

# LOUIS LALLEMANT AND JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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THE *SPIRITUAL DOCTRINE* of the French Jesuit Louis Lallemant (1588–1635) is an excellent place to start in understanding how Jesuit spirituality and identity developed in the period following the foundation of the Society.<sup>1</sup> And the vicissitudes of Lallemant's life help us to form a clearer vision of the challenges of a period in which the Society of Jesus passed through one of the most profound transformations of its history: a moment of immense growth, both in membership and in mission. My aim here is to present Lallemant and his work in historical perspective. However, I also hope that a fresh view may help readers understand more deeply the spiritual challenges that still face Jesuits—and others—today.

## ***Discovering Lallemant: Past and Present***

Louis Lallemant joined the Society of Jesus in 1605 in Nancy (Lorraine), which was part of the Province of France at that time. After his studies at the university of Pont-à-Mousson and his tertianship in Paris, he taught at the Jesuit colleges of La Flèche, Bourges and Rouen. In 1622 he was appointed novice master in Rouen, then professor of theology in Paris. In 1628 he returned to Rouen as instructor of tertians. Lallemant was responsible for this final year of Jesuit formation for some 57 Jesuits between 1628 and 1631.

Lallemant's conferences were noted down and preserved. More than fifty years later, Pierre Champion, another French Jesuit, published these notes under the title *Spiritual Doctrine*.<sup>2</sup> The reading of Lallemant's

<sup>1</sup> The most recent French edition is Louis Lallemant, *Doctrine spirituelle*, edited by Dominique Salin (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2011). I am using the English translation, *The Spiritual Doctrine of Father Louis Lallemant*, edited by Alan G. McDougall (Westminster: Newman Book Shop, 1946).

<sup>2</sup> For the book's complex history see Dominique Salin's introduction to his edition, *Doctrine spirituelle*, 12–18.

*Doctrine* as a mystical interpretation of Jesuit identity, seems to have been popular among French Jesuits from its first edition in 1694. An edifying biography (the 'Life') was written by Champion and included in the same volume as the *Doctrine*. It presented the figure of a saintly Jesuit living in perfect conformity with his teaching and helping people, mostly other Jesuits, to find their way to spiritual perfection.

This image was greatly reinforced in 1920 when a book about Lallemant and his teaching was published by Henri Bremond.<sup>3</sup> Bremond was a former Jesuit, expelled from the Society in 1904 for his radical views on modernism and his contacts with its representative figures. Bremond presented Lallemant as the founder of a Jesuit mystical school ('école de Lallemant'), in sharp contrast to a more ascetic interpretation of Jesuit spirituality that started, at least according to Bremond, with a Spanish Jesuit, Alfonso Rodríguez (1538–1616).

Although Bremond's criticism of Jesuit spirituality as being too ascetic and regulated at the beginning of the twentieth century was not ill-founded, his interpretation of Lallemant's *Doctrine* was tendentious and was strongly contested by his former Jesuit confrères. The bitter dispute between Bremond and the Jesuits did not really lead to a deeper understanding of Lallemant's teaching but, paradoxically, it did contribute to the *Spiritual Doctrine*'s status as one of the most important syntheses of Jesuit spirituality. Thus its author gained unquestionable authority in the field.

Though Champion's biography of Lallemant mentioned certain criticisms of his personality and teaching, the extent of these issues was not appreciated until 1927, when a German Jesuit, Alfons Kleiser, published a letter by Fr General Muzio Vitelleschi (1615–1645) complaining about Lallemant's mystical teaching.<sup>4</sup> Some forty years later the French Jesuit scholar Michel de Certeau shed more light on Lallemant's sympathies with a mystical movement among some young French Jesuits.<sup>5</sup> This

<sup>3</sup> Henri Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours*, volume 5, *La Conquête mystique. L'école du Père Lallemant et la tradition mystique dans la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1920). Bremond's work has recently been republished with a new bibliographical structure (Grenoble: Jérôme Million, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> The letter can be found in Alfons Kleiser, 'Claude Bernier S.J. (1601–1654): ein französischer Mystiker aus dem 17. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Ascese und Mystik*, 2 (1927), 155–164.

<sup>5</sup> Michel de Certeau, 'Crise sociale et réformisme spirituel au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Une "Nouvelle spiritualité" chez les Jésuites français', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 41 (1965), 339–86, especially 379–381. This study was reworked in *La fable mystique XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, volume 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 330–373.

group was certainly not an 'école Lallemant', but a spiritual (and partly quite naïve) reaction to the Society's critical expansion mentioned above. Lallemant could be seen as an emblematic figure of this movement, rather than its source. Finally, in the 1980s the Chilean Jesuit Julio Jiménez Berguecio published a huge number of documents concerning Lallemant's activity as novice master.<sup>6</sup> A summary of these discoveries will give an historical overview of both Lallemant and his epoch.

### ***Denounced and Defended***

The troubles surrounding Lallemant can be deduced from two denunciations sent to Fr General Vitelleschi. The first was made in 1625 when Lallemant was novice master in Rouen. Even though the letter of denunciation no longer exists, we are able to reconstruct the story it contained from the missives of Fr Vitelleschi sent to Lallemant's Provincial, Fr Pierre Coton, asking for a serious investigation.

According to these missives, Lallemant had fallen under the influence of an excessively pious man who inspired him to get the body of a dead novice dug up and taken at night into the chapel of the novitiate, where mass was celebrated in the hope that the dead man would revive. The story seems too macabre to be true. Jiménez believes the person who informed the General, Fr Denis Bertin, assistant to the novice master, acted out of envy. It is possible that Bertin nourished strong resentment against his colleague. In fact, they joined the Society in Nancy in the same year (1605), but Bertin, who was much older than Lallemant and probably less talented, was not allowed by his superiors to complete the full Jesuit formation programme. He became a so-called *coadjutor spiritualis*, whereas his classmate was promoted as a 'professed Jesuit'—a fully fledged member of the Society. Bertin, being subordinate to Lallemant as his assistant and feeling humiliated, may have invented an incredible story in order to take revenge on his confrère and tarnish his reputation.

Such was the essence of the first denunciation. Jiménez suggests that we take it as the result of Bertin's malicious intent and, all things

For an English translation, see *The Mystic Fable*, volume 1, *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, translated by Michael B. Smith (Chicago: U. of Chicago P, 1992), 241–270.

<sup>6</sup> Julio Jiménez Berguecio, *Louis Lallemant, S.J., 1588–1635: Estudios sobre su vida y su Doctrina espiritual* (Santiago: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1988), 238–309.

considered, I agree with him. Nevertheless, such an apparently unbelievable story is not at all unbelievable given the religious mentality of that time. Jesuits of the seventeenth century were often influenced by uneducated or psychologically disturbed people, whose piety and mysticism, often mingled with pathological phenomena, could impress them greatly. Sometimes they became victims of their own striking naïveté, such as the two novice masters in Nancy who, along with several other Jesuits, fell completely under the spell of a formerly possessed woman, Elisabeth de Ranfaing, in the 1620s and 1630s. She inspired them to spread strange and even superstitious religious devotions inside and outside the novitiate.<sup>7</sup> One of these novice masters, Fr Nicolas Javel, had in fact been a fellow novice of Lallemant and Bertin in the same formation house at Nancy some thirty years before.

Lallemant was cleared of Bertin's accusations, but one thing remained undeniable: he had had contact with someone fanatically devout in Rouen, introducing this man often into the novitiate, much to the



*Supposed levitation of Elisabeth de Ranfaing*

annoyance of some of those there. The Provincial, Fr Coton, ordered him to break contact with the man in question. This is the one fact that seems to be certain.

After having been novice master in Rouen, Lallemant was appointed professor of scholastic theology at Clermont College in Paris, the most prestigious school in the *Provincia Franciae*. As Certeau has shown, in the 1620s Clermont was a hotbed of the mystical movement among young French Jesuits, which worried Fr General Vitelleschi. This movement belongs to the series of French mystical trends

<sup>7</sup> See Erienne Delcambre and Jean Lhermitte, *Un cas énigmatique de possession diabolique en Lorraine au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Elisabeth de Ranfaing, l'énergumène de Nancy, fondatrice de l'Ordre du Refuge—Étude historique et psycho-médicale* (Nancy: Société d'Archéologie Lorraine, 1956), 35–48.

at the beginning of the seventeenth century described by Bremond as the 'mystical invasion'. But it is also a continuation of mystical developments in the Society of Jesus itself which had started around Fr Baltasar Álvarez in Spain in the 1570s and continued later to some slight extent among Italian Jesuits. Their leader, Fr Achille Gagliardi, was heavily influenced by the mystic Isabella Berinzaga.

As for the French Jesuit mystical movement in the 1620s, those involved did not hesitate to criticize Jesuit activism and absorption in apostolic life, notably in the colleges, whose increasing number burdened the Jesuits in France more and more, as they did the rest of the Society. These Jesuits, mostly young scholastics still in formation, were enthusiastic readers of mystical writings, especially the books of Teresa of Ávila. They were also committed promoters of an exaggerated devotion to Saint Joseph as the patron of mystical life.<sup>8</sup> They practised contemplative prayer, and some claimed to have direct access to the true spirit of the Society and its founder, St Ignatius. Wanting to return to the original ideals of the Society, they preferred an itinerant apostolic lifestyle to teaching grammar and rhetoric to schoolboys. Some displayed excessive contemplative tendencies, while others were marked by striking pathological characteristics. Certeau's investigations show that Lallemant was closely linked to Claude Bernier, the main proponent of the movement at Clermont College.

Lallemant certainly shared the ideas of his young confrères, though in moderation. His return to Rouen as tertian instructor in 1628 soon brought to light something of his mystical inclinations thanks to a new denunciation. Lallemant was criticized once more, this time by one of the Provincial's consultors, Fr Louis Grimald, as a *totus mysticus* (wholly mystic) instructor, who intended to lead his tertians in the spiritual life by *extraordinari modi*, unusual practices of prayer and devotion. Such practices, in the view of Fr General Vitelleschi, did not correspond to the common way of Jesuit spirituality; the General had decreed that this should produce solid virtues, especially obedience and the observance of every aspect of religious life.

As with the first denunciation, the French superiors cleared Lallemant of these new accusations. The *Spiritual Doctrine* that we can read today

<sup>8</sup> Georges Bottereau, 'Saint Joseph et les jésuites français de la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, 29 (1981), 807–808.

reflects Lallemant's teaching after the second denunciation. Perhaps the instructor gave up the more embarrassing features of his teaching, especially those which promoted mystical devotion to St Joseph. In the current text of Lallemant's *Doctrine* there are only seven short passages where the putative father of Jesus is mentioned. Lallemant treats him as an interior guide for the spiritual life, sharing the role of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

Suffering from a serious illness, Lallemant had to leave Rouen in 1631 and retired to the College of Bourges. He seems to have had a close relationship in Bourges with the prestigious princely family of Bourbon-Condé, whose elder son, Louis, the future Grand Condé, was educated at the Jesuit college. At the informal request of Louis's father, Prince Henri Bourbon II, Fr General Vitelleschi appointed Lallemant rector of the College in 1634. His deteriorating health allowed him only eight months of rectorship. In April 1635, Lallemant sent his adieu to the prince from his deathbed, promising to pray for him and his family in heaven.<sup>10</sup>

Tensions are evident between Lallemant's spiritual tendencies and institutional expectations. However, it would be erroneous to conclude that Lallemant's teaching represents a secret resistance to the mainstream of the Society. In fact, the *Spiritual Doctrine*, on the whole, is a mystical—though perhaps exaggerated—understanding of the spiritual reform that Fr General Claudio Acquaviva, the predecessor of Vitelleschi, tried to instil into the ranks of the Jesuits.

### ***Lallemant and Acquaviva***

The generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581–1615), the longest in the history of the Society of Jesus, was characterized by a spectacular growth in the number of Jesuits and by the enormous social influence of their apostolic works, mostly in the field of education.<sup>11</sup> Acquaviva recognised very quickly that the external increase of the Society did not run parallel with internal spiritual growth. On the contrary, a serious spiritual decline

<sup>9</sup> On this subject see my article, 'Saint Joseph, dans la mystique de Lallemant', *Christus*, 251 (July 2016), 96–105.

<sup>10</sup> See Georges Bottereau, 'Autour d'un billet inédit et de la *Summa vitae* du P. Louis Lallemant, S.I.', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 45 (1976), 293–295.

<sup>11</sup> Two years before his election the Society numbered some 5,100 Jesuits and ran 144 colleges throughout the world. In 1616, less than forty years later, the number of Jesuits was over 13,100 and the number of colleges had reached 372, without counting some 187 smaller residences, professed and probation houses. See *Synopsis historiae Societatis Iesu* (Leuven: Typis ad Sancti Alphonsi, 1950), cols. 82 and 146.

plagued the whole Order. A huge number of Jesuits could not find time for prayer or any interior life. They spent all their time at work—teaching, preaching or visiting people. Several of them were involved in political affairs in European courts, giving the impression that the Society was trying to build an international network of power and influence. The General often denounced these phenomena in his letters and tried to provide ‘remedies’ for the ailments of the Jesuits with his famous *Industriae*, as well as with his instructions and commands.<sup>12</sup>



Claudio Acquaviva

Like Acquaviva, Lallemant complained about Jesuits who were so absorbed in their studies and work that they paid no attention to prayer and the spiritual life. These religious, he maintained, live,

... in complete forgetfulness of themselves, a multitude of objects passes every day through their thoughts, and their heart being carried out of itself and intoxicated, as it were, with the whirl of outward things, in its absence, the mind continually deceived by the illusions of nature and of the devil.<sup>13</sup>

This was the inevitable consequence of a *magna effusio ad exteriora* (excessive absorption in external things). This expression and its equivalents often appear in the General’s writings, as well in the memoranda that

<sup>12</sup> See Claudio Acquaviva, *Industriae ad curandos animae morbos*, in *Regulae, Ratio studiorum, ordinationes, instructiones, industriae: Exercitia, directorium*, Institutum Societatis Iesu, 3 (Florence: Ex Typographia a SS. Conceptione, 1893), 414–415; English version as *Therapy for Illnesses of Soul*, translated by Mary Patrick (Jersey City: Program to Adapt the Spiritual Exercises, 1972).

<sup>13</sup> *Spiritual Doctrine*, 53.

Jesuits sent to Rome at the beginning of the seventeenth century about the spiritual deficiencies of the Society.<sup>14</sup>

Lallemant also blamed older Jesuits who, although respectable by reason of their age and their office, gave bad example to the young, 'setting high value on great talents and situations of distinction', rather than on virtue and piety.<sup>15</sup> In this way, he said, religious life was adopting secular features and turning itself into a secular world dominated by 'esteem of human talents; preference for employments, offices and stations of importance; the love for distinction and applause, or repose and easy life'.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere he complained about social discrimination in Jesuit schools: 'If in our classes we appear to treat the children of the rich with peculiar attention on account of their advantages of fortune, we shall do very wrong'.<sup>17</sup> Acquaviva was denouncing the same phenomena of secularisation. His letter 'De recursu ad Deum in tribulationibus et persecutionibus' (Of the Resort to God in Trials and Persecutions; 1602) provides a long list of the worldly and unspiritual behaviours that public opinion imputed to Jesuits at that time: too much involvement and dissipation in secular matters, greed, love of honours and reputation, libertinism in teaching and hasty judgment about others.<sup>18</sup>

Absorbed in the world and seduced by its values, some Jesuits had become more and more proud of themselves and of their Society. The ancient motto of religious, *amor propriae excellentiae* (the desire to stand out from others), had begun to apply to the Jesuits in a way strikingly different from how the earlier religious tradition had understood it. Patristic and medieval authors had used it to describe pride in overcoming all worldly attachment and becoming like angels. By contrast, Jesuit pride seemed to be based not on spiritual achievement and detachment from the world, but on the development of natural talents and competences, and on the social influence to be gained from them. All this produced self-centred apostolic agents whose performance was certainly amazing, but whose reputation was tremendously repugnant.

It is not surprising that in Acquaviva's *Industriae* one chapter is devoted to seeking remedies for the disease of 'pride and honour' in Jesuit

<sup>14</sup> See Certeau, 'Crise sociale et réformisme spirituel', 346.

<sup>15</sup> *Spiritual Doctrine*, 156.

<sup>16</sup> *Spiritual Doctrine*, 187.

<sup>17</sup> *Spiritual Doctrine*, 79.

<sup>18</sup> *Epistolae Praepositorum Generalium ad patres et fratres Societatis Jesu* (Ghent: T. V. J. Poelman-de Pape, 1847), volume 1, 285.



behaviour.<sup>19</sup> Similarly Lallemant attacks Jesuit pride with a self-torturing rhetoric:

We think only of exalting and aggrandising ourselves. Our own excellence is the centre in which all our thoughts, all our desires, all the movements of our heart terminate; ... and that vain-glory, that height we aspire after, is, in fact, the depth of degradation; that distinction and worldly greatness after which we seek is nothing but misery and poverty.<sup>20</sup>

The tone of this extract, to which many other passages of the *Doctrine* could be added, is clearly Augustinian and is typical of several spiritual writers of the seventeenth century in France. However, Lallemant's rhetoric is more than an Augustinian flourish. Using it, Lallemant creates, maybe unwittingly, an alarm system to waken Jesuits from their too obvious self-centredness. The Flemish and Rhenish mysticism clearly recognisable in Lallemant's teaching has a similar role.<sup>21</sup> By presenting God as 'All' and creatures as 'nothing' or 'emptiness', the instructor is waging a war against exaggerated confidence in human means, the perceived disease of the Jesuit soul at that time. Lallemant's view of God and the world differs from that of Ignatius but, paradoxically, this and other serious differences between the founder's mind and that of Lallemant contribute to an understanding of Jesuit identity.

### ***Acquaviva's Reform as Interpreted by Lallemant***

Lallemant's criticism unveils, maybe involuntarily, a deep conflict between two dimensions of Jesuit identity which in the mind of St Ignatius were still in harmony. The founder wanted Jesuits to strive not only for their own spiritual perfection and salvation, as had been traditional in religious life, but also for the perfection and salvation of their neighbour, as he explained in the Jesuit *Constitutions*. For Ignatius, any approach to one's neighbours and work for their perfection required Jesuits to possess not only spiritual qualities but also natural means, such as intellectual talents, rhetorical and organizational skills, learning and so on.

<sup>19</sup> Acquaviva, *Industriae*, 414–415.

<sup>20</sup> *Spiritual Doctrine*, 249–250.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the First Principle of the *Doctrine*, given the title 'The Consideration of the End', a kind of mystical reinterpretation of the Principle and Foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises: Spiritual Doctrine*, 27–31.

However, Ignatius wanted to ensure that Jesuits were primarily instruments of God, united with God by spiritual means, as he explained in the *Constitutions* (X.2 [813]). Such means are, he explains, ‘for example, goodness and virtue, and especially charity, and a pure intention of the divine service, and familiarity with God, our Lord in spiritual exercises of devotion, and sincere zeal for souls’. These means are also described there as ‘solid and perfect virtues’ and ‘spiritual pursuits’ (*las cosas spirituales*). The use of human and acquired means, whose importance is recognised by Ignatius in *Constitutions* X.3 [814], should be founded on virtues and prayer which give efficiency to these means.

This ideal, based on the holistic mystical experience of Ignatius at Manresa on the banks of the Cardoner,<sup>22</sup> seems (as we have seen) to have been under challenge from the time of Acquaviva or earlier. It comes as no surprise that the General tries to highlight with all his strength the importance of *Constitutions* X.2 [813]. In one of his early letters to the whole Society, he claims that this paragraph should serve as the basis of Jesuit life.<sup>23</sup> In another letter, on the missions, he expresses the hope that the words of X.2 [813] be impressed deeply on the hearts of Jesuits by the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup>

It is no exaggeration to say that Acquaviva’s entire spiritual reform was inspired and justified by this paragraph in the Jesuit *Constitutions*.<sup>25</sup>

**To establish a  
culture of  
interiority  
among Jesuits**

With it he tried to preserve the spirit of the Society. A number of Acquaviva’s instructions and commands, such as the establishment of the juniorate and tertianship, the annual eight-day retreat and the three-day recollections for the renewals of vows, reflect the General’s aim to establish a culture of interiority among Jesuits. Acquaviva gave his approval to the practice of contemplative prayer—quite a controversial issue under his predecessor.<sup>26</sup> He also enlarged the list of spiritual readings recommended

<sup>22</sup> Ignatius claims that in this experience ‘he understood and knew many things both spiritual and matters of faith and of learning (*letras*), and this was with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him’. *Autobiography*, n.30.

<sup>23</sup> ‘De quibusdam mediis ad Societatis conservationem facientibus’ (1587), in *Epistolae Praepositorum Generalium*, 186–187.

<sup>24</sup> ‘De fine missionis in Indiis orientalibus’ (1590), in *Epistolae Praepositorum Generalium*, 222.

<sup>25</sup> See Joseph de Guibert, ‘Le généralat de Claude Acquaviva (1581–1615): Sa place dans l’histoire de la spiritualité de la Compagnie de Jésus’, *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 10 (1941), 59–93; William J. Burke, *The Spiritual Direction of Claudius Aquaviva, S.J., General of the Society of Jesus, 1581–1615: A Study of Ascetical Tradition* (Jersey City: Program to Adapt the Spiritual Exercises, 1969).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Quis sit orationis et poenitentiarum usus in Societate’ (1590), in *Epistolae Praepositorum Generalium*, 248–270.

to Jesuits, in order to make them love the interior life and religious abnegation.<sup>27</sup> This list contained a number of books by Jesuit spiritual writers, such as Luis de la Puente, Diego Álvarez de Paz, Bernardo Rossignoli, Francisco Arias and others.

However, Acquaviva's institutionalisation of spirituality went along with an increasing emphasis on obedience and the observance of rules, orders and instructions, whose number continued to grow under his generalate and constantly challenged the daily life of Jesuits. The reinforcement of superiors' authority also led to resistance. Acquaviva tried to maintain the Ignatian ideal of the superior as strong and gentle at the same time, but his measures contributed more and more to the emergence of too paternalistic a figure of the superior.<sup>28</sup>

Lallemant is closely related to this complex phenomenon of Acquaviva's reform. Firstly, the paragraph of the *Constitutions* (X.2 [813]) identified as the inspiration and justification for Acquaviva's reform is certainly at the centre of Lallemant's teaching, but in a twofold way. In the chapter 'Of the Spirit of the Society of Jesus' he gives an impressive christological explanation of paragraphs X.2–3 [813–814].<sup>29</sup> According to this, spiritual and natural means, interior attitudes and exterior apostolic work are joined harmoniously together in Jesuit identity like the divine and human natures in the person of Christ. The harmony springs from a zeal for souls, which is, he affirms, the culminating point of Jesuit perfection.

Nevertheless, this harmonious vision of the interior and exterior does not seem to permeate the rest of his teaching. Lallemant sometimes emphasizes excessively the spiritual dimension of Jesuit identity: the importance of the interior life and the need for recollection, not only during the tertianship but throughout a Jesuit's life. His proposals can at times surprise us. He claims, for instance, 'St Ignatius desires that the professed [Jesuits] and those who have taken their final vows should give to prayer all the time they have remaining, after fulfilling the duties of obedience'.<sup>30</sup> In fact, Ignatius never expressed such a desire for Jesuits, even if he himself would pass several hours each day at prayer. Acquaviva himself, although strongly encouraging prayer and occasional recollections,

<sup>27</sup> See Pedro de Leturia, *Lecturas ascéticas y lecturas místicas entre los jesuitas del siglo XVI*, in *Estudios ignacianos*, volume 2, *Estudios espirituales* (Rome: IHSI, 1957), 269–33.

<sup>28</sup> See *Constitutions* IX.2.4 [727].

<sup>29</sup> *Spiritual Doctrine*, 293–297.

<sup>30</sup> *Spiritual Doctrine*, 187.

refused to oblige Jesuits to more than one hour of daily meditation, as had already been sanctioned by the Fourth General Congregation.

In Lallemant's view, a Jesuit should not be allowed to undertake major work until he has become entirely contemplative. For Jesuits to be truly efficient in apostolic work a high degree of contemplative life is required. It is 'when the soul acts no longer through the imagination ... but wonderfully enlightened by God by means of mental species or intellectual illuminations'.<sup>31</sup> Lallemant goes so far as to identify the mystical life of Ignatius, based on his experience at the Cardoner, with this type of contemplative life, even if this is hardly defensible: we know from the *Spiritual Diary* of Ignatius that his mystical life did not exclude imaginative elements.

Lallemant's rhetoric and metaphors often praise the contemplative life at the expense of the active life. To some extent the context of tertianship and the crises of activism in the Society explain his preference for contemplation, but only partly. In reality, Lallemant and many other spiritual writers of his time, including Jesuits, were reflecting within the concept of the *vita mixta*, a life based on an *alternation* of contemplation and action. This conception of religious life has difficulty in coping with the novelty of Ignatian spirituality, which conceives of contemplation in the midst of action, as one of the first interpreters of the Jesuit vocation, Jerónimo Nadal, wrote.

### **A Second Conversion**

Dominique Salin suggested that the true core of Lallemant's teaching consists of three spiritual attitudes: humility, purity of heart and recollection, each of these finding its archetype in a member of the Holy Family.<sup>32</sup> This threefold attitude empowers a Jesuit to be constantly attentive to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and to follow them without hesitation. Salin calls this immediacy between divine action and human reaction 'discernment in real time', in contrast to retrospective discernment.

Valuable as Salin's suggestion clearly is, an addition is needed. In fact, Lallemant puts the strongest stress on purity (and custody) of heart, as a condition for living permanently under the guidance of the Spirit. Thus the essence of his teaching could be summarised around two

<sup>31</sup> *Spiritual Doctrine*, 277.

<sup>32</sup> See Salin's introduction to the most recent French edition of the *Doctrine spirituelle*, 26–30.

poles: purity of heart (freedom from futile and frivolous thoughts and feelings) and obedience to the motions of the Spirit. This double understanding of the spiritual life is characteristic of the Desert Fathers, whose writings were widely recommended to Jesuits at that time. What Salin called 'discernment in real time' is quite similar to the *nepsis* (a kind of constant watchfulness) of the Desert Fathers and less identifiable with Ignatian discernment, which supposes retrospection, that is, taking a temporal distance from interior motions and reflecting on them. The search for one efficient spiritual attitude or method which includes or replaces all the rest and so simplifies the spiritual life is a characteristic feature of several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century spiritualities.<sup>33</sup> It also marks certain Jesuit spiritual writers, especially Francisco de Arias.<sup>34</sup>

To strengthen his teaching, the instructor refers to the scholastic doctrine of St Thomas about the gifts of the Spirit; these permit a person to recognise divine inspirations easily and to live a contemplative life. Aquinas's scholastic teaching was certainly helpful to Lallemant as it gave authority to his own teaching about obedience to guidance by the Holy Spirit. In fact, this access could have been readily misinterpreted as an *alumbrado* pretension, all the more so as the edict of Seville condemning *alumbrados* had been published in France just a few years before Lallemant became instructor of tertians.<sup>35</sup>

Lallemant tried to reconcile the guidance of the Spirit and obedience to superiors, but he could not help criticizing here and there the multiplicity of orders and the low spiritual calibre of certain superiors. Tensions between the spirit and the institution are certainly noticeable in his conferences, but he maintains, of course, the principle of religious obedience. The goal of the tertianship, which in Acquaviva's mind was a 'plena et absoluta sui ipsius abnegatio' (perfect and total abnegation of himself), becomes for Lallemant a second conversion, a radical and definitive act of self-renunciation, and a total consecration to the quest for perfection.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See Paul Renaudin, *Un Maître de la mystique française: Benoît de Canfeld* (Paris: Spes, 1956), 101.

<sup>34</sup> Arias's spiritual method is the constant remembrance of God's presence, as he expounds in his treatise, *Ejercicio de la presencia de Dios*, edited with other treatises in his *Aprouechamiento espiritual* (Valladolid: Diego Fernandez de Cordoua y Ouiedo, 1593).

<sup>35</sup> The *alumbrados* ('enlightened ones') were a heretical movement in sixteenth-century Spain who believed in a mystical union with God that rendered the external forms of worship and Christian life superfluous.

<sup>36</sup> Acquaviva, *Industriae*, 265.

The combination of Ignatian with other sources provides a counterweight to tendencies in Jesuit life which sometimes threaten to destroy it. Lallemant's Jesuit ideal may appear at times too eremitical and unlike that of Ignatius, and could be criticized on several points. However, Jesuit identity needed in the seventeenth century, and probably still needs, input from other spiritualities so as not to be overwhelmed by its own apostolic stimulus.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> This article is a summary, written with the help of *The Way*, of my French doctoral thesis (defended in Paris at the Jesuit theological faculty) due to be published in Rome by the Gregorian University Press.