

CONTEMPLATION ACCORDING TO THE
MODERN DOMINICAN SCHOOL
OF SPIRITUALITY
THE MYSTICAL QUARREL AT THE TIME OF THE SUPREMACY
OF THE GARRIGOU-LAGRANGIAN THESES
(1923-1928)

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The beginning of the interwar period saw the resumption in Catholicism of an intense controversy around the mystical question, the doctrinal coordinates of which had been defined two decades earlier.¹ At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries^c and^e, two great movements clashed. The first is that of the supporters of extended mysticism; It is essentially recognized in the theses developed by the Angevin canon Auguste Soudreau (1859-1946), who published, among other things, *Les degrés de la vie spirituelle* (1896), *L'état mystique, sa nature, ses causes* (1903), and finally *Les faits extraordinaires de la vie spirituelle* (1908) - according to him, According to him, souls are generally called to follow the unitive path to its end, which is then accessible to everyone, and the spiritual life must be conceived according to a gradual progress from the indispensable stages of asceticism to the supereminent degree of infused contemplation. The second, that of the partisans of restricted mysticism, takes up the doctrine of the Jesuit Augustin Poulain (1836-1919), who published in 1901 his treaty

¹ See Émile POULAT, *Critique et mystique. Autour de Loisy ou la conscience catholique et l'esprit moderne*, Paris 1984, in particular *L'humanité polie par la mystique*, pp. 254-306; ID, *L'Université devant la mystique. Expérience du Dieu sans mode ou transcendance du Dieu d'amour*, Paris 1999. ^cAn excellent and thorough presentation of the Catholic debate on mysticism at the beginning of the 20th century can be found in Manuel BELDA - Javier SESE, *La cuestión mística. Estudio histórico-teológico de una controversia*, Pamplona 1998. More recently, see Bernard MIN-VIELLE, *Who is Mystic? Un demi-siècle de débats, 1890-1940*, Paris 2017; *Modernisme, mystique, mysticisme*, dir. Giacomo LOSITO - Charles J. T. TALAR, Paris 2017; and *L'Université face à la mystique. Un siècle de controverses...*, dir. Mariel MAZZOCCO - François TREMOLIERES - Ghislain WATERLOT, Rennes 2018.

In 1908, the defenders of extended mysticism won a significant victory when they obtained the support of the Spanish Dominican Juan González Arintero (1850-1928), who largely agreed with the defenders of extended mysticism. In 1908, the defenders of extended mysticism won a significant victory when they obtained the support of the Spanish Dominican Juan González Arintero (1850-1928), who largely agreed with Father Saudreau's theses in his book entitled *Evolución mística*.² Following in the footsteps of his Spanish colleague, whom he had met in Rome, the French Dominican Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964),³ to whom the chair of ascetic and mystical theology at the Angelicum had been entrusted since its creation in 1917, undertakes, in the aftermath of the war, to build the doctrinal perimeter of a Thomistic school of spirituality which will end up capturing the movement of extended mysticism and obtaining the support of the abbot Saudreau.⁴ The three fundamental theses of the Thomistic doctrine were

² On Fr. Arintero, see Alvaro HUERGA, *La evolución, clave y riesgo de la aventura intelectual arinteriana*, in *Studium*, 1 (1967), pp. 127-153; Vito-Tomás GÓMEZ GARCÍA, *Magisterio espiritual del Fr. Arintero*, in *Vida sobrenatural*, 88 (2008), n. 659, pp. 324-357; Armando BANDERA, *Lectura de la obra evolucion mística del Fr. Arintero*, *ibid*, 91 (2011), n. 673, pp. 26-32; and the studies of Saturnino PLAZA AGUILAR, *El Padre Arintero y el modernismo*, in *XX Siglos*, 53 (2004), pp. 134-142; ID., *El dogma y su evolución en la teología del P. Arintero*, in *Vida sobrenatural*, 98 (2018), n. 718, pp. 249-257, and ID., *algunas consideraciones sobre el libro Cuestiones místicas del Padre Juan-González Arintero*, *ibid*, 97 (2017), n. 713, pp. 329-341.

³ On Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, see Benoît LAVAUD, *Le P. Garrigou-Lagrange. Maître spirituel. Testimony of a disciple and friend*, in *La Vie spirituelle*, 111 (1964), n. 508, pp. 337-354; ID., *Le P. Garrigou-Lagrange*. In memoriam, in *Revue thomiste*, 64 (1964), no. 2, pp. 181-199; ID., in *Garrigou-Lagrange (Réginald)*, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. vi, Paris 1965, col. 127-134; and Marie-Rosaire GAGNEBET, *L'œuvre du P. Garrigou-Lagrange. Itinéraire intellectuel et spirituel vers Dieu*, in *Reginaldi Garrigou-Lagrange in memoriam, Angelicum*, 42 (1965), n. 1-2, pp. 7-31. See also Tommaso DELLA CROCE, *Il P. Garrigou-Lagrange, teologo spirituale*, *ibid*, pp. 38-52; Abelardo LOBATO, *Itinerario filosófico de R. Garrigou-Lagrange O. P.*, *ibid*, pp. 53-116; Samuel GIULIANI, *P. R. Garrigou-Lagrange apologeta*, *ibid*, pp. 117-136, and Jean-Hervé NICOLAS, In memoriam - le Père Garrigou-Lagrange OP, in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 11 (1964), pp. 390-395. More recently, see Battista MONDIN, *Reginaldo Garrigou-Lagrange e la teologia spirituale*, in *IDORIA della teologia*, t. IV, *Epoca contemporanea*, Bologna 1997, pp. 478-481; Richard A. PEDDICORD, *Sacred Monster of Thomism. An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, o.p.*, South Bend (Ind.) 2004. For a bibliography of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, see Benedetto ZORCOLO, *Bibliografia del P. Garrigou-Lagrange*, in *Reginaldi Garrigou-Lagrange in memoriam*, pp. 200-272.

⁴ On the presence of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange in contemporary debates on mysticism, we refer to Sylvio DE FRANCESCHI, *La défense doctrinale du système thomiste de la mystique étendue. Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange and the Rigou-Lagrangian view* consist in the affirmation of a general call of souls to the mystical life, in the characterization of the state of unitive life by the predominant role of the gifts of the Holy Spirit - a predominance which alone allows the passage of the ascetic stage, and in

the cardinal principle according to which the state of infused contemplation remains in the normal prolongation of sanctity, unlike the extraordinary phenomena of the mystical life. A fourth conviction, on which Father Saudreau at first refused to agree before coming around to it, holds that there is a state of acquired contemplation to which anyone can gain access by his own efforts. Garrigou-Lagrangé relied on his pulpit at the Angelicum and on *La Vie spirituelle*, a journal founded in 1919 by the French Dominican Marie-Vincent Bemadot (1883-1941). From the first issue of the new periodical, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrangé published a series of articles which, gathered in two volumes in 1923, would form *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation*, the synthesis which delivered to the public the body of doctrine of the new Dominican school of spirituality.

Another chair of ascetic and mystical theology played a crucial role in the institutional and bookstore set-up that allowed the polemic to develop and reach readers who were not professional theologians. This was entrusted to the Jesuit Otta vio Marchetti (1869-1952), who later gave way to his French colleague Joseph de Guibert (1877-1942), who was appointed professor in 1922, at the Pontifical Gregorian University, an institution closely dependent on the Society of Jesus. He was not entirely committed, as was the Sulpician Albert Farges (1848-1926), a disciple of Father Poulain, to the party of restricted mysticism,

construction d'une école dominicaine de spiritualité, in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 103 (2019), n. 1, pp. 113-143; ID, *L'affirmation contemporaine d'une école dominicaine de spiritualité. Les combats du P. Garrigou-Lagrangé et l'élaboration de Perfection chrétienne et contemplation (1923)*, in *Angelicum*, 96 (2019), n. 4, pp. 493-524; ID., *Défense du périmètre d'une nouvelle école dominicaine de spiritualité. Publications et concurrence doctrinale dans les stratégies du P. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrangé (1921-1923)*, in *Nova et Vetera*, 95 (2020), n. 2, pp. 187-218; ID, *Le renouveau contemporain de la théologie mystique dominicaine. À propos de la genèse de Perfection chrétienne et contemplation (1923) du P. Garrigou-Lagrangé*, in *Revue thomiste*, 120 (2020), n. 3, pp. 497-527; and ID, *Perfection chrétienne, spiritualité dominicaine et contemplation. Le P. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrangé face au succès du système de la mystique étendue (1923-1927)*, in *Revue thomiste*, 121 (2021), n. 1, pp. 5-50.

Father de Guibert did not align himself with the positions defended by the Dominicans; founder and editor of the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, whose publication began in January 1920, the Jesuit gave it a positive and scholarly orientation which differentiated it quite clearly from *La Vie spirituelle*, which was more scholastic and openly Thomistic.² Launched in France, the debate spread

² On the beginnings of *La Vie spirituelle*, see Etienne FOUILLOUX, *Les premiers pas de La Vie spirituelle*, in *La Vie spirituelle*, 142 (1968), n. 679, pp. 157-167, reprinted in ID. *AU cœur du XX^e siècle religieux*, Paris 1993, pp. 219-230; and more recently Agnès DESMAZIERES, *Une école de spiritualité, Saint-Maximin ? La province dominicaine de Toulouse et La Vie spirituelle (1919-1928)*, in *Un siècle de vie dominicaine en Provence (1859-1957). Saint-Maximin et la Sainte-Baume*, dir. Tangi CAVALIN -

throughout the Catholic world. In Spain, Fr. Arintero founded the review *La Vida sobrenatural*, whose first issue appeared in January 1921 and which naturally joined the struggle led by *La Vie spirituelle*.³ The two Roman chairs and the two French reviews, completed by their Spanish counterpart, constituted an effective mechanism for the animation of the doctrinal quarrel.

In the course of the controversy which was rekindled with impetuosity in the aftermath of the First World War, a first phase was completed in 1923. Garrigou-Lagrange, but also *La Conscience morale* (1923) by Fr. Henri-Dominique Noble (1875-1945) and *La Contemplation mystique d'après saint Thomas* (1923) by Fr. Ferdinand-Donatien Joret (1883-1937). Three monographs that now form a sort of intimidating triptych at the entrance to the new Dominican school of spirituality. The Congress was held in Madrid from 1^{er} to 4 March 1923, under the presidency of Cardinal Juan Benlloch y Vivo (1864-1926), Archbishop of Burgos, to crown the celebrations of the tercentenary of the canonization of Saint Teresa, The recent Theresian Congress, organized on the initiative of the Carmelites, also brought the remarkable support of the Carmelite school to the doctrinal enterprise of the Dominicans - the support was publicly renewed by the French Carmelite Gabriel de Sainte-Marie-Madeleine (1893-1953), a close friend of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, who in September 1923 published a contribution entitled *La contemplation acquise chez les théologiens carmes déchaussés* in the *Supplement to La vie spirituelle*.⁴ Bemadot's journal in March 1923, an article by the neo-Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), a friend of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, also proposed a nuanced reformulation of Dominican positions that helped to rally the hesitant to the cause of the party of extended mysticism.⁵ The Garrigou-Lagrangian theses are now widely accepted in the debate, while the last stubborn supporters of restricted mysticism find themselves marginalized. Not that they had completely given up their attempts at resistance. As early as the end of 1922, the Carmelite Marie-Joseph du Sacré-Coeur (1847-1932), founder and director of the

Augustin LAFFAY, Nancy 2019, pp. 209-220.

³ See Federico Maria REQUENA, *Espiritualidad en la España de los años veinte. Juan G. Arintero y la revista La vida sobrenatural (1921-1928)*, Pamplona 1999.

⁴ Gabriel DE SAINTE-MARIE-MADELEINE, *La contemplation acquise chez les théologiens carmes déchaussés*, in *Supplément à La Vie spirituelle*, September 1923, pp. [277]-[303].

⁵ Jacques MARITAIN, *Une question sur la vie mystique et la contemplation*, in *La Vie spirituelle*, T (1923), n. 42, pp. 636-650, reprinted in Réginald GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation*, 2 vols. On the Maritainian approach to mysticism at the beginning of the 1920s, see Michel FOURCADE, *Asceticism and mysticism at the time of the Thomistic renewal*, in *Les dialectiques de l'ascèse*, ed. Brigitte PEREZ-JEAN - Michel FOURCADE - Pierre-Yves KIRSCHLEGER - Sabine LUCIANI, Paris 2011, pp. 361-390; and Sylvio DE FRANCESCHI, *L'intrusion maritainienne dans le débat entre mystiques restreinte et étendue. Jacques Maritain et la théologie ascétique et mystique du P. Garrigou-Lagrange au début des années 1920*, in *Maritain et la mystique. Actes du colloque des 10-11 mai 2019 à Toulouse (ICT)*, ed. Philippe-Marie MARGELIDON, Paris-Les Plans-sur-Bex 2020, pp. 35-64.

journal *Études canné- litaines*, had severely warned against the danger of exaggeratedly popularizing mysticism and democratizing its access.⁶ Other voices were sporadically raised in an attempt to curb the success of the theses defended by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange and the Dominicans who formed the team of *La Vie spirituelle*. In 1923, the Belgian Jesuit Pierre Charles (1883-1954) published an incisive article in the *Nouvelle revue théologique* entitled *L'abus de la mystique*. Faced with the multiplication of works that contributed to the idea that access to the supereminent life was open to everyone, Fr. Charles sensed that an anti-mystical reaction was taking shape: "It could, like that of the seventeenth century, cause immense harm to Christian piety. In order to prevent good money from being rejected because of so many surreptitious pennies, it is necessary to make a start right away and to point out the errors in the ideas that are circulating and the faults in the advice that is being distributed."⁷ The Jesuit notes that, since the beginning of the century, the genre of pious autobiographies has become fashionable, and that one no longer counts soul journals, spiritual notes, or letters of direction in the bookstore catalog. Nothing is more foreign, however, according to Fr. Charles, to true Christian perfection than a literature that is largely egocentric, not to say narcissistic: "The spiritual masters have repeated to us that to die to oneself [...], to abdicate all pretension, was the first and last step of Jacob's ladder. Do we really think that to arrive at this supernatural stripping [...], the most effective means is to recount copiously all one's states of mind and to fill in notebooks?" Moreover, notes the Jesuit, women seem to be more particularly taken with the mania of testifying to their interior life, and Catholic piety begins to take, contrary to its naturally virile spirit, "a vaporous and soft form": "The great voice of the militant Church has changed, in these women's books, into small whispers of intimate confidence."⁸ At a time when a new feminine mysticism was manifesting itself in Catholicism, whose sudden and unpredictable development Claude Langlois situated between 1898, when *VHistoire d'une âme* de Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus (1873-1897) was published posthumously, and 1925, when the Carmelite nun from Lisieux was canonized,⁹ Fr. Charles points out the danger of appealing to unprepared imaginations that want to reach the end of the path of perfection without effort: "Through a dangerous phenomenon of mimicry, people without experience, beginners, also want to go through states and discover special ways.

⁶ Marie-Joseph OF THE SACRED HEART, *D 'OU vient que la doctrine mystique, au lieu de progresser, semble piétiner sur place*, in *Etudes carmélitaines*, 7 (1922), n. 3-4, pp. 252-260.

⁷ Pierre CHARLES, *L'abus de la mystique*, in *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 50 (1923), n. 5, pp. 225-231, here p. 225.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Claude LANGLOIS, *L'émergence d'une nouvelle mystique féminine au début du XX* siècle*, in *Modernisme, mystique, mysticisme*, pp. 121-140, reprinted in ID, *Le continent théologique. Explorations historiques*, ed. Guillaume CUCHET - Denis PELLETIER, Rennes 2016, pp. 279-292.

One does not need to be a specialist in psychoneurosis to see that the contagion of *intimate accounts* is one of the most dangerous."¹⁰ According to the Jesuit, the vogue for spiritual confessions does not correspond to a true interior deepening of the young girls who devote themselves to them; for them, mysticism is "a genre."¹¹ Fr. Charles considers that the directors of souls commit an imprudence by putting in the hands of their penitents, still not very advanced in the way of Christian perfection, authors like St. John of the Cross or Ruysbroeck - their fevered imaginations and their religious fervor lead them to guilty misunderstandings: "These pious girls [...] believe themselves to be in holy darkness and on the ascent to Carmel; they disgust their school or family duties, they exalt themselves in an absurd illusion, and the tragic seriousness of the Christian life disappears in childishness".¹² The analyses developed by Fr. Charles are extremely severe and go straight to the point. The Jesuit holds that to put psychology in place of dogma and to substitute feeling for faith is without question "of Protestant and modernist essence".¹³ He denounces for illuminism the spiritual directors who pretend that only they allow their followers to reach the graces of light and he calls the Catholics not to play anymore "with this very holy and very high thing that is mysticism"¹³ - and to add immediately:

"It is very easy, by serving heady theories to young souls, to produce in them a kind of religious intoxication and temporary exaltation. To present the mystical union as a beatifying, ineffable reality, and that one obtains *because one loves*, is to bring into play all the powers of spiritual seduction, and, in young women especially, to provoke the enchantment of a beautiful dream."¹⁴

Nowhere is *The Spiritual Life* mentioned, but it is clear that the Jesuit disapproves of the desire to accompany everyone indiscriminately in the unitive way.

In spite of the opposition they persisted in arousing, the proponents of the system of extended mysticism benefited from a religious conjuncture exceptionally favorable to their theses. Charles's charge elicited an immediate response, also in the *Nouvelle revue théologique*, from the Belgian Franciscan Martial Lekeux (1884-1962), who published a contribution in 1923 entitled *Sur l'abus de la mystique* in which he reproached the Jesuit for wanting to discourage the faithful from embarking on the path of absolute perfection.¹⁵ Charles' article now serves as a support for the opponents of mysticism, and it has also cast doubt

¹⁰ CHARLES, *L'abus de la mystique*, p. 226.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁵ Martial LEKEUX, *Sur l'abus de la mystique*, in *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 50 (1923), n. 9, pp. 475-489.

in pious minds that finally wonder if they are really on the path of perfect contemplation - in short, many of Fr. Charles' readers think they are false mystics when their graces are genuine. Against the Jesuit's vehement statements, Fr. Lekeux asserts that "perfect guidance applies dogma by psychology, enlivens the life of faith by that of feeling, controls the virtues by internal analysis": "This is neither Protestant nor modernist, but only reasonable."¹⁶ The indispensable role of the imagination is firmly rehabilitated. Further, Fr. Lekeux holds that mysticism and asceticism call for and complement each other - the point is clear: "An asceticism without mysticism is a truncated religion."¹⁷ No more than Fr. Charles, Fr. Lekeux does not allude to the French debates in which the figure of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange came to prominence, but it is obvious that they form the background of his analyses. The Franciscan holds that the danger is not, as Fr. Charles claimed, in the abuse of mysticism, and he specifies: "Our era more than any other needs mystical life, because the modern spirit is at heart cruelly altered by truth and the absolute and modern souls feel the nostalgia for that life which is the only complete one."¹⁸ Lekeux, the recent success of the contemplative orders, which are attracting a growing number of vocations and whose prestige among the faithful should be maintained: "It is important to encourage a movement that is so imperatively taking shape because it is a sign of the times and contains the promises of the future."¹⁹ Following the article by Fr. Lekeux is published a right of reply by Fr. The Franciscan is ultimately criticized for not offering any decisive criteria for distinguishing between true and false mystics - and the Jesuit vigorously concludes, "Yes, let's save mysticism, and therefore let's deliver it from that which is not it."²⁰ At a time when Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange is putting the finishing touches on *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* and his doctrinal positions are prevailing, the divide between extended and restricted mystics retains its relevance and serves as a dividing line between the proponents of a democratization of access to the heights of the interior life and their opponents.

The beginning of a second phase of the interwar Catholic debate on mysticism, marked by the now very clear predominance of the Garrigou-Lagrangian theses, coincided with the opening of a new polemical front in which theologians found themselves obliged to reaffirm their sovereign disciplinary domain in matters of mysticism in the face of the competing incursions of university philosophers. Professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne, the psychologist of religions Henri Delacroix (1873-1937) had already drawn the attention of the theological corporation by publishing an *Essay on speculative mysticism in*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 481.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 482.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 483.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Pierre CHARLES, *Mise an point, ibid.*, pp. 485-489, here p. 489.

Germany (1900) and *Studies in the history and psychology of mysticism* (1908).²¹ The opportunity for a rather lively confrontation between theologians and philosophers was however offered two decades later when a pupil of Delacroix, the philosopher Jean Baruzi (1881-1953),²² defended a doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne devoted to *Saint John of the Cross and the problem of mystical experience* (1924). As soon as the thesis was defended, the historian of medieval philosophy - and ardent promoter of the Thomistic revival in France - Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) expressed his strong reticence. Present in the audience, Maritain was angered by an approach to Sanjuanist mysticism that paid little attention to its relationship to dogma and to the Catholic theological tradition. In the *Supplement to La Vie spirituelle* of May 1925, Baruzi's thesis was the subject of a rather reserved review by Dom Philippe Chevallier (1884- 1972), a Benedictine of Saint-Pierre de Solesmes who was close to Fr Garrigou-Lagrange.²³ If the scholarly merits of the work are not contested, the reviewer nevertheless considers that Baruzi, by transposing the thought of Saint John of the Cross, ended up putting it to the service of an idealistic philosophy which no longer has anything Christian about it. In the July-August 1925 issue of *La Vie spirituelle*, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange makes the point in a review of a short popularization study recently published by the Bishop of Dijon, Maurice Lan drieux (1857-1926) and entitled *Sur les pas de saint Jean de la Croix* (1924). The master of the Angelicum believes that, however sober, Bishop Landrieux's little book is much more faithful to Sanjuanist thought than "the eight hundred page thesis written by M. Jean Baruzi after fifteen years of hard work." If Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange readily acknowledges the considerable erudition employed by Baruzi, if he has no difficulty in admitting that the philosopher manifests an obvious admiration for St. John of the Cross, he

²¹ On Delacroix, see Frédéric FRUTEAU DE LACLOS, *La psychologie des philosophes de Bergson à Vernant*, Paris 2012; *Naissance d'une psycho-philosophie. Henri Delacroix, le chaînon manquant d'une évolution créatrice*, pp. 31-53; and more recently Stéphane GUMPPER, *La crise moderniste, entre mystique et folie. La psychologie des religions en France (1899-1914)*, in *Modernisme, mystique, mysticisme*, pp. 33-63, here pp. 47-51.

²² On Baruzi, see Jean-Louis VIEILLARD-BARON, *Présentation*, in Jean BARUZI, *L'intelligence mystique*, ed. Jean-Louis VIEILLARD-BARON, Paris 1985, pp. 9-47; Émile POULAT, *Jean Baruzi historien de l'inaccessible*, in ID, *L'Université devant la mystique*, pp. 117-174; François TREMOLIERES, *Foi mystique et raison critique. Un débat de l'entre-deux-guerres (Bremond, Loisy, Bergson, Baruzi)*, in *Les enjeux philosophiques de la mystique*, ed. Dominique DE COURCELLES, Grenoble 2007, pp. 203-215, reprinted in François TREMOLIERES, *Approches de l'indicible. Études bremondienne*, Grenoble 2014, pp. 47-61; ID, *Le dossier Jean Baruzi*, in *Pius XI et la France. L'apport des archives du pontificat de Pie XI à la connaissance des rapports entre le Saint-Siège et la France*, ed. Jacques PREVOTAT, Rome 2010, pp. 269-281; and more recently Agnès DESMAZIÈRES, *L'expérience mystique de saint Jean de la Croix à l'aune des sciences humaines*, in *Vingtème Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 130 (2016), pp. 59-75; and Guglielmo FORNI ROSA, *Maritain contre Baruzi. Prémystique naturelle et mystique surnaturelle*, in *L'Université face à la mystique*, pp. 27-37.

²³ Philippe CHEVALLIER, *Saint John of the Cross in the Sorbonne*, in *Supplement to La Vie spirituelle*, May 1925, pp. 188-212.

immediately points out that the thesis defended at the Sorbonne "contains several of the most serious philosophical and theological errors, which one finds in the writings of the rationalist Henri Delacroix, to whom, moreover, this work is dedicated: "It is a characteristic sign of an era still deeply undermined by a radical modernism, which goes as far as the denial of the life of grace." ²⁴ To support his critique, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange refers to several passages in Baruzi's thesis that paradoxically tend to abstract Sanjuanist reflection from its rigorously Christian ground. Thus Baruzi claims that, in his desire to understand God, St. John of the Cross embarked above all on an enterprise of intellectual research: "He wants to arrive at divine thinking. It doesn't matter that he imagines he can do it through an action of God in him." ²⁵ For Baruzi, John of the Cross leads his reader "in a way beyond Christianity" ²⁶ - and he adds, "Of all the great mystics, John of the Cross is the one who most intimately realizes the permanent and universal conditions of divine union." ²⁷

When Baruzi comes to deal with the question of an infused contemplation in St. John of the Cross, his analyses provoke a firm rejection on the part of Father Garrigou-Lagrange. Baruzi thus notes in John of the Cross the experience of a passive way of the contemplative state, when "contemplation from partial becomes total and from external or functional becomes intimate or substantial": "One understands that this contemplation is more and more an infusion and that it finally consists *in receiving*. Expression all anthropomorphic, to indicate the stop of a mechanism considered inferior, the widening of our being far from any indiscrete movement [...]. But this reception does not imply an extrinsicism, since we are going to become spirit ourselves and since we are going to be led little by little to the theopathic state." ^M Conclusions that Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange rejects en bloc. For the Dominican, it is clear that Baruzi has given in to modernist tendencies and that he has come to deny the distinction, so essential in Christianity in general and in the doctrine of St. John of the Cross in particular, between nature and grace. Under Baruzi's pen, Sanjuan's teachings paradoxically become the vehicle for a naturalist mysticism.

The interest of philosophers in the mystical question contributed to transpose the debates of theologians onto another polemical stage, the one where the apologetic struggle against modernism and its aftermath was played out for a quarter of a century. A few months after the defense of Baruzi's thesis, a *Cahier de la Nouvelle Journée* - a liberal Catholic journal - was published, entitled *Qu'est-ce que la mystique?* in which the philosopher Maurice Blondel (1861-1949) made

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 518.

²⁵ Jean BARUZI, *Saint John of the Cross and the Problem of Mystical Experience*, Paris 1924, pp. 277-278.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

a noteworthy contribution on *Le problème de la mystique*. To be sure, Blondel explicitly pledges allegiance to the proponents of the system of extended mysticism when he writes: "If there is one precious gain among the results of recent controversies on mysticism, it is this: the life of contemplative union is not outside or beside the normal path, it is an extension of it; and all could or should tend to what makes it possible."²⁸ Yet he also enters into debate with Maritain - without naming him - on the question of knowledge by connaturality. In a letter to Fr. Bemadot dated April 27, 1925, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange expresses his irritation: "Blondel sent me the booklet of the *Cahiers de la Nouvelle Journée* on mysticism. I have not yet been able to read his article. I will write about it in a future column. These *Cahiers de la Nouvelle Journée* [...] become modernist again [...]. There is a renewal of modernism"²⁹ In the same letter, the professor of the Angelicum urges Fr. Bema dot, to whom he has sent the text of Dom Chevallier's review, to be firm against the positions defended in Baruzi's work, all the more so, explains the Dominican, since in the recent issue of the *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, Fr. Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990), himself a former student of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, under whose direction he completed a doctorate in theology devoted to contemplation, had "far too much praise for this book and really not enough reservations" - Fr. Chenu's review was indeed very admiring of Baruzi's work.³⁰ Fr. Baruzi's thesis is a real philosophical actuality. On May 2, 1925, Baruzi gave the opening talk at a session of the French Society of Philosophy devoted to "Saint John of the Cross and the problem of the noetic value of mystical experience."³¹ With Delacroix, Baruzi, Blondel, Maritain, then Bergson, the intrusion of philosophers indicates that reflection on mysticism is no longer the monopoly of theologians.

While they had to be careful to protect their epistemological prerogatives, the Dominicans of *La Vie spirituelle* also had to be careful not to be overtaken by the success of their theses. Jealous of the representatives of other spiritual sensibilities, they were reproached for opening up access to the mystical life too widely. Only four years after having published *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation*, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange was forced to moderate the expression of

²⁸ Maurice BLONDEL, *Le problème de la mystique*, in *Qu'est-ce que la mystique ? Quelques aspects historiques et philosophiques du problème* (Cahiers de la Nouvelle Journée, 3), Paris 1925, pp. 1-63, here p. 19.

²⁹ Garrigou-Lagrange to Bemadot, Rome, April 27, 1925: Paris, Archives dominicaines de la province de France, VI O 97.

³⁰ Marie-Dominique CHENU, *Doctrines chrétiennes: période moderne*, in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 14 (1925), n. 2, pp. 234-247, here pp. 240-245.

³¹ Jean BARUZI, *Saint Jean de la Croix et le problème de la valeur noétique de l'expérience mystique*, in *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie*, t. xxv, session of May 2, 1925, pp. 25-33, reprinted in ID., *L'intelligence mystique*, pp. 59-68. On the importance and the repercussion of the session of May 2, 1925, see Guglielmo FORNI ROSA, *Saint Jean de la Croix à la Société française de philosophie*, in *Modernisme, mystique, mysticisme*, pp. 65-85.

his commitments. While he was absorbed in writing a new synthesis of mystical theology that would lead to the publication in 1929 of *L'Amour de Dieu et la Croix de Jésus*, the Dominican published in September 1927 in *La Vie spirituelle* a column entitled *Ne brûlons pas les étapes* (*Let us not burn the stages*), the text of which had been in gestation since May 1926 - in which he proceeded, through a Liguorian inflection, to a complete rehabilitation of the ascetical stage in the development of the interior life.³² The turning point of 1927 opened a new phase in the quarrel of the first post-war period about the relationship between asceticism and mysticism.

Even if the party of extended mysticism had undeniably succeeded in winning the doctrinal victory, new publications contributed to shifting or complicating a discussion which, by the very admission of the protagonists, had ended up becoming rather repetitive. In 1927, the Assumptionist Father Fulbert Cayré (1884-1971), who had published a series of articles in *La Vie spirituelle* from October 1926 on the problem of contemplation in St. Augustine, published a monumental study entitled *La contemplation augustinienne*, which marked the rallying of the Augustinian school to the positions advocated by the Dominicans. Cayré's book compares the teachings of St. Augustine with the doctrine of the great masters of modern spirituality, and in particular with the theses of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa. Fr. Cayré may defend himself, in his introduction, of having wanted to take the side of a particular school in the debate on mysticism, but the fact remains that the three main conclusions he has reached largely corroborate the Garrigou-Lagrangian positions: St. Augustine's insistence on the necessity of mystical gifts for access to the contemplative state; the unity of contemplation, even if it has two forms, one passive and the other active; and finally, the characterization of the state of perfection by contemplation, even if simple meditation, "insofar as it is ordered to contemplation," can also "be considered as an oration of the perfect."³³ Cayré's interpretations thus make it possible to accord Augustinian teachings to the Garrigou-Lagrangian thesis of two contemplative states, one of acquired contemplation and the other of infused contemplation, the former opening the way to the latter. In the January 1928 issue of the *Supplément to La Vie spirituelle*, the Dominican Marie-Benoît Lavaud (1890-1979), a close friend of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, who had been a professor at the major seminary of La Rochelle and had joined the Order of Friars Preachers in September 1924, hastened to report with satisfaction on the recent publication by Fr.³⁴ He reminds

³² Réginald GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, *De l'intention à la réalisation en spiritualité. Ne brûlons pas les étapes*, in *La Vie spirituelle*, 16 (1927), n. 96, pp. 573-588.

³³ Fulbert CAYRE, *La contemplation augustinienne. Principes de la spiritualité de saint Augustin. Essai d'analyse et de synthèse*, Paris 1927, p. 11.

³⁴ Marie-Benoît LAVAUD, *La contemplation augustinienne*, in *Supplément à La Vie spirituelle*, January 1928, pp. [190]-[196].

us that the readers of *La Vie spirituelle* have been made aware of the theses defended by the assumptionist on the occasion of the publication of several articles and that they have thus been able to note "the essential agreement with the ideas defended here for eight years."³⁵ According to Fr. Lavaud, after the work of Fr. Cayré, it is now possible to see "how the doctrine of St. Augustine, by the multiplicity and the height of its points of view, makes it possible to work with some chance of success in reducing certain oppositions that misunderstandings alone could eternalize and make irreducible."³⁶ Cayré's demonstration is thus enlisted in the service of the cause defended by the team of *La Vie spirituelle* under the diligent leadership of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange. The analyses of Fr. Lavaud, who evokes a true "theological renaissance",³⁷ indicate the will to build a new age of Catholic theology by working "to compose, without confusing them [...], things that a certain exclusivist separatism had disjoined or opposed as enemies"³⁸ - and immediately, the Dominican to clarify his point by giving the very meaning, in his eyes, of the enterprise valiantly carried out by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange and his confreres of *La Vie spirituelle*. "We know that we must not expect everything from a theology without contact with the science of the saints and that, on the other hand, the experience of the saints, however superior it may be to discourse, to scientific reasoning, must be considered in the light of metaphysical and theological doctrine."³⁹ Without contemplation, Fr. Lavaud adds, there can be no perfect theology, but without the speculative rigor of theologians, contemplatives can only fall into error. With the recently published work by the Dominican Ambroise Gardeil (1859-1931) - a tutelary figure of the Saulchoir school - on *The Structure of the Soul and Mystical Experience* (1927), and which could have earned its author the suspicion of having rallied to the camp of Augustinianism to the detriment of his obligation of fidelity to the Thomasian teachings,⁴⁰ the study of Fulbert Cayré testifies to an unprecedented effort of theologians to spiritually refresh the very teaching of Catholic theology.

Developed in a particularly erudite and technical work, the conceptions of Fr. Cayré were very quickly the object of a popularized presentation. In the precious introduction which opens the first volume of his copious *Patrology and History of Theology* (1927-1944), the Assumptionist gives a judicious review of the principal notions of ascetical and mystical theology which, in fact, amounts to a review of recent discussions. One can easily notice the convergence with the Garrigou-

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. [195].

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Ambroise GARDEIL, *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique*, 2 vols, Paris 1927, t. i, *Introduction. III. Have I become an Augustinian*, pp. xxvii-xxxii.

Lagrangian doctrine. Cayré defines the ascetical life as the stage of the spiritual life in which asceticism predominates, that is, "the effort to dominate oneself and to submit to the divine action of grace".⁴¹ This ascetical phase should be identified with the traditional purgative and illumination paths native and which is "dominated by activity, both in prayer and in the acquisition of virtues".⁴² The stage of asceticism is sometimes followed by the mystical life proper, "in which the action of the Holy Spirit becomes more urgent in order to achieve perfection".⁴³ We find here a characteristic thesis of the system defended in *La Vie spirituelle* by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange and his confreres. Moreover, Fr. Cayré's agreement with the Garrigou-Lagrange theses is evident when he describes the mystical state as a "mixed state of soul" comprising on the one hand "mystical gifts [...which mark the part of the *divine activity* in a soul" and, on the other hand, "a very intense *human activity*, which in itself belongs to moral theology, especially asceticism, but which is linked here to mysticism because of the powerful influence exerted by the gifts on the whole conduct of the perfect".⁴⁴ The agreement with the positions of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange is manifested even in the rallying to the re-evaluation of the ascetic stage recently carried out by the Dominicans and the team of *La Vie spirituelle* - Fr. Cayré hastens to specify: "There would be disadvantages, however, in insisting in them [the perfect] on divine activity to the point of neglecting that of man; one would run the risk of implying that supernatural favors characterize holiness more than the virtues."⁴⁵ For Fr. Cayré, ascetical theology is therefore only a branch of moral theology which has as its goal to define the practical rules allowing progress in virtue in order to reach a state of perfection. Mystical theology, on the other hand, seems to be more naturally linked to dogmatics, and more particularly to the treatise on grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit - which were however originally included in the field of moral theology. The essential object of mystical theology, notes Fr. Cayré, is therefore contemplation, defined as "a high knowledge of God, usually granted by the Holy Spirit to Christians who have stripped themselves of their vices and firmly established themselves in virtue."⁴⁶ Within the Christian tradition in general, and among the Fathers in particular, Fr. Cayré then proposes to distinguish two great doctrinal trends in spirituality, moralism and mysticism. Mysticism is "the tendency to insist on the divine action in the soul", while moralism emphasizes "the duties of man, the activity he must deploy in the moral order in order to unite himself to God, in

⁴¹ Fulbert CAYRÉ, *Patrologie et histoire de la théologie*, t. I, 4^e ed., Paris-Toumai-Rome 1945 [1927¹], p. 20.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

a word, everything that we have linked to ascetic theology".⁴⁷ Reduced to its fundamental components, Fr. Cayré's doctrine is clearly in complete agreement with the system of the modern Dominican school of spirituality.

The inscription of the analyses elaborated by the Assumptionist in the French polemical context did not escape the opponents of the positions of *La Vie spirituelle*. In a rather severe review published in 1928 by the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, the Jesuit from Toulouse, Ferdinand Cavallera (1875-1954), respects the orientations of the periodical in which he publishes and manifests his attachment to the side of Fr. de Guibert - whom he succeeds in 1928 as director of the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* - when he criticizes Fr. Cayré for delivering interpretations that are anachronistic, scientifically fragile, and therefore largely questionable.⁴⁸ From its foundation, the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* had claimed to oppose *La Vie spirituelle*, a periodical attached to a scholastic conception of theology, by its insistence on developing a philological and historical approach to mysticism. Cavallera's review of Cayré's work is therefore consistent with the general epistemological orientation of the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*. Of Fr. Cayré's study, the Jesuit notes that it represents "a remarkable personal effort and an interesting attempt to adapt Augustinian thoughts and doctrines to the most current problems of ascetical and mystical theology", but he immediately points out: "This is its real merit and also, it must be said, its insufficiency."⁴⁹ The methodological choice made by Fr. Cayré in composing his book corresponds, according to Fr. Cavallera, to a model that is now largely outdated and to an old state of approaches devolved to mystical theology: "In wanting to pursue the double aim of making known the thought of St. Augustine and of adapting it to current doctrines on spirituality, Fr. Cayré risks missing the former to a great extent, while being somewhat deluded about the latter."⁵⁰ In the end, Fr. Cavallera reproaches Fr. Cayré for not having clearly admitted that his study, supposedly of positive theology, belonged to a polemical field whose effect it maintained. Between the two religious, there is a fundamental disagreement on the way to do theology. For the Jesuit, the Assumptionist had to choose between the two goals he had given himself. If it was a question of delivering a faithful reading of the positions of Saint Augustine, "a completely different method was needed, much more free from our scholastic formulas and our modern preoccupations"⁵¹ - it was then appropriate to approach the works of the holy bishop of Hippo in a much more objective manner, "with the sole concern of knowing what he really said about contemplation and of reproducing in all its

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁸ Ferdinand CAVALLERA, *Contemplation augustiniennne*, in *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, 9 (1928), n. 3, pp. 319-321.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

complexity, with its views of genius, no doubt, but also its gaps and its defects, the thought of the master".⁵² Cavallera, who has taught positive theology at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse since 1910 and who had the opportunity to develop his methodological commitments in two fundamental articles published respectively in November 1910 and January 1925 in the *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, the first on *Historical Theology*,⁵³ the second, more decisive, on *Positive Theology*.⁶ ' For Fr. Cavallera, Fr. Cayré lost sight of the fact that St. Augustine was writing at the beginning of the V^e century and that he was "a stranger to problems most of which would not arise until much later" - and to add very significantly:

"There is always some danger in trying to involve the authors of the distant past in the solution of questions to which they never directly devoted their attention. There is a danger of misunderstanding the true scope of their assertions and of attributing to them doctrines which are much more precise and determined than they really were."⁵⁴

According to Fr. Cavallera, this is the most serious flaw in Fr. Cayré's analyses: in wanting to relate the teachings of St. Augustine to the mystical question as it was posed in the 1920s, the assumptionist has misunderstood the healthy discipline of an authentically scientific positive theology. Cavallera's judgment is without appeal: "I fear that in [Fr. Cayré's] work on Augustinian contemplation, if there are good pieces to be retained, the whole must be closely reviewed and only imperfectly responds to what one would expect from an objective study on this subject."⁵⁵ Cavallera's warnings to Fr. Cayré must be taken seriously: in the background, one finds the defense of the epistemological orientations of the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* against the partisan commitments of *La Vie spirituelle* and in particular against the theological posture of Fr. Fr. Cayré is given a green lesson in method:

"It is clear, for example, that the starting point should not be the idea of contemplation as some schools of spirituality understand it today, but the Augustinian usage. It was therefore necessary to begin with a study of the word itself and its synonyms, to make known in detail what place it occupies in the writings of St. Augustine, what its various meanings are. This fundamental work has not been done."⁵⁶

Cavallera complained to Fr. Cayré that he had ignored the extent to which St. Augustine was dependent on scriptural language in the writing of his texts,

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Ferdinand CAVALLERA, *La théologie historique*, in *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, 4^e series, 2 (1910), n. 9, pp. 426-434.

⁵⁴ *Id.* in *Augustinian Contemplation*, p. 320.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

that he had not presented a chronological study of the Augustinian corpus, and that he had neglected to note the Neoplatonic influence. From his reading, the Jesuit retained the impression that, far from seeking to deliver the authentic expression of the thought of Saint Augustine, Fr. Cayré wanted above all to adapt to his polemical project theses which "have a much more general scope": "He discovers allusions and applications which testify above all to the ingenuity of his mind and to the desire to support on the authority of Saint Augustine the theories which have his preference."⁵⁷ The whole of Fr. Cayré's study is ultimately disqualified from a scientific point of view - thus his properly polemical contribution in favor of the system of extended mysticism is largely undermined.

The issue at stake in the debate was of primary importance, for it was a question of knowing whether the partisans of the Garrigou-Lagrangian theses could claim the guarantee of Saint Augustine. Cavallera's attacks elicited an ulcerated reply from Father Cayré, who published a column in the January 1929 *Supplement to La Vie spirituelle* entitled *Saint Augustin and contemporary spirituality*.⁵⁸ The Assumptionist began by recalling the seriousness of the judgment made against him by the Jesuit: "Father Cavallera makes a categorical judgment on the very conception of [my] work and on its method, which, if it were well founded, would go no further than to discredit it totally."⁵⁹ According to Fr. Cavallera, explains Fr. Cayré, his analyses were developed only to promote a doctrine in ascetic and mystical theology that the Jesuit does not approve of. Cayré insists that he himself has made an explicit profession of not belonging to any school and of meekly following the pure teachings of Saint Augustine. The accusation of having committed a guilty anachronism by making the Hipponate intervene in strictly contemporary debates is briskly swept aside by the assumptionist. Cayré notes that his adversary can of course rely on his competence as a specialist in positive theology, since he has studied the thought of Saint Jerome with unparalleled mastery in the two volumes of his imposing *Saint Jerome, his life and his work* (1922). The fact remains that the methodological intransigence he displays is not acceptable according to Fr. Cayré and that there is obviously no question of maintaining that nothing that St. Augustine teaches has any relation to the mystical debate of the 1920s:

"Father R. pleads all or nothing, like those lawyers who ask for the maximum sentence or acquittal for their client. But this position is untenable. Spirituality touches the very life of the Church; it is the soul of Christian life. Its external manifestations may be diverse, varying with the centuries; they come together in

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 321.

⁵⁸ Fulbert CAYRE, *Saint Augustine and contemporary spirituality*, in *Supplement to La Vie spirituelle*, January 1929, pp. [214]-[227].

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. [223].

areas familiar to all the saints of all times."⁶⁰

Cayré believes that the approach he has taken in his work is perfectly justified. This reply did not really convince Fr. Cavallera. The Jesuit published his response in October 1929 in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*.⁶¹ Cavallera reproached the Assumptionist for wanting to unduly prolong a discussion that lasted unnecessarily only because the protagonists refused to adopt a rigorous method - thus giving pride of place to an approach of positive theology - and defined criteria. Cavallera then proposes a programmatic definition of his epistemological conceptions. He affirms that in a scientific field, that of asceticism as in any other, "progress is manifested by the highlighting of new problems clarifying and making explicit the ancient doctrine."⁶² Precisions and explanations which are themselves dependent on the then dominant metaphysical and psychological theories. In the field of the asceticism and the mysticism, it is necessary moreover to take into account the contributions of experimental testimonies whose richness varies from one time to another. But "to want, in these cases, to make use of the statements of ancient authors who had no idea of these problems of a technical nature, posed in very precise conditions, depending on scholastic conceptions that had never occurred to them, is to do a truly vain work."⁶³ Fr. Cavallera then concludes his reply by noting that the arguments recently put forward by Fr. Cayré do not allow him to modify his first judgment and by affirming once again that a scientific study of Augustinian contemplation still remains to be done.

At the time when the Dominicans began a strategic retreat to the Liguorian positions, the conflict between the schools on the alternative between restricted and extended mysticism experienced a final outburst. In 1927, the Jesuit Albert Valensin (1873-1944), professor at the Faculty of Theology in Lyon, published a study in the *Nouvelle revue théologique* entitled *L'objet propre de la théologie spirituelle*.¹² In it, he vigorously developed two main theses, which, according to him, form the heart of the Catholic spiritual tradition: on the one hand, that "ascetical theology and mystical theology, still distinct in their processes, nevertheless meet in the fundamental unity of their object, which is the perfection of the spiritual life, of which they are, both of them, the science."⁶⁴ on the other hand, that spiritual or mystical theology, considered from its double experimental and speculative point of view, "is not essentially distinct from scholastic theology", but that, "basing itself on its principles, it brings to the conclusions of reason

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. [226].

⁶¹ Ferdinand CAVALLERA, *La contemplation augustinienne*, in *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, 10 (1929), n. 4, pp. 421-426.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 425.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

enlightened by faith, this new enrichment which makes theology a *Wisdom*".⁶⁵ The analyses proposed by Fr. Valensin indicate that Jesuit theologians were sometimes favorable to the positions defended by *La Vie spirituelle* under the impulse of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange. Thus Fr. Valensin recalls that

"It is not exclusively, nor even principally, by extraordinary phenomena, by gratuitous graces, *gratiae gratis datae*, that mysticism is characterized, properly speaking, but by the sanctifying grace, *gratia gratum faciens*, of an intimate union with God in charity, whose act par excellence is that of contemplation, produced in the soul by the infusion of the gift of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁶

This is a deliberate expression of an agreement in principle with the Garrigou-Lagrangian theses. In a column in the *Supplement to La Vie spirituelle* of February 1929 entitled *L'unité de la vie spirituelle*⁶⁷, Father François-Xavier Maquart (1892-1947), a professor at the major seminary of Reims and a close associate of Maritain and Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, does not hesitate to underline the fact that Fr. Valensin "indicates in very clear terms his preference for the school which, admitting the unity of the spiritual life, does not place mysticism outside the normal ways of grace."⁶⁸ Furthermore, Father Maquart continues, Fr. Valensin firmly defends the need for asceticism in the progression towards the mystical way - the chronicler of *La Vie spirituelle* thus tends to make the Jesuit from Lyon a supporter of the Liguorian turn very recently given by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange to the modern Dominican school of spirituality. Thus, Fr. Valensin does not hesitate to maintain that "a mysticism without ascetical practices would run the risk of making people take sentimental reveries for the living realities of spirituality."⁶⁸ Further on, the Jesuit adds: "If we can therefore say of mysticism that it is like *the ontology* of the spiritual life, it would seem appropriate to add that asceticism is its *logic* and asceticism its *methodology*."⁶⁹ Proposals that are in line with the new positions adopted by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange - and one is therefore not surprised to see that they arouse the full approval of Abbé Maquart: "These last formulas are golden!"⁶⁹ Without being overly instrumentalized, the tacit but clear rallying of Fr. Valensin made it possible to counter the intransigence of the Toulouse Jesuits led by Frs. de Guibert and Cavallera. Once the first Liguorian softenings had been made, the new version of the system of extended mysticism appeared to be a very acceptable compromise and likely to rally authors who had previously been spontaneously inclined to defend the party of restricted mysticism.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 167.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p 182.

⁶⁷ François-Xavier MAQUART, *L'unité de la vie spirituelle*, in *Supplément à La Vie spirituelle*, February 1929, pp. [265]-[277].

⁶⁸ VALENSIN, *L'objet propre de la théologie spirituelle*, p. 182.

⁶⁹ MAQUART, *The Unity of the Spiritual Life*, p. [267].

The Garrigou-Lagrangian theses naturally still have obstinate opponents, and among them, the Carmelite Marie-Joseph of the Sacred Heart still stands out. At the end of 1927, he published in the *Études carmélitaines* a remarkable contribution on *La spiritualité camélitaine traditionnelle*.⁷⁰ Marie-Joseph du Sacré-Coeur reaffirmed positions diametrically opposed to the system defined by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange and advocated in *La Vie spirituelle*. He thus holds that "there are two ways to reach the summit of perfection, *the ascetic way and the mystical way*".⁷¹ The path of asceticism progresses through the three stages of the purgative life, the illuminative life and the unitive life. For Fr. Marie-Joseph of the Sacred Heart, it is obvious that "this ascetic way is complete in itself".⁷² A little further on, the Carmelite atrabilaire retains that infused contemplation is not necessary "for the full development of the spiritual life":

"Therefore, it is not the normal (i.e. regular) crowning achievement of the ascetic way, since this alone can lead to the highest perfection. This is why there is no remote call to infused contemplation for all Christians, in virtue of their baptism, as is taught by those who want the full perfection of the Christian life to be of a mystical order and cannot be attained without infused contemplation. >>^M

The highest sanctity is thus accessible to each one by the difficult but sure way of asceticism; if the mystical way brings unspeakable pleasures, it is also full of dangers. Marie-Joseph of the Sacred Heart orders the doctrine of the Carmelite school only to acquired contemplation, not to the infused. The opposition to the Garrigou-Lagrangian system is clearly assumed. In February 1929, Father Maquart, who acted as Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange's spokesman in *La Vie spirituelle* when the professor of the Angelicum was preoccupied with more urgent tasks, maintained that the position of Fr. Marie-Joseph of the Sacred Heart was isolated among the Carmelites and that, moreover, it did not conform to the tradition of the Carmelite school. Father Maquart then opportunely refers to a study entitled *La spiritualité carmélitaine* published by the Carmelite Jérôme de la Mère de Dieu (1870-1954) - a close friend of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange - in the March 25, 1927 issue of the *Cahiers thomistes*, where a rigorously Carmelite system is formulated which is closely in line with the orientations of *La Vie spirituelle*. Moreover, Maquart notes, the examples of Saint Therese and Saint John of the Cross show sufficiently that the spirituality of the Carmelites is oriented "towards the peaks which were for these two masters of the spiritual life the way to holiness": "It would be difficult to understand how they could have sanctified themselves outside the ways which constitute the *proper* spirit of the Order to which Providence had

⁷⁰ Marie-Joseph DU SACRÉ-COEUR, *La spiritualité carmélitaine traditionnelle*, in *Études carmélitaines*, 12 (1927), n. 2, pp. 145-171.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁷² *Ibid.*

assigned them.⁷³ The doctrinal conjunction between Carmelites and friars preachers, cemented by the adoption of a common Thomism, was once again established to legitimize the supremacy of the Garrigou-Lagrangian theses.

Numerous indications concur to show that at the moment when the Dominican team which presides over the destiny of *La Vie spirituelle* begins a movement of liguorisation of its doctrine, we are witnessing an irremediable loss of steam in the debate around the mystical question. If the victory of the positions defended by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange and his confreres is not in question, to the great displeasure of Frs. Cavallera and Marie-Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the need is clearly felt to begin a rigorous discussion that goes beyond the different partisan commitments in order to clarify the frameworks of the debate and in particular the definition of terms, too often used without knowing exactly what they mean. One protagonist of the quarrel in particular stood out for his unceasing plea for the establishment of a vocabulary on which everyone could agree: Father Joseph de Guibert. In January 1926, the Jesuit had already pointed out in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* the imprecision of the term *mystic*:

"The word *mysticism* pays for its present vogue by a crisis of imprecision, which almost discourages from using it whoever cares to express his thought with clearness and exactitude. It is, however, a very old word [...]; it has behind it a rich and varied history which should, it seems, defend it against the whims of arbitrary usage. >>⁷⁴

In July and October 1927, Fr. de Guibert published a substantial article in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* entitled *L'appel à la contemplation infuse* in which he pleaded for a clear doctrinal reorganization of the mystical question.⁷⁵ It is immediately clear that the quarrel that has been going on since the beginning of the 1920s has had unfortunate repercussions among the faithful. On the one hand, in fact, explains Fr. de Guibert, "these souls have been accustomed to consider the mystical graces properly so called, the gifts of infused contemplation, as divine privacies reserved for a relatively small number of privileged Christians, called by a free choice of God to walk in this more magnificent way.⁷⁶ - On the other hand, perfectly orthodox authors - here we are talking about the proponents of extended mysticism - who claim to have absolutely venerable traditions, never cease to repeat that access to the state of infused contemplation is the normal outcome of the spiritual life. Valensin wrote in 1927 in the *Nouvelle revue théologique* "that it would be singularly damaging to the spiritual life of the faithful if the opinion were

⁷³ MAQUART, *The Unity of the Spiritual Life*, p. [273].

⁷⁴ Joseph DE GUIBERT, "Mystique", in *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, 7 (1926), n. 1, pp. 3-16, here p. 3.

⁷⁵ ID, *The Call to Infused Contemplation: Tradition and Opinions*, *ibid*, 8 (1927), n. 3, pp. 225-248, and 8 (1927), n. 4, pp. 337-360.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 225.

to be accepted that there were two schools of spirituality in the Church, equally authorized, even though they were formally opposed on the essential points of Christian perfection.⁷⁷ The article by Fr. de Guibert is therefore a necessary reflection on the state of affairs which proposes, much more than accusing the differences between the schools in presence, to bring to light the whole of the positions on which the one and the other agree. Garrigou-Lagrange and his supporters to obtain brilliant results, the fact is confirmed when Fr. de Guibert admits that there is now agreement "to recognize that the highest sanctity can adorn a soul without the help of certain gifts that everyone qualifies as extraordinary, visions, revelations, interior words, and without presenting in any degree the phenomena of ecstasy, or a fortiori of levitation, stigmatization, etc."⁷⁸ Infused contemplation is absolutely no longer considered as belonging to the extraordinary phenomena of the mystical life. The fact remains that recourse to Christian tradition to settle the remaining disagreements can only be made with a philological meticulousness - one recognizes here a characteristic position of the Toulouse Jesuits - which most of the protagonists of the dispute dispense with too easily. Fr. de Guibert repeats: "Too often, investigators are satisfied with the simple word *contemplation* to apply a medieval text to infused contemplation."⁷⁹ Yet, the Jesuit insists, the term most of the time has a much more indeterminate meaning. The resolution of the mystical quarrel must therefore pass through scientific and rigorous lexical investigations.

In the incessant polemical concert that marked the treatment of the mystical question on the French theological scene of the 1920s, the importance of the year 1927 must be emphasized. Because they had unquestionably won the day, the Garrigou-Lagrangian theses were widely disseminated, leading the team of *La Vie spirituelle* and the professor of the Angelicum to make a tactical withdrawal in order to avoid being accused of encouraging dangerous excesses of false mysticism. The publications of 1927 saw the consolidation of a common front between the Thomist and Carmelite schools, which were joined by the Augustinian school, in spite of the persistence of resistance which emanated either from isolated voices - such as that of the Carmelite Marie-Joseph of the Sacred Heart - or from the Jesuit pole of Toulouse, which had nevertheless made important concessions. The article by Fr. de Guibert on *The Call to Infused Contemplation* in fact proposes a roadmap for the appeasement of the quarrel. In it, the Jesuit argues that the acrimony of the discussions that have taken place is due mainly to the fact that the various protagonists have made little effort to try to understand the point of view of their opponents - in each case, the consequences of the doctrine under attack have been distorted and exaggerated: "Let anyone deny the universal call to

⁷⁷ VALENSIN, *L'objet propre de la théologie spirituelle*, p. 191.

⁷⁸ DE GUIBERT, *L'appel à la contemplation infuse*, p. 231.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

infused contemplation, it will be imagined at once that he claims to keep all souls in the exclusive practice of discursive meditation, to compel them never to depart from a rigorously traced method."⁸⁰ The ardor of the exchanges was reinforced by an unprecedented publicization of the dispute, which led to a popularized dissemination of the opposing theses. In 1927, Fr. de Guibert frankly asked the question of whether high spirituality was "susceptible to a safe vulgarization."⁸¹ He notes that "today pious souls [...] rush en masse, with insatiable greed, to the writings of high spirituality".⁸² This taste has led to the multiplication of collections and publications of ancient mystical writings and studies intended for the general public - a fact that the Jesuit Pierre Charles notes in his turn in an assessment of dogmatic theology published in 1929 in the *Nouvelle revue théologique*:

"Among the phenomena of our time, we must certainly note the ever-increasing success of theological literature for the use of Christian people [...]. Today it is claimed - and the public does not balk - to initiate the laity into the mysteries of dogma and to explain to them the doctrinal foundations of the spiritual life. Biographies in which no external events stimulate curiosity, *diaries of souls* in which only subtle mystical experiences are described, find buyers and fervent readers - sometimes lacking, moreover, the sufficient intellectual preparation or the counterweights that ensure perfect mental balance."⁸³

In 1927, Fr. de Guibert noted that the contemporary success of mystical literature was the object of two different types of appreciation. For some, there is reason to be pleased to see the faithful desirous of nourishing themselves with texts written by undeniably orthodox and very often canonized authors. To forbid them access to them can only mean the will to maintain them in a spiritual mediocrity little in conformity with the spirit of authentic Christianity. Other theologians and directors of conscience, knowing the difficulty of mystical texts, are wary of the erroneous interpretations that the simple faithful can make of them. The conflict between these two attitudes, according to Fr. de Guibert, largely explains the duration and intensity of the ongoing quarrel over asceticism and mysticism. The Dominicans of *La Vie spirituelle* and Fr Garrigou-Lagrange were obviously not insensitive to the arguments of their adversaries. The inflection given by the professor of the Angelicum in his article of September 1927 entitled *Ne brûlons pas les étapes* (*Let us not burn the*

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 349.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 353.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 356.

⁸³ Pierre CHARLES, *La théologie dogmatique hier et aujourd'hui*, in *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 56 (1929), n. 10, pp. 800-817, here p. 812.

stages) gave the Jesuits a first satisfaction by proceeding, with the guarantee of Alphonse de Liguori, to a rehabilitation of the ascetic stage in the progress of the spiritual life. The text, which was very well received, had a pastoral impact, since in its October 20, 1928 issue, the *Semaine religieuse de Paris* echoed a recent recommendation of the Council of Vigilance of the Paris diocese, the text of which is quoted in full: "In this march towards Christ, are some of the faithful not going too fast? Shouldn't it be said of them that they are burning up the stages?"⁸⁴ Immediately, the Council of Vigilance to recall that spiritual perfection can only be acquired by the prior exercise of a vigorous asceticism. Garrigou-Lagrange: "Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, in an article that has not been forgotten, denounced here the danger of a certain tendency to burn out the stages of the spiritual life. We are happy to see the Vigilance Council of the Diocese of Paris confirming with its high authority the directives of *La Vie spirituelle*."⁸⁵ As for the appeals made by Fr. de Guibert for a preliminary lexical agreement that was absolutely essential to the conclusion of the ongoing quarrel, they were eventually heard, and from June 1929 to May 1931, the *Supplément to La Vie spirituelle* published the elements of a vast investigation intended to fix mystical terminology. Concluded in the issue of 1^{er} May 1931 by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange himself,⁸⁵ the survey opens in June 1929 with a firm questioning of Canon Saudreau,⁸⁶ which signifies the will of the magazine to respond to the challenge launched by the Toulouse Jesuits: "It is not rare to hear this remark made: the authors who nowadays write on mysticism do not agree on the meaning of the words they use; this divergence in terminology is a cause of confusion and disagreements, it makes many arguments go wrong; it sometimes puts off those who would like to study this science."¹⁰ The rest of the statement indicates without ambiguity that Canon Saudreau and with him the team of *La Vie spirituelle* have accepted to break with the scholastic and systematic character of their previous commitments in order to enter into an approach more concerned with answering the specifications of a positive theology soundly applied. It is true that the victory won on a doctrinal level could allow the Dominicans to come on the ground of their adversaries, and Canon Saudreau does not have difficulty in admitting, following the example of Fr. de Guibert in his long article of July and October 1927, that the points of agreement are henceforth more numerous than the disagreements between the partisans of restricted mysticism and the defenders of the system of extended mysticism,

⁸⁴ Quoted in *La Vie spirituelle*, 19 (1928), n. 111, p. 353.

⁸⁵ Réginald GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, *L'enquête pour fixer la terminologie mystique*, in *Supplément à La Vie spirituelle*, May 1931, pp. [65]-[75].

⁸⁶ Auguste SAUDREAU, *Pour fixer la terminologie mystique et pour obtenir une entente*, in *Supplément à La Vie spirituelle*, June 1929, pp. [129]-[146].

henceforth moderated by the contribution of the Liguorian theses. After a decade of dispute, Fr Garrigou-Lagrange and his confreres and allies tried to put an end to the quarrel by undertaking the necessary lexical reorganization to which their adversaries had been inviting them since the beginning of the contestations.

Abstract

At the end of 1923, Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange published *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation*. The book is a masterful synthesis that presents the Thomistic system of extended mysticism to the public, defended by the Dominicans in the journal *La Vie spirituelle* since 1919. Against the supporters of the characteristic theses of a restricted mysticism, the representatives of Thomist orthodoxy clearly won the victory in 1923. The theologians who animated *La Vie spirituelle* were given new responsibilities. They had to embody a theological sensibility whose doctrinal dominance was now accepted but whose theses gave rise to abusive interpretations. From 1923 to 1927, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange was thus gradually led to moderate the radical nature of his theological positions.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. [129].

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*. at 226.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁹ Réginald GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, *Un traité de vie spirituelle. Sur les pas de saint Jean de la Croix*, in *La Vie spirituelle*, 12 (1925), n. 70-71, pp. 516-519, here p. 518.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 609.

⁶¹ *Id*. in *La théologie positive*, *ibid*. 26 (1925), n. 1, pp. 20-42.

⁷² Albert VALENSIN, *L'objet propre de la théologie spirituelle*, in *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 54 (1927), n. 3, pp. 161-191.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. [267].

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 168.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 353.