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The letters contained in the present volume were written over a period of seventeen years (1834-1851) and are representative of the spiritual advice given by Francis Libermann to seminarians, priests, bishops, and religious. They reveal his deep understanding of souls and his ability to adjust his language and counsels to the capacity and needs of his readers. Here, in turn, he speaks as seminarian, novice master, priest, founder of a congregation, and apostle to the most neglected souls. Every letter manifests his profound spirituality and his eagerness to make Jesus live in the soul of its recipient.

The solidity of the Venerable Libermann’s spiritual teaching manifested itself most strikingly when his writings were examined by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the process of his beatification. As is well-known, this examination is an exhaustive and most rigorous inquiry into the dogmatic and ascetic content of the writings left behind by anyone whose cause of beatification or canonization is introduced. Many a proposed candidate has failed to pass this test or has cleared this formidable obstacle only with the greatest difficulty; e.g., Saint John Eudes. In Libermann’s case, the conclusion of the examination was “full of high praise” for his writings. “It is rare,” added the Cardinal, “that such a favorable verdict is reached.”¹ This testimony is all the more remarkable if we keep in mind that Francis Libermann’s thirteen volumes of writings were produced under almost unbearable stresses of illness, nervous tension, overwork, and without time to weigh his words carefully.

And Pius XII, in a Letter of January 16, 1952, wrote “[Libermann’s] doctrine and example draw those who study them to the heights of Christian renunciation, union with God, and interior peace. . . . Convinced, according to the teaching of

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the Angelic Doctor that the apostolic life ‘presupposes an abundance of contemplation,’ this priest, burning with love for his most abandoned brothers, was above all a man of God. On his death-bed, he left behind this last instruction in which he stands himself revealed: ‘God is everything, man is nothing.’”


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