

**OF THE LOVE OF OUR
LORD JESUS
CHRIST, AND THE
MEANS OF ACQUIRING IT**

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Of the Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Means of Acquiring It by François Nepveu

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LORD JESUS CHRIST,

And the Means of acquiring it.

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OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

The Translation Edited by the Rev. H. J. Coleridge, S.J.



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PREFACE.

AS our LORD JESUS CHRIST was the sole Object of the love of the Eternal Father from all eternity, so ought He to be our only love also. He was sent into the world by the Eternal Father expressly that He might be loved by men. In the New Testament His Father speaks but to commend this love to them. Men are pleasing to Him only so far as they bear resemblance to Jesus Christ. He loves them only inasmuch as they love Jesus Christ. Lastly, He predestines them to eternal glory only by reason of the conformity they have to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ Himself came into the world to lead men to this love. All His thoughts,

His desires, His actions, and His sufferings, had this love for their chief aim. He declares that He came into the world for no other purpose than to kindle in the hearts of men the fire of His divine love, and that His chief desire is to see them inflamed with it. "I came to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?"—*Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?*

In all that the Holy Ghost works in our souls, He has no other aim than to teach us to know, love, and imitate our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself assures us of this, when He says in the Gospel that one of the chief motives of the coming of the Holy Ghost shall be to give testimony of Him to men, and to impress the knowledge of Him on their minds, and the love of Him on their hearts—"When the Paraclete cometh, He shall give testimony of Me."

Lastly, we are Christians only inasmuch as we are united to Jesus Christ. We cannot be perfectly united to Him except by love for Him, and by that entire conformity of our hearts and minds to Him, which this love cannot fail to produce. It is thus only that we are Christians. This love then for Jesus Christ should be the only aim of our desires, the object of our thoughts, the chief occupation of our life, and the end and aim of all our cares and exertions. Sinners may make this, their aim, the imperfect should be always aspiring to it, and the perfect should be unceasingly occupied with it.

What then is the business of our life, if it is not studying, knowing, honouring, loving, and imitating Jesus? This ought to be the chief employment, the chief, or rather, the only devotion of a Christian. Other devotions, I allow, are good; but after all, they are only good in as far as they have

reference to this, from which they derive all their merit and all their virtue. This is the solid and essential devotion of Christianity. This it is which makes us true and perfect Christians. Other devotions are often works of supererogation, this is of obligation. Others often oppress us by imposing extra obligations on us, this relieves us by helping us to perform those obligations we already have. Others are means, this is their end. Others assist us towards perfection, this completes and accomplishes our perfection.

Nevertheless, we must own it with sorrow, we see multitudes at this present time in Christendom, who by an intolerable mistake, which we cannot sufficiently deplore, prefer the accessaries to the principal, the means to the end; who entangle themselves in endless devotional practices, and neglect the devotion of devotions, namely, the devotion which we ought to have for

the Sacred Person of Jesus Christ. All those, then, who have any zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ should unite in putting an end to such an evil.

This should be the object of the zeal of preachers and the ordinary subject of their sermons; it should be one of the chief cares of those who make a profession of loving Jesus Christ. This is what Directors should aim at above all things; for they should only strive, like St. Paul, to form Jesus Christ in souls; for this is the surest, quickest, and easiest means to conduct souls in a short time to perfection. We may certainly say that many Directors have something to reproach themselves with on this score. But this is more especially true of those persons who make a particular profession of devotion, and who even aspire to the highest perfection. For, how is it, that with a number of excellent practices which they observe, with morti-

fications and austerities, sometimes even excessive, which they undertake, with the assiduous and, as it would seem, elevated prayer to which they apply themselves—how is it that they grovel all their life, scarcely advancing in virtue, sometimes shamefully bending under considerable faults, such as secret pride, and unmortified tempers and passions, so as never to succeed in acquiring to any great degree any of the evangelical virtues, such as deep humility, invariable sweetness, great contempt of the world, complete interior detachment, and a continual mortification of their tempers, senses, and passions? All this comes, doubtless, from not giving their attention sufficiently to the Sacred Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; from not sufficiently studying His Life, His Virtues, His Example, and His Precepts; from not meditating and penetrating sufficiently His Mysteries, His Greatness, His Merits, His Favours, and