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**T**HE RENOWNED historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette, names the nineteenth century 'The Greatest Century' in mission expansion. By any standards a significant figure in that period of Catholic mission was Francis Libermann.

Libermann was the founder of a missionary congregation that took over a dying institution, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. This renewed society spearheaded mission work in Africa and a missionary movement in the church.

The son of a Rabbi from Alsace in France, Libermann became a Catholic at the age of 24. He immediately entered a seminary in Paris and was about to be ordained but the onset of epileptic seizures excluded him from the priesthood. He was allowed to remain in seminaries for ten years. Some seminarians spoke to him of the plight of slaves and he felt called to an apostolate to the slaves in the French colonies.

In this book we have the results of a trawl through the numerous letters and memoranda outlining the genesis of a missionary strategy of a shrewd and tactful negotiator with leaders in church and state, a contemplative and renowned spiritual director and a true apostle of Africa though he himself never went there.

Christy Burke C.S.Sp. is an Irish Spiritan (Holy Ghost) missionary priest. Appointed to Kenya where he would serve from 1966 to 2002, he taught in secondary schools as well as Junior and Senior Seminaries, and was chaplain in the University of Nairobi where he also lectured in Philosophy. He has worked in parish ministry, was adviser to the Family Life Counselling Association of Kenya as well as working in hospital chaplaincy in Nairobi and, more recently, in Ireland. Francis Libermann was the subject of his doctorate dissertation.



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