

more than a century of Spiritans

EPILOGUE

With the death of Father Le Jamtel in 1835 and that of Father Hérard in 1839 the apostolic activities of the Spiritans in Canada and the United States came to a temporary halt. The Congregation found itself in dire straits in France, trying to survive amidst the political storms raging around it which at any moment threatened its total disappearance.¹ The critical situation continued in this fashion until 1848, when the entrance of the Venerable Francis Libermann and his confreres of the Holy Heart of Mary Congregation restored its vigor and gave it a bloom surpassing anything it had experienced in its glorious Eighteenth Century.²

Nevertheless, the death of the last surviving Holy Ghost Father in America did not mean that relations with the northern half of the western hemisphere were broken off. Aside from continuing to provide missionaries for the Miquelon Islands, the Spiritans remained in touch with bishops and priests in the United States. A few years after Father Hérard's death, Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati invited them to resume their American labors in his archdiocese,³ and in 1847, the Propaganda applauded their plan to supply missionaries "for the various dioceses of North America."⁴

In the same year Father John Loewenbruck actually embarked for the States⁵ to negotiate with the Archbishop of Baltimore and other prelates,⁶ but a violent storm drove the vessel back to France and thus prevented his departure. In a short time he was too deeply engaged in negotiating the impending merger of Father Libermann's congregation with that of the Holy Ghost to make a second attempt. While this merger was actively pursued, Father Monnet, the Superior General, managed to send one priest, Father Arnold, and one seminarian,

¹ Koren, *op. cit.*, pp. 51 ff.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 97 ff.

³ *Bulletin général*, vol. 9, p. 313.

⁴ *Notes et documents relatifs... à... Libermann*, vol. 9, App., p. 197.

⁵ Koren, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

⁶ M. Leguay à S.G. l'Archévêque de Baltimore, 15 déc. 1847: *B.C. Arch., 25I-7. Cf. *ibid.*, encl. of 17 déc. 1847.

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Mr. Herzog, to the Cincinnati Archdiocese.⁷

The Venerable Francis Libermann, on the other hand, had been thinking about going in person to America as early as 1831, but his ill health prevented him from executing this plan. In 1844, after founding his congregation, he considered having his priests undertake apostolic work in America.⁸ After the merger of 1848, he resumed contact with Archbishop Purcell, which resulted in the acceptance of his offer to have the Spiritans staff the planned interdiocesan seminary of Cincinnati. Libermann appointed Ignatius Schwindenhammer, his future successor, to head this new venture. The ticket for the trip "by fire and wind" in one of the early steamships across the Atlantic was already in his pocket,⁹ when, for some unknown reason,^{1*} the plan was dropped.

In the succeeding years a steady stream of invitations to come to the United States and Canada to open seminaries, colleges, parishes and missions, reached the Spiritan headquarters.¹¹ Provisionally, all the Congregation could do was send a few priests trained in its Parisian seminary to various dioceses, such as those of Cincinnati and Cleveland.¹² It was not until 1872 that the Holy Ghost Fathers were able to take up, in systematic fashion, the tradition which in the first part of the Eighteenth Century had led them to the North American continent. As discussed in a previous work,¹³ it was the expulsion of the Congregation from Germany on the pretext of its alleged association with the Jesuits which, in that year, led to the re-entrance of the Spiritans on the American scene.

^{1*} In a letter to Bishop O'Connor of Pittsburgh, Purcell says that he "declined accepting" the Holy Ghost Fathers.¹⁰ This certainly was not the impression Father Libermann retained from the prelate's visit to Paris.

⁷ M. Monnet à Mgr Purcell, 29 juillet 1848: *Archives of the University of Notre Dame.

⁸ See footnote 5.

⁹ *Bulletin général*, vol. 9, pp. 313 ff.

¹⁰ Purcell to O'Connor, Feb. 16, 1853: *Diocese of Pittsburgh Archives.

¹¹ Koren, *op. cit.*, pp. 211, 259 f.

¹² *Sp. Arch., b. 411, d. 1, *passim*.

¹³ Koren, *op. cit.*, p. 211.