

RECENT THEOLOGICAL OPINION ON INFUSED CONTEMPLATION

ROBERT B. EITEN, S.J.

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE
St. Mary's, Kansas

INTRODUCTION

While there are many who would try to characterize this age as one of Godlessness, yet on the other hand it cannot be denied that there has scarcely ever been an age in which so much interest was shown in mental prayer in all its ramifications, and here I refer especially to infused contemplation. The numerous writings of Garrigou-Lagrange, Suardreau, Poulain, de la Taille, Arinterro, de Guibert, to mention only some of many outstanding writers, are a sufficient proof of this. Maritain in his monumental work, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, in which no less a scholar than Dr. Mortimer Adler discerns ". . . the outlines, at least, of a synthesis of science, philosophy and theology which will do for us what St. Thomas did for philosophy in the middle ages,"¹ devotes more space to mystic prayer than to any other subject.

THE NATURE OF INFUSED CONTEMPLATION

Three states of mental prayer usually precede infused contemplation. They are 1) meditation, which is largely a discursive reflection involving affective acts and resolutions; 2) affective prayer, which resembles meditation except that the discursive reflection is gradually lessened and affectivity is increased; and finally, 3) simplified affective prayer, the prayer of simplicity or simple regard, which according to Bossuet "consists in a simple view, regard, or loving thought on some Divine object, be it God Himself, or some of His mysteries, or any other Christian truth."² This prayer of simplicity is also called acquired or active contemplation.

INFUSED CONTEMPLATION PROPER

Before defining infused contemplation it will be well to give descriptive definitions of the four stages of development which Saint Teresa singles out for this type of prayer: 1) The prayer of quiet: here "the divine action is not strong enough to hinder distractions;" or briefly, "here the imagination still preserves its liberty." 2) Full union: a state in which "the soul is fully occupied with the divine object;" it is not here troubled by distractions. "On the other hand, the senses continue to act more or less, so that it is possible, by a greater or lesser effort, to put ourselves in relations with the

¹*What Man Has Made of Man*, p. 242.

²Quoted from Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 638, n. 1364.

exterior world, by speaking, walking, etc., it is possible to come out from our prayer." 3) Ecstasy: here "the Divine action has a considerable force, and all outside communications with the senses are interrupted, or almost entirely so. Thus we are no longer capable of any movements, such as are voluntary at least, nor are we able to come out of our prayer at will." 4) The Spiritual Marriage (transforming union): here there is almost a permanent union with God, even in the midst of exterior occupations, and this in such a manner that these two different operations do not interfere with one another. There is also a transformation of the higher faculties in their mode of operation (hence the name of transforming union). Finally, in this union there is generally a permanent intellectual vision of the Blessed Trinity, or some Divine attribute.³

In the light of these descriptions we might with J. de Guibert, S.J., define infused contemplation as "a contemplative prayer in which a simplification of the intellectual and affective acts in the soul results from a Divine action which surpasses, or even sometimes, contradicts that which would be produced by the simple causes of a psychological order when they are at work."⁴

THEORIES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASCETICISM AND MYSTICISM

In 1896 Mgr. Auguste Saudreau published *Les Degrés de la Vie spirituelle*, and in 1901 another work of his appeared under the title: *La Vie d'union à Dieu et les moyens d'y arriver*.⁵ In these and other works of his, he has

³Poulain, S.J., *Graces of Interior Prayer*, 6th Ed., London, 1911, pp. 54, 283. Poulain's book is truly a monumental work when it comes to description. Besides this work, one might profitably consult Garrigou-Lagrange, *Les trois âges de la vie intérieure*, Paris 1938, Vol. 2, pp. 56-59, 482-497, 400-410, 681-708; Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life*, pp. 667-697, nn. 1420-1481. Of course for further study, the works of Saint Teresa, Saint John of the Cross, and Saint Francis de Sales should be consulted. It is beyond the scope of this article to give anything more than the barest essentials of infused contemplation. We rather suppose an acquaintance with this subject.

⁴*Etudes de Théologie Mystique* p. 25. I will append here also his definition of contemplation in general, and acquired contemplation (the prayer of simplicity) to bring out the proper contrasts between these states. "Contemplation or contemplative prayer is a mental prayer in which our soul is elevated and united to God by an intellectual gaze and volitional adherence, both entirely simple, with the result that reasoning and a multiplicity of thoughts and affections are excluded." And "acquired contemplation is a contemplative prayer in which a simplification of intellectual and affective acts results by a simple play of the psychological laws from our personal activity aided by grace." p. 25. Garrigou-Lagrange's definition stresses the theological side of contemplation. It is: Infused contemplation is "a loving knowledge of God, which is not the fruit of human activity aided by grace, but of a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost." (*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, p. 46)

⁵Both works have been translated into English and have gone through several editions.

tried to show by extracts from the Fathers, theologians, and spiritual writers down through the ages that infused contemplation is not to be considered anything extraordinary or to be necessarily identified with visions, revelations, and other such psycho-physical phenomena.⁶ Contemporaneously a work of great importance, *Les Grâces d'Oraison*,⁷ by Augustin Poulain, S.J., appeared. While the latter agreed with Saudreau in many points, yet in some very important ones he disagreed with him, and especially on the general call to contemplation. Dom Butler has indicated clearly Poulain's mind in the following remarks:

"Mystical prayer is for him [Poulain] no doubt the reward and the crowning of previous endeavors; but still itself is a thing in no way 'achieved,' but wholly 'given.' Consequently he ranges the prayer of simplicity, of faith, in the category of ordinary and non-mystical prayer, and calls it 'acquired contemplation,' one that can be acquired in some measure by our own industry and exercisings, of course, assisted always by Divine grace. This setting up of two different kinds of contemplation, one acquired and non-mystical, the other infused and mystical, is vehemently opposed by the other school, by Saudreau and the Dominicans."⁸

With this began a controversy "on the general and remote call to infused contemplation."⁹ This controversy is still being carried on, with Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., Arintero, O.P., Joret, O.P., Lamballe, Peeters, S.J., Jaegher, S.J., De la Taille, S.J., Maréchal, S.J., etc. holding out for Saudreau, and De Guibert, S.J., Cardinal Billot, S.J., Maumigny, S.J., Mgr. Lejeune, Mgr. Farges, etc. defending Poulain's position. I shall try to set down scientifically and synoptically the fundamental positions of these two schools of thought.

Rather than emphasize or stress their differences as some authors do, I believe that it is much in place here to note first of all the several points

⁶One could scarcely suggest a better work in English on this entire subject than the Introduction (*After-thoughts*, 75 pages long) of *Western Mysticism* by Dom Cuthbert Butler, London, 1927. Tanqueray's treatment, op. cit. 1558-1570, is also very clear. Perhaps, no modern author has discussed this problem with greater zeal and length than Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P.

⁷This work has gone through eleven editions in the French and it has been translated into various languages.

⁸Dom Cuthbert Butler, O.S.B., *Western Mysticism*, p. xxi.

⁹With regard to the individual and proximate call to infused contemplation there is no great divergence of opinion. Of this Garrigou-Lagrange writes: "It is certain that all holy souls are not called in an individual and proximate fashion to infused contemplation." Of this latter call he further writes: "Finally the individual and proximate call can be sufficient and remain sterile on account of our negligence, or on the contrary, it is efficacious and it is such in different ways: either to conduct us effectively to the lower grades of contemplation or to raise us to the very highest ones." (*Les trois âges de la vie intérieure*, Vol. 2, pp. 413-433).

on which there is a complete agreement. In the light of these, we will see these two schools are not so far apart, even though they have a few fundamental differences.¹⁰ The following are points on which they all agree:

1) Actual sanctity of a soul is measured by the amount of sanctifying grace which it possesses, and by the perfection of the life which it lives, joined to an ever more complete dominion of theological charity over all the acts of our lives. There are by no means two kinds of theological charity and thus as a consequence there are not two species of sanctity.

2) To reach a high degree of sanctity and perfection, special graces are necessary. They must be more abundant and more stimulating than those which suffice for an ordinary good life or for simple perseverance in grace joined to the graces necessary to ensure the latter. The recipient of these extraordinary graces on the other hand must ever more and more show a greater docility to correspond with these graces with the result that the life of grace completely rules all the actions of his life.

3) One of the effects of this life of grace in a holy soul will be an ever greater union of its mind and will with God. Finally this union will become habitual. Joined to this there will be also an ever greater penetration of the supernatural truths and mysteries of our faith.

4) Thus, as a result there is no sanctity without a life of fervent, deep, and ever-increasing prayer, be it mental, vocal, ejaculatory, or contemplative.

5) Nor is there sanctity without an intimate and rigorous purification of the soul. For this purification personal efforts, even the most generous, will not suffice, but God must intervene by means of interior and exterior trials which are adapted to the special needs of each soul. And thus we have something similar to the nights of Saint John of the Cross.

6) The very highest possible sanctity is perfectly consonant without those gifts which all term extraordinary as visions, revelations, internal locutions, ecstasies, levitation, stigmatization, etc. There was a time, especially in the 16th century, when such an agreement did not exist.

7) Infused contemplation is a very notable factor in sanctifying those souls to whom God has given it. Thus, in itself it is most desirable. There may be a difference of opinion on the opportuneness of exciting such a desire in all souls on account of certain disadvantages it may bring about. As any other means of sanctification, it can be desired and prayed for under certain conditions.

8) The term *infused contemplation* is used or applied to those forms of prayer described by Saint Teresa in the last three mansions of *The Interior Castle*. Many authors understand this term also to apply to the prayer of quietude described in the Fourth Mansion, and even to the prayer of sim-

¹⁰de Guibert, S.J., op. cit. pp. 126-136, says that no essential point of the spiritual life is here involved.

plicity; or even more widely yet. Again while there is not an entire agreement among authors as to the definitions of these different degrees of prayer nor again even to the degrees themselves, still it is very doubtful if there is any author who would refuse to admit that there is a special kind of work of great importance, *Les Graces d'Oraison*,⁷ by Augustin Poulain, S.J., prayer which corresponds substantially to Saint Teresa's description in the last three or four Mansions.

9) The gift of infused contemplation cannot be an object of strict merit *ex condigno* (Garrigou-Lagrange and Arintero would most likely tone this down. See *Christian Contemplation and Perfection*, p. 161, and *Questions*, ed. 2 pp. 248-286). Thus when it is a question of a call to infused contemplation, it is to be understood of the remote, and not of the proximate and immediate call.¹¹

10) Both schools admit that there is some continuity between acquired prayer and infused contemplation. Surely fundamentally there is an essential continuity and unity in the spiritual life insofar as charity, the bond of perfection, remains the same in spite of its continual progress *in via ad patriam*. Nor is this latter continuity or unity in any way impaired by any Divine gifts of any kind, be they internal or external, which God may give to strengthen this charity.¹²

11) There is a tendency in both schools to admit that infused contemplation differs specifically, and not merely in degree (in intensity) from the states of prayer prior to it.¹³

12) Infused contemplation is usually *per se* and primarily granted for one's holiness, and secondarily that others may be urged on to a greater love of God.¹⁴

13) All or nearly all authors agree that God grants the gift of infused contemplation *when* and *in the way* he wishes, and therefore, sometimes even to beginners, although this latter is very rare. All admit, too, that direction, temperament, external surroundings, vocation, etc. are important factors in the reception of this gift.¹⁵

¹¹These nine points are a summary of a more lengthy and excellent exposition of de Guibert, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-122.

¹²de Guibert, S.J., *Theologia Spiritualis Ascetica et Mystica*, Rome, 1937, p. 346, n. 393b.

¹³Garrigou-Lagrange gives his reason for this in the following remark: "On the contrary, a special inspiration on the part of the gifts, a thing which is notably above our own powers, is required for infused contemplation. This former requires a superior direction and because of this, the gifts are specifically distinct from the virtues by their formal object. It follows, therefore, that infused contemplation and acquired prayer are specifically distinct, if one bears in mind the proper characteristics of each." (*La vie spirituelle*, Jan. 1940, *Etudes et Documents*, pp. 40-42).

¹⁴de Guibert, S.J., *op. cit.*, pp. 376-377, n. 425b.

¹⁵de Guibert, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 377, 425b.

14) With every increase in sanctity, there is also a proportionate increase in the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Likewise, it seems that the graces which make infused contemplation possible, are largely caused by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially by the gift of understanding and wisdom.¹⁶

15) Our present supernatural life is not only a way and preparation to our future glory which we merit here below, but it is in some sort of way the beginning of that future life, insofar as by faith we now in obscurity truly possess the Blessed Trinity whereas *in patria* we will clearly see and possess the triune God. The charity which we have now, will be the same *in termino*. It unites us now to God by the bonds of friendship.¹⁷

16) Infused contemplation, especially in its higher degrees as the spiritual marriage, gives to the soul a state similar in some sort of fashion to the state which it will have *in termino*, insofar as some of the veils which hide from it the face of God, are brushed aside and insofar as it, too, on account of its purgations is better prepared to enter heaven immediately after death without the necessity of suffering in purgatory.¹⁸

17) It cannot be proved that holy souls (saints) have not at least had transitory touches or passing graces which belong to the contemplative type. And much less can it be proved that there has never been a soul who being perfectly united to God, was without them.¹⁹

18) The way of infused contemplation is a normal way to high sanctity insofar as it does not place the soul outside of the ordinary laws of the spiritual life or contrary to the usual kinds of graces.²⁰

19) Infused contemplation does not produce a different union of the soul with God than that which sanctifying grace and charity initiate by faith in this life and complete by vision in the next.²¹

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

The chief points of difference between these two schools may be, I believe, reduced to two:

- 1) Is there a general remote call for the just to infused contemplation?²²
- 2) Is infused contemplation normally (morally) necessary for high (heroic) sanctity?²³

¹⁶de Guibert, S.J., op. cit., pp. 383.

¹⁷de Guibert, S.J., op. cit., p. 384.

¹⁸de Guibert, S.J., op. cit., p. 384.

¹⁹de Guibert, S.J., op. cit., pp. 386-387.

²⁰de Guibert, S.J., op. cit., pp. 387.

²¹de Guibert, S.J., op. cit., pp. 343-344.

²²Fr. de Guibert, *Etudes de Théologie Mystique*, p. 117, in the first paragraph of a section devoted to explain the extent of the doctrinal differences of these two schools writes: "Are all Christians called to the gift of infused contemplation? Or, in fact, is there on the contrary, a bifurcation of the spiritual life, two ways to reach sanctity, that of ordinary graces and that of extraordinary graces, just as holiness is possible in different callings, as in the marriage state or in the religious state? Have we not here an essential question whose solution governs the entire spiritual life? And yet who can deny that to this very question answers have been given today which are diametrically opposite?"

²³See de Guibert, op. cit., pp. 123-124: "The real problem, therefore, on which theologians

I only too well realize that some theologians will stress the fact of *continuity*. Thus Garrigou-Lagr ange heads three divisions of one article of one of his books as follows: I. Traditional Thesis: The Unity of Spiritual Doctrine. II. Thesis of Several Modern Authors: Separation of Ascetical From Mystical Theology. III. Return to the Traditional Thesis: Unity of Spiritual Doctrine.²⁴

However, I am thoroughly convinced that this is laying too much stress on something which followers of the other school will not admit. Of course, if one answers in the affirmative to the two points of difference mentioned above as Garrigou-Lagr ange does, it is easy to see that the continuity or compenetration between asceticism (acquired prayer) and mysticism (infused contemplation) is more real. It will not be out of place here to quote one of the typical defenders of the other school, Mgr. Farges:

"Does this mean that we erect an *impassible barrier* between the two [the passive ways of mysticism and the active or semi-active ways of asceticism and of acquired contemplation]? Not at all, for there is *no hiatus* in the works of God, but continuity is conjoined with hierarchy of species. The total passiveness of contemplation is only a final stage of the partial passiveness which is common to the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The ascetic ways are, then, a preparation for the mystical ways, if God will lead us in them."

But if mysticism is a continuation of asceticism, are we to conclude that it is the normal term of perfection and of the spiritual life, and therefore that we are all called thereto?²⁵

I have already in some sort of fashion indicated what positions these two schools of thought take. Among those who hold 1) that there is a general remote call to infused contemplation and 2) that infused contemplation is normally necessary for high (heroic) sanctity, are to be

ans, are divided, is this: is the gift of infused contemplation necessary to reach a high degree of sanctity? Or better: is it possible for anyone to arrive at a high degree of sanctity without this gift? Or still better, with the view of distinguishing more clearly the real problem from a question of vocabulary, does it happen *as a matter of fact (en fait)* that souls reach high sanctity without those gifts of infused contemplation which correspond in substance to the last three mansions of Saint Teresa?" In a foot note Fr. de Guibert explains what he means by *en fait (as a matter of fact)*: "Here we can abstract from the question as to whether this gift is a necessary means by the very nature of things, or simply that God has freely decided to give it to all souls advancing to it. The real problem is then, that whatever be its exact nature, does there exist *en fait* a bond *un lien* between sanctity and infused contemplation?" (p. 124).

²⁴*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, St. Louis, 1937, pp. 23, 27, 29. I might mention that constantly in his other works Father Garrigou-Lagr ange makes much of these distinctions.

²⁵Farges, *Mystical Phenomena*, 2nd ed., London, 1926, pp. 307-308. Mgr. Farges distinguishes the last sentence of the above quotation by stating that perfection has two meanings.

numbered Garrigou-Lagrance, O.P.,²⁶ Soudreau,²⁷ Lamballe,²⁸ de la Taille,

²⁶"... Is a special vocation necessary to reach the mystical life? In principle, no. The grace of the virtues and of the gifts suffices in itself by its normal development to dispose us to the mystical life, and mystical contemplation is necessary for the full perfection of the Christian life." (*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, p. 163. See also ch. 2, art. 2, and ch. 6 of this book. Likewise see his recent work, most likely his definitive one here, *Les trois âges de la vie intérieure*, Paris, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 16-30, Vol. 2, pp. 427-434.

²⁷Section 2 of Chapter XI of *The Life of Union with God*, p. 316, reads: "Contemplative union the end of the spiritual life." About three pages are devoted to this section. See also n. 12 ss. His *Degrees of the Spiritual Life*, ch. 6, might also be profitably consulted.

²⁸Lamballe devotes an entire chapter (chapter 2) in his book, *Mystical Contemplation*, to this subject; he concludes as follows: "Let us, then, unhesitatingly draw our conclusion: Contemplation is the normal goal of the spiritual life." (p. 98). In the following text he tries to show the necessity of contemplation for sanctity: "If we would have indisputable examples of the highest sanctity, we must go to the great Christians who have been beatified or canonized by the Church, though they were not martyrs. Were all of them contemplatives? Yes; all those whose history is known possessed mystical gifts in such a high degree that they burst forth in spite of them, however much care they took to dissimulate them, and this has been capable of historical proof." (p. 93).

²⁹"On the contrary, the law of Providence on the growth and development of grace being granted, we can say in the case of a given subject, that he has passed a certain point to which he can attain by his human exercise of virtue and supernatural gifts, there will be no more regular and normal progress for him, except by the path of passivity." In a foot note he explains this providential law with great profundity as follows: "This providential law consists in this: that man progresses by his victories over self-love, gaining more and more on his self-love for the advantage of his love of God, so that his self-love ends, if not by dying, at least in being separated from that inaccessible term by only a negligible distance. One can see that the continuous heroism implied in such a conquest growing more and more complete, and more and more stable, will not be able to maintain itself beyond a certain point, given human weakness, unless by means of the inappreciable help furnished by contemplative love. It is not a question of physical, but of moral impossibility. This moral impossibility will appear at various points of growth, according to the vigour of natural temperament and character, the relative richness of the individual's sentiments and intellectual resources, and degree of abundance of external supports, etc. But since in all men there exists the weakness inherent in fallen nature, it is evident that in every case moral forces have a practical limit, and contemplation and an increasing contemplation may well be needed to surpass and advance beyond it." *Contemplative Prayer*, New York, 1927, p. 22.

³⁰"[Contemplative activity] ought to be, even in its higher grades, something else than a series of brilliant episodes. It ought to indicate a flowering relatively rare, still normal, of the ordinary life of grace. On this point and whatever may be the case (the truth) of a universal call to contemplation, the insistence of P. Garrigou-Lagrance, O.P., appears to me to be entirely justified. It is an echo of a tradition most authentic and it scarcely finds any opponents today." (*Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 1929, vol. 56, p. 182)

³¹*Vers l'union divine par Exercices de S. Ignace*, pp. 27-30. However, one must read practically the entire book to appreciate fully the mind of Fr. Peeters.

³²"We believe with such teachers as Fr. Garrigou-Lagrance, Fr. Lamballe, and other theologians whose numbers are growing daily that the full and perfect development of the

S.J.,²⁹ Maréchal,³⁰ L. Peeters, S.J.,³¹ Jaegher, S.J.,³² Joret, O.P.,³³ Arintero, O.P.,³⁴ Louismet, O.S.B.,³⁵ etc.

It is in place here to propose briefly the arguments which the proponents of this school bring forth to defend their position. Since Father Garrigou-Lagrange is at present the outstanding defender of this theory, we will let him speak for himself. After devoting about forty pages on the call to mystical contemplation, in the course of which he explains extensively his theories as well as arguments to back them up, he synthesizes his three principal arguments in the following words:

"The three principal reasons we adduced for affirming the general and remote call are: 1) The radical principal of the mystical life is the same as that of the common interior life, the grace of the virtues and the gifts; 2) In the progress of the interior life, the purification of the soul cannot be complete without the passive purifications, which belong to the mystical order; 3) The mystical life is the normal prelude to the beatific vision, the goal of the life of grace."³⁶

spiritual life, as a rule, presupposes mystical graces of the highest degree, comprising the spiritual nuptials or transforming union, which is the normal climax of Christian perfection. See in the masterful work of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation*, the very illuminating synthesis given on p. 8." Jaegher, S.J., *One with Jesus*, p. 49.

³³Thus Joret writes in his *La Contemplation Mystique d'après Saint Thomas D'Aquin*: "If mystical contemplation is brought about by the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then we must conclude that its existence depends on the divine initiative, and that any violent effort on our part to provoke it would be to no purpose. But there is another excess, so to say occurring frequently enough, and which takes its rise from the fact that many souls have been erroneously instructed in these matters. They for their part look at contemplation as a closed paradise, a promised land for a few rare privileged souls. This is by no means the teaching of Saint Thomas. According to him, every Christian soul can aspire to the mystical life; and if one disposes oneself properly, God normally intervenes to elevate such a person to that state." (p. 62) And again: "Saint Thomas goes further still. He is not merely contented to permit one to aspire to contemplation. To his mind it is a duty to tend to it in the measure that it is a duty to tend to perfection. For mystical contemplation forms a body with Christian perfection. It is, he says, in the case of perfect and saintly souls, the normal prelude of heavenly bliss and a foretaste of the beatific vision." (*ibid.*, p. 65)

³⁴Fr. Arintero in the first publication of one of his books, used the following sub-title: "The Heights of Contemplation Accessible to All." Later on he suppressed this title. See Farges, *Mystical Phenomena*, pp. 299, 638.

³⁵This author has written several books on Contemplation. He does not usually take contemplation in its strict sense as we can see from this definition given by him in *Divine Contemplation for All*, p. 1: "Divine Contemplation is the act of communing with God." Still with de Guibert I believe that he belongs to this school. See de Guibert, *Theol. Spir. Asc. et Myst.*, p. 379, n. 428.

³⁶*Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, p. 383.

The work of Father Garrigou-Lagrange is written in the style of severe scholastic treatment. For a larger insistence on Patristic sources, and for the discussion of Scriptural texts, among them, the description of Saint Paul's raptures, the work of Dom Anselm Stolz, O.S.B., may be consulted. The thesis of Stolz' *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection* (Herder, 1940, 255 pp.) follows that of the school we have been describing.

I might mention here that of all the arguments which the members of this school propose, the argument of Père de la Taille, S.J.,³⁷ appeals to me more than any other, since the others are much controverted. It seems to be inherent in man to desire to move ahead. Stagnation is a tremendous trial to anyone, and this is especially true in the matter of mental prayer. The great and continual heroism which is required in dying to self and living only for God and His designs over a period of years, seems to demand a corresponding solace or new strength gotten by advancement in prayer, and this prayer would, of course, be infused contemplation as opposed to acquired prayer. Such at least, would seem to be the import of de la Taille's reasoning.

In his incomparable way in a long letter to Father Bainvel S.J., Father de la Taille develops this same idea from the standpoint of grace. I would be tempted to insert the entire letter, if space permitted. However, I will give here a rather long quotation from it because it is really very enlightening:

"Ordinary grace (understanding by this word non-mystical grace) by definition, never does anything but utilize the means and the resources of our human psychological make-up by supernaturalizing them. But in every man, the psychological make-up has limited means and resources, whether there is question of the actual sum of his affective and mental dispositions or of his potential dispositions in reserve. When there is question of passing beyond the limits accessible to his total of forces, even when they are supernaturalized, (that is, when the struggle of charity against self-love reaches that point where the maximum human resources of a definite individual are brought to bear, and when it is necessary to go still further, and to gain more and more over his self-love for the advantage of God and of His kingdom) then it is necessary, *normally*, for the Divine action to bring to bear something more than purely human elements, and consequently arouse new and ultra-human states of soul. This amounts to the same thing as saying that ordinary grace must give way to mystical or contemplative grace. Once again, the limit of these two confines is not the same for every individual: it varies from one individual to another according to their temperament, their character and exterior circumstances. But can it be denied that this limit exists somewhere for every man? We would have to

³⁷This argument is given in foot-note no. 33.

suppose for this that the human apparatus has infinite potential energy, which is unbelievable, and even impossible.

Do you say that grace supplies the insufficiency of nature? Again *ordinary* grace (taken in the sense given above) only supernaturalizes the means borrowed from nature; it only steers our affections and our tendencies toward the final end and bathes them in a Divine element which carries them there. It elevates what we have acquired, brings out what was still latent in our reserve; elevating alone in the first case, elevating and fortifying in the second; but in the one as in the other, utilizing the elements of nature; here adorning with its reflection the moral forces at our disposal, there stirring up those which the unexplored recesses of the soul concealed. If grace is compared not only with everything which we have at present, [with psychological assets], but with the sum-total of everything which we have actually and potentially, then we must say that it does not increase the moral forces of our nature (above their natural value). It increases them only by comparison with our moral state at the moment. This is meant of ordinary grace, and not, evidently, of contemplative grace, which latter utilizes resources which are foreign and superior to nature. It is on this account that it increases our moral forces by comparison with the ensemble of our psychological resources, whether they be actual or potential. And this is why it will go beyond the point where ordinary grace must fall short, at least normally and regularly . . . In resumé, outside the case of a miracle which springs from extraordinary providence, contemplation is required to elevate man beyond the limits which his moral force can attain. These limits are variable according to the individual, but real in each one, and consequently destined to be surpassed by whoever shall have attained them, under pain of no longer progressing in the way of grace and sanctity otherwise illimited . . .³⁸

Some of the leading authorities of the other school, which denies the general remote call to infused contemplation and the moral necessity of the latter for heroic sanctity, are de Guibert, S.J.,³⁹ Farges,⁴⁰ de Maumigny,⁴¹ Poulain, S.J.,⁴² Billot, S.J.,⁴³ Lejeune,⁴⁴ etc.

³⁸Cf. J. V. Bainvel, *Introduction à la 10e édition* of Poulain's *Des grâces d'oraison*, pp. LXXXI-LXXXIII.

³⁹"Although it seems to be an ordinary fact that generous souls do not reach perfection unless God grant them some touches or brief communications of those graces which are proper to infused contemplation, nevertheless, the path or state of infused contemplation is not the only normal way to perfect charity. And therefore, any grade of sanctity is within the reach of souls without travelling this path in any habitual way." (*Theol. Spir. Asc. et Mys.*, p. 381).

⁴⁰See *Mystical Phenomena*, ch. 14: "Is Infused Contemplation Accessible to all?" He denies this and he devotes several pages (pp. 299-310, 638-640) to prove his contention. One of his typical passages runs: "The only universal call, therefore, is that to the blessed

Poulain's school feels that it represents a continual tradition for at least two hundred years. Of course, it realizes that modifications and refinements have been made necessary with further progress in the theology of the gifts and better psychological description on the part of mystics. One strong argument in its favor seems to be the fact that many, many holy souls after several years of a life well spent, do not enjoy infused prayer.⁴⁵

contemplation of heaven, and sanctifying grace in our souls is already the germ of this glory, semen gloriae, but its blossoming before the time and the anticipation of heaven on earth through passive contemplation cannot be other than a gratuitous privilege. Moreover, the facts are there to deny the opposing thesis. Benedict XIV, like Saint Teresa, teaches us that all the saints are not contemplatives, and that a great number have been so only in a passing way or by exception. Now just as one or two swallows do not make a summer, so one or two ecstasies do not make a contemplative life, and are not enough to characterize a saint. Etc." (p. 640). See also pp. 223, 225.

⁴¹"Infused contemplation is not the only way of reaching Christian perfection. It requires a special vocation, which most souls practicing mental prayer, have not received." *The Practice of Mental Prayer*, II, 9th ed., 1911, p. 5.

⁴²"Did all the saints possess the mystic state? . . . The reply would be in the negative. The mystic graces are one means only, and God may employ others. The evidence of history does not prove extraordinary graces to be necessary to sanctity, but simply that God, in His generosity, is pleased to bestow upon the canonized saints a measure of grace far in excess of what is necessary for them." P. Pourrat, the great authority on the history of Christian spirituality, writes on this point: "It cannot be doubted that there are spiritual writers who have taught the general call to mystic prayer [infused contemplation]. But it is a fact of history, that there is an equally or even greater number of writers who do not admit this universal call." (*La Spiritualité chrétienne*, t. IV, 1928, p. 650).

⁴³"In my opinion, to put forward the theory that the heights of contemplation are accessible to all, there must be a lack of the most elementary notion of what constitutes mystical contemplation. It is so much so that it is difficult to believe that the idea of our opponents is really what we understand or think we understand it to be." These words Farges was authorized to reproduce in *Mystical Phenomena*, p. 639.

⁴⁴In his *Introduction to the Mystical Life*, p. 20, he writes: "We pause here to answer a very natural question, viz., To what degree is mystical contemplation accessible to us? Can we reach up to it by ourselves, endeavor to attain it? As regards simple contemplation, the endeavour is lawful; it does not exceed the limit of power available to souls with the ordinary help of grace. Is it the same with mystical contemplation? No; this latter must always be the result, not of our personal energy, but of the Divine munificence." This author is a great follower and admirer of both Poulain and Alvarez de Paz.

⁴⁵It may be mentioned here that such authors as Waffelaert, Maritain, Bainvel, Gabriel a S. Magdalena, etc. have tried by proper distinctions to join what has appeared true in both schools. See de Guibert, *Theol. Spir. Asc. et Myst.*, pp. 380-381.

