This volume contains some of the early spiritual letters of Francis Libermann which were written while he was still in minor orders. It was for him a period of trial, of severe suffering from epilepsy which blocked his way to the priesthood. He had been baptized in 1826 at the age of twenty-four, had in turn been in the seminaries of St. Stanislas, St. Sulpice, and of Issy. Though still a minorite, he became novice master for the Eudist Fathers (1837-1839). It was only on September 18, 1841 that he was raised to the priesthood. In the meantime he had been the inspiring guide to numerous souls.

Many of these early letters manifest the zeal of an apostle who wants to do everything he can to make young seminarians and priests strive zealously for Christian perfection. He constantly preaches self-renunciation and renunciation to creatures to enable them to belong to God alone.

Some may take offense at what they may call exaggerations, excessive demands from weak human nature, or inhuman contempt for our natural craving for enjoyment. But do we not find that "folly" in every saint, and not merely in a Teresa of Avila and a John of the Cross? True lovers of a crucified Christ are eager to resemble Him in His love of the Cross.

In some of the letters we may recognize echoes of the Sulpician spirituality of Father Olier or that of Saint John Eudes, but Libermann is not a follower of any "system." He is a man of God, a follower of Jesus Christ.

A former rabbinical student, he appears in these letters as a "biblical man" whose fundamental attitudes have been so well described by Father Gelin, S.S., attitudes of adoration (Hallel) and spiritual poverty (Awana).
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Keeping this in mind, the reader of these letters will recognize those attitudes throughout: the constant expression of the deepest respect of puny man for the transcendent God and His Christ; an ever-present awareness of man's incapacity, nullity, his need for utter annihilation "in the presence of God"; his absolute submission to any form of God's "good pleasure," a term dear to Libermann. But besides all that there is never any inclination to despair nor even a sign of discouragement because there is always present an unshakeable faith in God's infinite mercy to which man must abandon himself with complete childlike confidence.

Every reader will no doubt realize that these letters are truly spiritual letters. Though not inspired as are the Scriptures, they make us "contact" Christ and His Spirit, to use an American expression very much liked by Father Edward Leen, C.S. Sp. Written as they are with no pretense at style, they nevertheless serve solid food for the mind and heart and will, and if read with humble openness, they will, no doubt, act as powerful stimuli for making the reader more truly "another Christ."

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