Louis Lallemant, S.J.

The Spiritual Doctrine, translated by Patricia M. Ranum. Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2016. Pp. 357. Hb, \$45.

The *Doctrine spirituelle* of the French Jesuit Louis Lallemant (1588–1635) was translated into English and edited in 1855 by Frederick W. Faber. All other editions followed his interpretation. A new English translation has become necessary for two reasons: First, Faber's translation was deficient of nuances of the French text and, with time, his style became obsolete. Moreover, in the meantime, the extent of the French original has been enlarged. In fact, Dominique Salin, S.J., editor of the last French edition (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2011) integrated three more treatises in the *Doctrine*, earlier attributed to Jean Rigoleuc, as well as five letters of Lallemant. Now we can read all these additions in Patricia M. Ranum's translation. She follows Salin's edition and tries to respect more closely Lallemant's thought linguistically.

Lallemant's *Doctrine* deserves our attention, because it sheds light on how Jesuits interpreted their spirituality and identity in France some seventy years after Ignatius's death. A Jesuit since 1605, Lallemant worked both in the intellectual and in the spiritual formation of young Jesuits of the province of France for twenty years (1615–35). This time was marked by an intensive adaptation of the Society of Jesus to the political and ideological parameters of the Bourbon monarchy. The same epoch was also characterized by a deep spiritual and disciplinary crisis that Jesuits were going through not only in France, but in the whole Society of Jesus. The lack of good formators and superiors and the deficient spiritual formation caused in the rank of Jesuits an exaggerated absorption and inordinate ambition in their apostolic commitments, as well as an ever more secularized lifestyle.

Faced with this situation, a mystical movement was emerging among young Jesuits in France. While French Jesuit superiors were lenient with these young, the Roman government tried to discipline them. Like other movements of the French "mystical invasion," these Jesuits cultivated contemplative prayer, read Northern and Spanish mystical literature, and practiced sometimes excessive devotions to Saint Joseph and to angels. They dreamt of a mobile apostolic life instead of teaching in colleges, a life closer to the original Jesuit ideal. Lallemant sympathized discreetly with this movement and protected its members whose aspirations appear also in the *Spiritual Doctrine*.

The *Doctrine* is a collection of conferences and exhortations Lallemant gave in Rouen mostly between 1628 and 1631 as tertian instructor, i.e. spiritual formator of Jesuits who passed their final stage of formation under his guidance. His conferences reach us through the notes of two tertians, Jean Rigoleuc and

Jean-Joseph Surin. Their records were classified and edited some sixty years later in 1694 by the Jesuit Pierre Champion under the title *Doctrine spirituelle*. A *Life* of Lallemant, written by the same Champion, was added to the *Doctrine*. Lallemant's work became well-known thanks to Henri Bremond who dedicated to it in 1920 the fifth volume of his monumental study of French spirituality. Reading the *Doctrine*, we should guard against considering it as a "synthesis of Jesuit spirituality," as it has sometimes been claimed to be. Lallemant did not have enough time to synthesize his thoughts. The division of the *Doctrine* into seven "Principles" (parts) goes back probably to Champion.

How can one approach, then, Lallemant's talks? The inner "logic," i.e. a hermeneutical key to understanding Lallemant's thoughts and the order of the "Principles," which Patricia M. Ranum presents in the footsteps of the French editor, is fairly interesting, but cannot be rigorously proved. Another, more traditional solution is to demonstrate the *Doctrine's* perfect accordance with the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius. Yet, this way is artificial. Certainly, the instructor makes use of the great Ignatian metaphors, but he is far from being an interpreter of the *Exercises*. He amalgamates freely Ignatian paradigms with the ideas of patristic and desert literature, Augustinian anthropology, Thomistic theology, Flemish and Brabant mysticism, as well as Theresian and Salesian ideas of contemplation. In doing so, he follows the example of Jesuit authors, such as Luis de la Puente, Diego Álvarez de la Paz, Bernardo Rossignoli, and others who try to reconcile mystical and dogmatic theology in their works.

Lallemant's connection with Ignatius should be considered less through the *Exercises* than by *Constitutions* x. 2 [813] ([St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996], 411). This paragraph of the Jesuit *Constitutions* requires that Jesuits shall pay more attention to spiritual means, by which they are united with God, than to natural means (talents, learning, etc.), which equip them to deal with their neighbors in their apostolic engagements. This idea of *Constitutions* 813 was largely promoted by General Claudio Acquaviva's letters in order to bring remedy to the above mentioned spiritual crisis of the Society of Jesus.

Constitutions 813 inspired many spiritual writers and formators in the Society, including Lallemant. But where the others tried to enlarge the range of spiritual means of union with God, Lallemant sought to reduce it to the combination of two spiritual realities: the purification of heart and the docility to the movements of the Holy Spirit. The first is a kind of mental asceticism, which prepares the second, i.e. a mystical capacity to recognize immediately God's movements in the soul and to follow them promptly. Both are to practice, as Lallemant suggests, in the *garde du cœur* (guard over the heart), this sort of constant psycho-spiritual attentiveness to one's interior movements. Lallemant's *garde du coeur* is close to the *nepsis* of the Desert Fathers whose works

are recommended to tertians. By his twofold conception of union with God, Lallemand offers a radical mystical interpretation of *Constitutions* 813.

Lallemand's mysticism appears as a strong protest against pure activism, which often threatens Jesuits and other apostolic orders. His thoughts demonstrate well how Jesuit spirituality can be completed with the input of other spiritualities in a time of crisis. Certainly, fissures and contradictory colors are also perceivable in his mysticism, which comes from the heterogeneity of his sources. But even with these limitations his *Doctrine* remains an important witness of the historical development of Jesuit spirituality and still remains a spiritual help for those who seek for the presence of God both in their prayer and action.

Tibor Bartók, S.J.

Institute of Spirituality, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome

bartoks.j@gmail.com

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00502005-05