B. The Indwelling Spirit

The source of Libermann’s spirituality lay in the mystery of the Spirit’s indwelling of the baptized Christian who was made for holiness, “that he [the Spirit] may establish in us his own life of holiness.” He describes the Spirit’s indwelling in various ways, closely synonymous:

1. The Spirit resides in us, makes his home within us, which evokes intimacy and familiarity. “Remain quiet and peaceful near the Holy Spirit...who resides in you and wants to be there in everything.”

2. The Spirit dwells in us as in his sanctuary. “The same Holy Spirit who did such great things in them [the great saints] is in you, making his sanctuary there to produce the same effects in you.” “Sanctuary” points to the holiness of the place of his indwelling because he himself is holiness.

3. The Spirit can be found in the deepest recesses of our being—not in my brain, my physical heart, my will, my hands, my feet, etc., but beyond body, intellect, and will. That beyond is “me,” what individualizes me, what personalizes me. Libermann calls it the interior of my being, the interior of my soul, the “still center” (le centre) of my whole being. The Spirit and sweetness [douceur] reside there, because there precisely is where the love of Jesus is found, radiating out into my soul and body. It is the place where we receive Jesus’ sanctifying self-communication which is the work of the Spirit.

4. The Spirit reposes in our soul: “Remind yourself that the Holy Spirit reposes in your being...” This describes the Spirit’s peaceful contentment to be there, recalling Libermann’s teaching of sweetness [douceur] and peace as the essential environment for the perfect working of the Spirit in us. Libermann obviously alludes to the Last Supper scene of the Beloved Disciple resting on Jesus’ breast: “Jesus dwells in the deep interior of our soul and, being master of all our powers, keeps them resting in himself...Our soul, for its part, resting thus on its Well-Beloved, gives itself over to him completely...”

Such descriptions of the Spirit’s presence in us reveal Libermann’s preoccupation with the Spirit. He was speaking from the heart and from his own experience. His contemporaries “...venerated him as a saint...a man animated by the Spirit of God.” As one person said, “I cannot doubt that this holy man [Libermann] was animated by the divine Spirit.”
Note the testimony of the New Testament: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God” (1 Cor 6:19). “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

As in any divine action “ad extra” Libermann can attribute it variously: “.... tranquil and effortless attention to God who resides in the core ["le fond"] of our being” (LS 1.99, Aug 1835, to unknown seminarian; ND 1.206).

“...God reposes in the depth ["le fond"] of our being, he dwells in our innermost being ["l'intime"]...at the source of all our faculties, communicating to them a totally spiritual life and peace” (LS 1.297, Sept 1837, to M. Gamon, seminary director; ND 1.394).

But we can also think of the Song of Songs as P. Blanchard does (vol. 1, p. 134).

ND 13 Appendix 20, from Marie-Madelaine-Victoire de Bonnault d'Houet, foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus.

ND 2.425, from M. de Brandt. “I kept these letters [from Libermann] as relics of a saint....” (ND 1.113, from Dom Salier); Pope Gregory XVI predicted after meeting him “sara un santo” (he will be a saint. ND 2.55, from M. Drach).