact the partial truths of various perspectives are in need of a deeper theoretical basis from which to be reunited in accord. Take, for instance, Kant's emphasis on moral reason and Hume's emphasis on moral sentiment: each excludes the other (as they are posited by these respective thinkers), but each also can be seen to find some accord with the virtue theory of Aquinas, in which prominent place is given both to the education of moral sentiments and to the deliberations of moral reasoning. Hylomorphic realism can be seen, then, to afford a greater and more prescient context for understanding the human person than the truncated anthropologies of many influential moderns. Clearly this kind of thinking advances the idea, not only that not all scholasticism was bad, but that the scholastic traditions of classical Christian thought contained profound forms of insight that have often been eclipsed. What then might we say of the scholastic theology of the young Matthias Scheeben, partic-

ularly in his treatment of nature and grace? Perhaps here we can pose a MacIntyrean kind of thesis with regard to Scheeben. His thought offers us a more comprehensive perspective on the grace-nature paradigm than either Barth or de Lubac, but one that takes account of many of the critical concerns of each, without the respective deficits of each. In a word, Scheeben is able to hold together a "good extrinsicism" of grace to nature and a "good intrinsicism" of the inherent potential of the nature of man for elevation to the supernatural order. Precisely because of this (essentialist) scholastic perspective, he is also better able to articulate the typologies of a history of grace-nature orthodoxy. His scholasticism is not an obstacle to the elaboration of a dynamic historical understanding of doctrine but is rather its precondition.

II

At the age of seventeen, Matthias Scheeben was sent to Rome in 1851 for studies in view of the diocesan priesthood. He was educated at the Gregorianum under the guidance of the Jesuit fathers who initiated the Thomistic revival of the mid nineteenth century, thinkers such as Kleutgen, Passaglia, Perrone, and Franzelin.³⁰ (The latter in particular directed Scheeben's research.) This is the same movement that was to influence Gioacchino Pecci, later Pope Leo XIII (1878 to 1903) and the eventual author of the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, on the renewal of the Christian philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (in 1879). Scheeben consequently was acutely aware of classical scholastic conceptions of the relations of faith and reason, such that his early thought seems like a striking precursor to the *Dei Filius* document of Vatican I, upon which the older Scheeben was in fact to write a commentary.³¹ Nevertheless, the cleric from Köln was above all a theologian. His speculative thought was deeply influenced by Aquinas, whom he interpreted through the filter of the scholastic commentary tradition of the Society of Jesus (above all, Suarez and Gregory of Valencia). Simultaneously Scheeben was also deeply indebted to a nineteenth-century revival of interest in the Greek patristic tradition, and was sensitive in particular to Cyril of Alexandria's conceptions of grace and divinization. Significantly, he maintained the idea of a profound doctrinal continuity between patristic and scholastic understandings of the mysteries of the faith (while recognizing their differences), seeing no intrinsic opposition between the two. It was a time of true theologians.

³⁰ See A. Kerkvoorde, "La formation théologique de M.-J. Scheeben à Rome (1852-59)," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 22 (1946): 174-93.

³¹ In *Die Constitutionen des Vaticanischen Concils*, ed. W. Molitor (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1870).

The early work *Nature and Grace* was published some ten years after Scheeben first came to Rome, so it was in a sense the immediate product of his doctoral studies. It is also a work of extraordinary synthesis, conceptual clarity, and spiritual depth. The work is imperfect theologically on a number of fronts, most especially with regard to its failure to sufficiently acknowledge Aquinas's teaching on the wounds of sin. (Scheeben fails to identify in Aquinas, for instance, the teaching on the incapacity of the fallen human person to love God naturally above all things, without the help of grace.)³² Nevertheless, it must be esteemed to be above all a kind of masterpiece of scholastic spiritual thought, filled with a rich interlacing of speculative analysis, historical interpretation, spiritual commentary, and penetrating philosophical reflection. Scheeben was a very ingenious and very spiritually profound twenty-six-year-old.

His analysis of the current spiritual crisis of his age, the religious intellectual crisis of modernity, is based upon the identification of two competing and equally mistaken spiritual trends in modern Europe. Each in fact also has roots in antiquity and each knows a series of diverse but unified manifestations that have cropped up cyclically in diverse forms, often in repeated opposition to one another. The Church's doctrine and reflection have developed, then, in contradistinction to the respective partial truths of these two traditions. So Scheeben, also, like Barth and de Lubac after him, is trying to navigate a middle way between extremes. In fact, he explicitly portrays Catholic grace-nature orthodoxy in this sense.³³

On one extreme, he identifies a development of thought running through the course of western European intellectual history that he terms "Pelagianism," and that he sees as the most prevalent temptation of the era of post-Enlightenment Europe. This is the view that "man's nature [carries] within itself at least the seed of [all] the good which it [can] ever reach, including the Christian good; no more than some favorable influence from the outside [is] needed to develop that seed to full maturity."³⁴ The principle is not posed by recourse to a historically naïve conceptuality. Scheeben notes on the one hand a Christian form of Pelagianism stemming from the idea's namesake, one that takes seriously the existence of grace "materially" but that is confused "formally" about the human capacities and inclinations that pertain to the order of grace and those that pertain to the order of nature.³⁵ This form of thinking would find

³² Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 109, a. 3, contrasted with *Nature and Grace*, 54–55, 84, 87.

³³ Scheeben, *Nature and Grace*, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

explicit adherents in modernity in the theology of Socinianism, for example.³⁶ The deeper idea of Pelagianism develops, however, in modernity by way of an intellectual stance toward grace as something wholly extrinsic to the good of man's nature. Scheeben sees in Enlightenment skepticism and rationalism, which reject the existence of the supernatural, the existence of more than a philosophical (rational) set of arguments. These are anti-theologies and are derived in part from a non-rational choice against the mysteries of faith. Kant's philosophy, for instance, presents a speculative agnosticism that rejects natural knowledge of God and simultaneously rearticulates the goals of Christian morality.³⁷ Yet it does so not only by recourse to philosophical principles but also in explicitly anti-supernaturalist terms. For Kant, the supernatural mystery of Christ is not considered philosophically even as a *possible* reality but is reinterpreted reductively as an exemplar of a purely philosophical (natural) moral ideal. Whereas human nature can accomplish the moral good solely by its own powers, grace is seen as something extrinsic and even opposed to human freedom to do the good.

What classical Pelagian theologies instinctually avoided or failed to render explicit, modern secularism has adopted self-consciously: the thorough-going conviction that the intrinsic good of nature can and should be realized by human powers alone without recourse to grace. This is coupled with the idea that the *ultimate* final end of man is something wholly natural to him, in no way transcending the inclinations of his innate powers. In his comments on modern rationalism, Scheeben is not only preoccupied with the emergence of post-Christian Europe; he is also explicitly seeking to engage the rise of modern Catholic rationalism in nineteenth-century Germany and Austria. As Aiden Nichols has shown, Scheeben sought throughout his career to counter programmatically the theories of Catholic theologians like Franz Anton Staudenmaier and Anton Günther.³⁸ For these latter theologians, the mysteries of

³⁶ Ibid., 1.

³⁷ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, I, I, 2, trans. N. Smith (London: Macmillan, 1990), 120ff.; II, I, 1, esp. 368ff.; idem, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6:60–6:66.

³⁸ Cf. *Nature and Grace*, 35, n. 2, where Scheeben mentions Staudenmaier explicitly; Aiden Nichols, O.P., *Romance and System: The Theological Synthesis of Matthias Joseph Scheeben* (Denver, CO: Augustine Institute Press, 2010), 69–70: “Staudenmaier’s refusal . . . to contemplate a middle ground between the pantheistic confusion of divine and human on the one hand, and, on the other, a (merely) moral union with God by the fullest possible enhancement of natural faculties, cannot but impart a ‘rationalist coloring’ to his doctrine. . . . For Scheeben, all this is the intellectual

faith seem to be interpreted as entities known by an unfolding process of reasoning initiated from a purely natural set of intellectual starting points. We might say today that Scheeben is arguing against an “evidentialist” epistemology of Christian apologetics that claims to derive positive knowledge of revealed mysteries in themselves from the initial consideration of purely natural rational principles (or to reduce the knowledge of the former to that of the latter). In his later dogmatic *Handbuch* Scheeben will in turn underscore the continuity between Catholic rationalism (represented by a figure such as Döllinger, who refused the dogmatic claims of Vatican I) and the modernism of liberal Protestantism subsequent to Schleiermacher. Both allow post-Enlightenment claims regarding the possibilities of what reason can and cannot understand naturally to enter into the determination of the dogmatic content of supernatural mysteries as such. In other words, both blur the inevitably necessary distinction between natural reason and divine revelation, co-opting revealed truths too aggressively, interpreting them as if they pertained to the domain of natural reason.³⁹

What has been described thus far pertains to one extreme, or set of positions, that Scheeben wishes to avoid. What about the other wing of the twofold error? This is the error of European spirituality that has tended toward an excessive pessimism that disparages the inherent goodness, integrity, and intelligibility of nature, especially human nature as it is subject to being naturally ordered to the moral good and toward God. Scheeben locates the prototypical instantiation of this error in Manicheism, but he also sees later, less crass echoes of it in the teaching of Luther, Baius, and Jansenius. Evidently, then, he finds in Augustine, the “doctor of grace,” the original balance of an affirmation of the essential goodness of human nature (against Manicheism) coordinated with an affirmation (against Pelagianism) of the necessity of the life of grace for the healing of the human person wounded by sin and for his union with God by charity in this life and eschatologically in the beatific vision.⁴⁰ It was because of an exaggerated emphasis on the teaching regarding the inherently fallen character of human nature *without grace*

analogue—an analogue in the realm of knowing the true—to Pelagianism in ethics, itself a mis-direction in the matter of loving the good. Like ancient Pelagians, modern Swabians or Austro-Germans have overlooked the ‘double ontological order’—nature and grace—to which Catholicism is committed.”

³⁹ Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, vol. I, *Theologische Erkenntnislehre*, ed. M. Grabmann (*Gesammelte Schriften* III; Freiburg: Herder, 1948), 42, 43. (See on this point, Aidan Nichols, *Romance and System*, 127–28.)

⁴⁰ Scheeben, *Nature and Grace*, 23.

that the teaching on the inherent integrity and goodness of human nature as distinct from divine grace was sometimes seriously obscured.

. . . this very teaching of the Church and its whole substructure as supplied by St. Augustine [against Pelagianism] were exploited to the advantage of the other error. The Church had established the doctrine that the true life of the soul had not only been obstructed by original sin but had been completely eradicated, down to the last root, and that consequently the soul had lost all its power and tendency to reach its original [supernatural] destiny. The heretics drew the false conclusion that the soul had forfeited all higher life, all power for all true morality and religion, as well as the capacity for any good; it had become evil and corrupt either in its substance (Luther), or in its faculties (Baius), or in its inclinations (Jansenius).⁴¹

Scheeben, then, develops the idea (however roughly hewn) of a point of continuity from ancient distrust of the goodness of nature down through the Reformation era, and one that he sees affecting judgments with respect either to the substance of nature (the doctrine of radical depravity) or the moral powers and inclinations of nature. In the case of the latter, he rightly sees that a Baius-Jansenist “integralism” so associates grace and nature *prior* to the fall, that in the wake of sin *human nature is unintelligible without grace*. The integrity of what man is (particularly in the moral domain of human willing and the natural end of man) is not decipherable except in relation to the “formal wholeness” afforded by grace.⁴² Thus the real (ontological) distinction between nature and grace becomes difficult to sustain. Interestingly, as he did with the post-Enlightenment form of “Pelagianism” that is secularism, Scheeben again carries his narrative of heresy types into modernity and identifies what he takes to be the contemporary spiritual inheritor of integralism. In a parallel to rationalism as a form of epistemological works righteousness, modern integralism can also be found in the noetic domain. The novelty of Catholic “traditionalism” or “fideism” that developed in the nineteenth century claimed that the human person is not rationally intelligible, whether formally or teleologically, except in light of grace and within the domain of revelation and doctrinal tradition. This error, a distant inheritor of Manicheanism, is seen by Scheeben as a contemporary reinstantiation of integralism, now reinvented in the domain of theological epistemology in confrontation with the crisis of modern secular reason.⁴³ Evidently there are parallels between

⁴¹ Ibid., 2. See also 4–5.

⁴² Ibid., 54–55, 79–80.

⁴³ Ibid., 9, n. 3, 54–55, 83.

what Scheeben is criticizing here and the later thought of Barth. We might well say that Scheeben's critique is pitted against what today emerges as an exclusively theological, tradition-based Christian post-modernism that fails to accord to philosophy a role essentially distinct from that of theology in the identification of natural structures and ends. This "integrative" vision (so Scheeben argues) collapses natural reason and supernatural faith into one another, standing in direct opposition to the emergence of anti-supernaturalist rationalism. The two positions are locked in an interminable conflict, each side considering the other a radically opposed aggressor. Yet, Scheeben suggests, neither side is telling the whole truth.

How then does Scheeben propose to navigate between the two extremes (in my language: Pelagianism/naturalism/secularist progressivism vs. Manicheanism/integralism/post-modern traditionalism) that he has identified? Here he adopts the fundamental distinction that will structure the basic argument of his work: that between the "order of nature and the order of supernatural grace."

Everything that constitutes a thing's essence as a component part [of that reality] is natural. . . . [T]hose qualities and adornments that do not constitute the essence of a thing, but are so exalted that they greatly surpass what the thing is equipped by its origin to have, are supernatural. Those powers which in no way emanate from a thing's essence and substance but transcend its level are supernatural. . . . [T]he last end (and in the case of rational creatures, full consummation in beatitude) which a being is meant to attain is supernatural, if the destiny is such that the being can neither make itself capable and worthy of it by its own dignity or its preparatory activity, nor reach it by its own powers.⁴⁴

This twofold distinction is envisaged by Scheeben as extending across three domains: those of being (or essence), knowledge, and love.

This means that man enters into a twofold relationship with God through a twofold nature he receives from Him. In the first place, man receives human nature from God, along with his existence, and thereby enters into relationship with Him as the Creator of this nature. . . . However . . . man receives from God not only a nature proportionate to his proper mode of being, but a higher nature (which is accidental, not substantial) whereby he is refashioned on the model of the higher, divine nature. . . . It further places him in a new, special relationship with God, who now draws near to man in His own essence, and not only as Creator of a nature foreign to Him.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27–28. See also 11–15.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

The distinction of nature and supernature extends from the essence or nature of man, who is transformed by the supernatural activity of grace, into the domains of knowledge and love. Man is naturally capable, not only of understanding certain determinations of created being, but is also capable of orienting himself toward natural knowledge of God (albeit of an indirect and inferential sort). Likewise, he is capable only by grace of a distinctly supernatural knowledge of God, of an entrance into the contemplation of divine mysteries withheld entirely from the gaze of man in a merely natural state.⁴⁶ A similar duality exists in the order of love. Man is naturally ordered toward the love of God above all things, and toward natural acts of religion (worship and piety directed toward the Creator). Only by grace, however, is man indwelt by the deifying presence of supernatural charity, such that his own acts of willing and ethical decision-making are conformed to the mystery of God's own essence and life.⁴⁷ Natural being, knowledge, and love are truly distinct in their formal determinations and final ends from all that pertains to the realm of the supernatural. The latter realm utterly transcends the natural and is inaccessible to it, except by the gift of God. With this gift, however, human nature is exalted beyond itself into a stable communion with the higher mystery of the Triune God.

In light of these characterizations of nature and super-nature, theology can helpfully counteract the twin errors identified above. Against Pelagianism it underscores the reality of the supernatural, the ultimately supernatural destiny of the human person, the epistemological prerogatives of divine revelation (apart from which we can know nothing of the inner mystery of Trinitarian life), the necessity of grace for eternal salvation, and the transcendence of the life of grace with respect to all human natural powers of knowledge and love. Against integralism it insists on the relative integrity of human nature, the natural capacity for philosophical knowledge of God and the human person, "reasons of credibility" regarding the truth of the Catholic faith, proportionate ethical ends that are proper to human nature, and the capacities even of wounded human nature to achieve some moral goods by its own powers.⁴⁸

Of course Scheeben's distinction stems from the classical scholasticism of Aquinas and his subsequent interpreters, and as such it was not articulated (at least in a fully developed form) in the patristic era. Scheeben's historical interpretation of the gradual emergence of the distinction, however, is not naïve. On the contrary, his portrayal of the historical

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 13–14, 83–84.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 13–14, 82–98.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 33–45, 49–59.

development of the Church's theological clarity is intriguing. For he sees Pelagianism as a theory that is initially conceptually "impure" (i.e., vague: "nature can obtain its ultimate ethical purposes without grace") and which undergoes progressive development and clarification. In this sense, modern naturalism is a more pure form of an idea that originated in an imperfect or hesitant way in antiquity.⁴⁹ Analogously, the thinking of modern integralism also took the crude and somewhat ill-stated ideas of antiquity's religious pessimism and reformulated them in a more technical and incisive way. It is seen by Scheeben to have obtained a more formal, pure way of thinking in the age of the Reformation, as a reformulation of radicalized Augustinianism over and against the ambitions of renaissance humanism.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Aquinas (against the backdrop of medieval Albigenianism) had developed an appropriate sense of the dignity of human nature and its capacities, in part through an identification of distinctly philosophical principles that had their own integrity but which could also be put into the service of theology. At the same time, he also revived a robust sense of the primacy of grace and of the supernatural destiny of man, which he put into the service of classical Augustinianism (against the Latin Averroists). It is not surprising, then, that the Church should have recourse to Aquinas's principles in the Reformation and modern periods, as She was confronted with the progressive clarification of this dual challenge from two opposed extremes. On the one hand, Catholicism in modernity has confronted an intensifying sense of the integrity and intelligibility of the natural realm, but accompanied by the attempt to absolutize this dimension of reality over and against the co-existent reality of grace. On the other hand, the Church confronts the competing absolutization of the world of grace to the detriment of any idea of the ontological, moral, or intellectual integrity of the nature of the human person considered in distinction from the life of grace. While opposed in species, Pelagianism and integralism are generically united by a common error: each fails to recognize sufficiently *the real distinction of the orders of grace and nature*. Consequently, because of the modern history of the unfolding of these extremes (in competition with one another), the Church has been invited to render more explicit conceptually what has been implicitly present ontologically and logically from the inception of the Christian religion. The *duplex ordo* of grace and nature, faith and reason, natural and supernatural ends and inclinations, philosophy and theology—all of this is inscribed in the very order of reality, and theology must acknowledge this truth if it is itself to remain realistic. Failing

⁴⁹ Ibid., 6–10, 91–92

⁵⁰ Ibid., 87–88

to do so, it tends by nature toward an insufficiently supernatural modern liberalism or an insufficiently rational modern traditionalism.

As long as we do not accept the doctrine of two provinces and orders of knowledge, or regard the higher merely as a more perfect evolution of the lower without a new foundation of its own, or look on the foundation of the order that is left [i.e., the foundation of nature as it pertains to the order of grace] as a simple expedient for promoting the naturally restricted development of that order; in general, as long as we recognize only one basic order of knowledge and yet desire to remain faithful to the positive teachings of the Church, we shall not be able to reconcile those teachings but must fall into one or the other of the extreme errors condemned by ecclesiastical authority, depending on which one we retain.⁵¹

III

How, then, might we compare Scheeben's ideal paradigm of grace-nature orthodoxy with those of Barth and de Lubac respectively? Evidently, simple schematizations are not possible. It is certainly not evident that Scheeben's paradigm is superior in every way. Nevertheless, we can try (in allusion to the ideas of MacIntyre noted above) to say in what sense the scholastic analysis of the theologian from Köln allows us to explain or articulate adequately the errors identified in turn by Barth and de Lubac, while also offering what is a more comprehensive perspective, free in various respects from their particular limitations or partial perspective. Toward this end it is helpful to identify briefly those ways in which Scheeben attempts to articulate (1) what we might call a "good intrinsicism" that shows the ontological harmony or compatibility between human nature's innate spiritual ends and the proposed work of revelation and grace in us, and simultaneously, (2) a "good extrinsicism" that emphasizes the radical gratuity and transcendence of the order of grace to that of nature. In *both* these respects, Scheeben differs (profitably in my opinion) from *both* Barth and de Lubac.

To begin with, we can consider how Scheeben's understanding of the natural ends of man differs from the anthropology of Barth. In seeming counterpoint to the Swiss Reformed theologian, Scheeben underscores the philosophical capacity of the human intellect to attain to natural knowledge of God and to a real, if apophatically qualified understanding of the divine attributes of the one God:

⁵¹ Ibid., 8.

[T]he knowledge of God that [nature] can and ought to obtain . . . is predominantly a knowledge of God derived from the beauty and greatness of sensible nature. This is the way the human mind, including that of pagan philosophers, ordinarily comes to a knowledge of God, and sacred Scripture itself teaches that man is impelled by nature to know God by this process (Cf. *Wisd.* chap. 13; *Rom.* 1:17ff.).⁵²

This is coupled with the affirmation of a final natural end of the human will: the exercise of the natural love of God above all things, which Scheeben claims informs in human beings the natural virtue of religion. “Love of the good, which is inherent in the will, can and must rise toward the good and repose in that Good which is the good of every good. All the love which the spirit naturally has for itself leads back, under nature’s guidance, to its Author.”⁵³ Evidently it is difficult to think of two affirmations (natural theology, natural religion) that could stand in more direct opposition to Barth’s theology of fallen human nature’s innate capacities. Scheeben’s point is to underscore in a qualified way the intrinsic openness of human nature to the gratuitous gift of divine life. Grace is not wholly alien to the human person’s spiritual nature. This is not to say, however, that this Catholic vision of theology falls into the forms of Pelagianism that Barth perceives in the Roman theological tradition. On the contrary, Scheeben affirms that the reality of the natural ordering of the human person toward God (by knowledge and by love) cannot procure in any way the sufficient conditions for the “merit” of grace. He is deeply opposed to this “semi-Pelagian” idea with which he is well acquainted, and he underscores instead that grace alone can procure the sufficient conditions for a response to grace in man.⁵⁴ In keeping with such an idea, he develops at length the Thomistic teaching that grace is not only a moral energy given to the human person (coming to complete our natural tendencies) but a new and higher *supernatural life* formally distinct from human nature.⁵⁵ The human person is naturally and intrinsically oriented toward God, but this inclination does not suffice to permit us to cooperate with the life of grace. Nor does it efface the real distinction between

⁵² *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 80. Scheeben qualifies this affirmation. In the fallen state, the exercise of this natural love of God is hampered by the effects of sin. See 83–84.

⁵⁴ See *Nature and Grace*, 83, including n. 4, which refers to Denz. 1036, and the condemnation of Baius’s thesis that any philosophical articulation of an order inscribed in man toward the natural love of God must necessarily diminish the merits of the Cross of Christ, and (n. 1037) imply a Pelagian concept of human nature. See also 292–93.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 150–71.

the order of grace and the order of nature. The natural orientation toward God *does* makes us innately *open to* or *capable of* the gift of grace, but it is *not* inherently spiritually proportioned to the gift of divine life.⁵⁶

And yet the two orders do have to be coordinated, precisely so as to be united even while remaining perpetually distinguishable. For if there is not a natural disposition toward God inscribed in our natural appetite for knowledge and love, then this new and higher life (because it relates man to God by *supernatural* knowledge and love) will also be utterly extrinsic to human nature, and therefore violent to it or inassimilable for it. In this case one of two results obtains. The human being can be considered intrinsically (naturally) secular such that grace is something alien to human flourishing. Or one will be able to maintain the idea of a graced supernatural knowledge and love as the perfection of the human person only by assimilating human nature to that end (for example, by 're-reading' all of nature in an artificially Christological fashion), such that the relative integrity and philosophical intelligibility of nature (and the real distinction of nature and grace) are jeopardized or abandoned.

With Barth, meanwhile, Scheeben does share the common concern for the affirmation of a sufficient sense of the transcendence of God's grace to our human nature. Like Barth, he sees that only a sense of the radical discontinuity between the two orders can safeguard the strictly supernatural character of divine revelation and the epistemological primacy of theology with respect to other sciences. The two thinkers thus make common cause against what both perceive to be the "Pelagianism" of nineteenth-century modernism, especially liberal Protestantism. Scheeben appropriately couples this tendency of thought with the analogous developments in nineteenth-century Catholic rationalism. Different though the two movements may be, both seek in some way to reinterpret classical Christian mysteries that are formally supernatural in light of the cultural norms of post-Enlightenment philosophical reason. In that way they each obscure (in different ways) the supernatural gratuity of the knowledge of Christ and its utter transcendence with respect to the limits of unaided human reason. In addition, however, Scheeben notes the hidden point of unity between liberal Protestantism and the integralist traditionalism that contests it. Both extremes fail to see that human reason has an intrinsic natural form distinct from the supernatural but inherently open to it as well. One side (post-Kantian liberal Protestantism) claims that human reason is not capable of felicitously finding higher completion in

⁵⁶ Ibid., 27, 31–32. This is the explicit teaching of Aquinas. On the inherent "disproportion" between the orders and ends of nature and grace, see the clear parallels in Aquinas, *De Veritate* q. 14, a. 2; q. 27, a. 2; *In III Sent.* d. 27, q. 2, a. 3, ad 5.

supernatural revelation as traditionally understood, because classical dogmatic Christianity is not in harmony with the natural aspirations of reason, now more liberated in its modern, “Enlightened” form. The other side (integralism) claims rightly that the former way of thinking originates from an erroneous and overly simplistic conception of the autonomy of reason, but it concludes from this problematically that human reason has no distinguishable determinate form except in subservience to the gift of divine revelation. Even when Christian reason might raise its head above water for a moment to make philosophical arguments based on natural principles, it is always, already being swept away in the tide of theology and is thereby continually dissolved into divine revelation. Neither side acknowledges sufficiently the intrinsic harmony-in-distinction of reason and faith, of nature and grace.

With de Lubac, Scheeben argues that a distinction of nature and grace has to be maintained, such that grace is “formally” or essentially extrinsic to or distinct from the formal essence of human nature, contrary to the understanding of Baius.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Scheeben argues that the form of a natural entity is intelligible as such only because one also understands its teleological end or purpose. Consequently, he argues, if like Jansenius one thinks that the unique natural final end of man is supernatural, the formal intelligibility of human nature dissolves into a vaguely identified “tendency toward grace or toward the supernatural.”⁵⁸ Even if grace and nature are formally distinguished, unless there is a distinction of final ends as respectively and irreducibly twofold—natural and supernatural—then integralism of the two orders still inevitably results.

Only they who blindly persist in error can deny the principle that was established above and is so clear in itself, that the aspirations and rights of nature cannot reach beyond the horizon of their active power. That was the mistake of the Jansenists and of some theologians who unfortunately sided with them. They admitted that nature did not have the resources to see God’s essence as it is in itself, but maintained that nature had a positive desire and title to the beatific vision as its natural

⁵⁷ On Baius, see Scheeben, *Nature and Grace*, 5, 83, 93.

⁵⁸ Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 277–93, has analyzed the positions of Jansenius with regard to the natural desire to see God (which Scheeben is reacting against) and has rightly shown parallels between them and a number of ideas found in de Lubac. (1) There is an innate appetite for the vision of God in man, and this vision is the only possible beatitude for a rational creature. (2) However, grace is required for its realization. (3) No pure state of nature is possible. (4) Love of God is possible only by grace and not by a natural love of God alone. (De Lubac qualifies his affirmation of the first idea, and might not admit the last idea, though it is not clear that he does not.)

end. This contention seems to us to be not only false but to involve a *contradictio in terminis*, an intrinsic contradiction.⁵⁹

Scheeben seems to be concerned that if a uniquely supernatural end is proposed to human nature, then this nature loses its formal intelligibility. Why would this be? Because filial adoption by grace becomes an intrinsic dimension of the spirit's essential character. "Nature" and "grace" consequently cease to denote coherently realities that are truly distinct.

In contrast to de Lubac, then, Scheeben maintains the integrity of a purely natural final end. (Indeed, he does so with a classical Jesuit insistence that is much more emphatic and less unqualified than one finds in the treatment of this topic by the Dominican commentatorial tradition.) The natural and supernatural ends of man are not on a par, however, but are hierarchically subordinated such that grace can elevate the inclinations of nature without doing any violence to it.⁶⁰ Scheeben weds this idea to his insistence on the transcendence of grace to nature by appeal to Aquinas's notion of obediential potency. Human nature is not directly and proportionately ordered to the supernatural (by a natural potentiality, like the eyes' capacity for vision), for to affirm this would imply an integralist confusion of the orders of grace and nature. Rather, human nature, because of its spiritual life, is intrinsically open *potentially* to being *elevated* freely by God into the life of grace, in view of the beatific vision.⁶¹

Of course a stance like this places Scheeben squarely within the heritage of Cajetan and Suarez. He affirms the relative integrity of nature (replete with the twofold end) and the obediential potency of natural inclinations for elevation to supernatural life in God.⁶² Nevertheless, for

⁵⁹ Scheeben, *Nature and Grace*, 80.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 65–66, 111, 117, 121.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 40. See n. 4. Scheeben rightly sees that Aquinas employs the concept of obediential potency to discuss the relation of human nature to sanctifying grace (cf. *ST* II–II, q. 2, a. 3; III, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3). This reading of Aquinas is something that Gilson, de Lubac, and Laporta all denied but that has recently been convincingly demonstrated by Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 136–65.

⁶² In *Nature and Grace*, 61–69, it becomes apparent that Scheeben follows Suarez (*Opera Omnia* [Paris: Vivès Edition, 1857], Tome VII [*De statibus humanae naturae*], Prolegomenum IV, cap. VIII–IX) in arguing that human nature in the fallen state, though deprived of the gifts of supernatural grace, nevertheless preserves its natural integrity such that the fallen state of human nature is virtually identical with a "state of pure nature" had man been created without the gift of grace. This viewpoint is universally contested by the Dominican Thomist tradition, which argues that fallen nature is wounded and less capable of the *natural* good than it would have been in a state of pure nature. Likewise, Scheeben at points (55, 81, 84 n. 5) suggests that in a fallen state man can by his own powers (with the assistance of a

Scheeben this theological stance is clearly not extrinsicist in the sense that de Lubac (mistakenly?) takes it to be. On the contrary, to return to the supposition against Luther, Baius (and Barth): only if there is a naturally proportionate inferior final end both open to and not identical with the supernatural end can the latter come to the former not only as truly gratuitous but also as something *not* wholly alien. Scheeben's "good extrinsicism" is something relatively balanced. He sees grace as simultaneously elevating *and fulfilling* the intrinsic aspirations of human nature for the true and the good with regard to God. Without the duality of ends, the gratuitous elevation would be eclipsed. Without the capacity for integration of the two into a unity of life, the true harmony of grace and nature would be indecipherable. In fact, while it is too schematic to summarize things in this fashion, one could say that the early Barth maintains a radical equivocity (alien otherness) of grace to nature while de Lubac's *Surnaturel* risks tending toward a univocal identification of the two (in the realm of final if not formal causality). Scheeben, meanwhile, maintains an analogy. Likeness without identification allows for an integration or marriage of grace and nature that does not elide the difference between the two, while still maintaining the radical otherness of grace, revelation, and the supernatural with regard to all human capacities and innate inclinations.

In addition to this comparative indication of the strength of Scheeben's views, we can consider last at least one way in which his analysis of grace-nature orthodoxy examines key questions left unexamined by Barth and de Lubac. This has to do with the necessary philosophical question that Scheeben poses to the Enlightenment anti-supernaturalist tradition: just how natural is naturalism? Unlike Barth and de Lubac, Scheeben's *theology* is capable of asking *in strictly philosophical and rational terms* whether the decision to close culture off to supernatural influences is itself warranted. In other words, if there is a natural end in man that tends toward the pursuit of philosophical knowledge of God and that, were it exercised correctly and not in a disordered way, would even tend to the natural love of God above all things, then the secularized person is a *naturally* conflicted being. Indeed, he is an irrational and unnatural being. If this is the case, then philosophical reason is able in a limited way (within the limits of

divine *auxilium*) love God naturally above all things. This is a teaching disavowed by Aquinas himself as well as by the subsequent Dominican commentatorial tradition. The natural love of God is possible in man's fallen state only if the reparative work of grace is present, even though the natural love of God remains in creatures graced with the supernatural love of charity (see, for example, *ST* I, q. 62, aa. 1 and 7, and *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 3).

reason alone) to diagnose this condition and anticipate the *mere possibility* of divine revelation and authentic human religiosity.

The point of this argument is not to suggest that a philosophical articulation of arguments for the existence of God and for the validity of religious worship of God will efficaciously deliver a secular culture from its anti-religious instincts. The point is that a de-Christianized, irreligious reason is also an unnatural reason and that Barth and de Lubac have insufficient conceptual resources at their service to adequately articulate this truth that was underscored by the First Vatican Council. Correspondingly, a re-Christianization of culture depends not *solely* on the work of grace and on theological instruction (though these above all are required) but also on a *philosophical* wisdom that seeks to articulate a natural understanding of reality to a *naturally* wounded human reason (as Leo XIII and John Paul II have argued in *Aeterni Patris* and *Fides et Ratio*, respectively). Even if grace is necessary to human healing, *within the work of grace and not apart from it* there are salves that sound philosophy *alone* can provide and without which theological teaching will become intrinsically handicapped. Rational knowledge of God and philosophical understanding of the natural law form an integral part of sacred theology, which means that they also have their relative *integrity* that must be respected even from within a science of the supernatural.⁶³

Surely the Church in the modern world is confronted with the challenge of communicating a sense of the mysteries of the faith, but She also is charged with the challenge of reawakening a renaissance of human reason invested in the study of God's natural world and the natural ethical order of man. The latter effort is not something that must occur existentially "outside" of theology and its culture, for the aids of grace and divine revelation are in fact greatly needed in the development of sound philosophical perspectives. And yet this philosophical effort is also distinguishably natural and rational, even as it is placed at the service of Christian culture. Scheeben's scholasticism in this respect is a model of integration of natural and supernatural tasks within one interweaving vision of theology.

IV

We can conclude this study by briefly underscoring our second thesis: Scheeben's scholasticism is not a deficit hindering his capacity to articulate an insightful narrative history of orthodoxy. In a sense, rather, it is the presupposition of its success. Presumably, of all nineteenth-century

⁶³ Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2.

Catholic theological figures, Newman and Scheeben stand out most prominently. However, there is no equality of influence between the two in the contemporary Church. Newman has an undisputed preeminence as a Catholic thinker of the modern era and is in many ways a precursor to the existential and historical reflections of many mid-twentieth-century Catholic theologians, figures such as Congar, de Lubac, Balthasar, and so on. But it needs to be asked: to what extent is a coherent narrative history of the development of doctrine or of the evolving religious opinions of the self *possible* in the absence of a genuinely scholastic typology of doctrines that examines the essential content of contrasting and developing positions? Or to ask the question more provocatively, after the eclipse of scholastic doctrinal theology, to what extent does the narrative of the Church or of the modern Christian self break down for lack of content and of the essential structure that study of the mysteries of Christianity alone provides? This is not to intimate that Scheeben and Newman should be contrasted, nor that historical *ressourcement* and scholastic study of the structures of the mysteries of Christianity should be opposed. It is to imply the opposite: that the dichotomy between these two worlds is exaggerated and overwrought. What is so powerful in Scheeben's vision of the historical unfolding of doctrine is that he can identify how core ideas that persist across time unfold in analogical but unified ways. He can do this because of his scholastic understanding of the structure of the realms of nature and grace, pointing out how diverse aspects of being are subject to analysis by the same idea in different historical ages. For instance, what he terms "Manicheanism" or "Pelagianism" are in fact nuanced notions, which he employs to depict the developmental unity present in a range of historical opinions, each pertaining either to our human essence or to our knowledge or to human ethics, and so on. The history of opinions in its diversity and unity ultimately derives from the structure of being in *its* diversity and unity, because different historical epochs devote attention to one area or aspect of reality more than others. Traditional ideas can be redeployed innovatively in new contexts in order to consider an ontological terrain that has not previously been considered sufficiently. To study the relation of these various ideas diachronically, then, it is necessary to be able to compare them synchronically in relation to the whole ontological terrain that they (variously) seek to analyze. To do this, however, it is necessary to have a "vision of the whole": a scholastic analysis of the essence, capacities, and ends of nature and grace respectively, a vision that allows for the coordination and evaluation of the history of opinions that has developed through the course of time. One may fairly dispute whether or not the conceptual map that Scheeben draws is sufficiently complex, nuanced, or accurate. However, it

seems fair to say that what he rightly sees is that there is no genuine historical theology without a logically prior speculative theology.

Scheeben was himself a gifted and remarkably insightful analyst of the history of doctrines and he had a profound spiritual and scholastic vision of the development of the human person under the influence of grace. Perhaps we know too much about the poverty of modern scholasticism and too little of its riches. In the face of secularization and generalized religious ignorance, the renewal and vitality of Christian theology in the near future will no doubt depend upon a return to the central mysteries of Christian teaching in the domains of Trinitarian theology, Christology, moral theology, and the interrelations of nature and grace. As an illuminating example of the renewal of Christian doctrinal theology in the midst of the modern world—and specifically as an example of the renewal of scholastic theology—the theologian of Köln has much to offer us. **N-V**