

THE CHARITY OF JESUS CHRIST

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The charity of Jesus Christ by Francisco Arias

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FRANCISCO ARIAS

**THE CHARITY
OF JESUS CHRIST**

THE CHARITY OF
JESUS CHRIST.

BY

FRANCIS ARIAS.

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.



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P R E F A C E.

BORN in 1533, at Seville, where also he died in 1605, having entered the Society of Jesus in his twenty-eighth year, Father Francis Arias, the author of the treatise translated in the following pages, may be said to have belonged to the first generation of the religious body founded by St. Ignatius. His life does not seem to have had many vicissitudes, but we know that he was Rector of the College of the Society at Cadiz, and that he was esteemed, while living, as a saint. He was the author of a number of works, the reputation of which was very great and widespread in his own time. The great work from which the following pages have been translated, and which is strongly recommended by St. Francis de Sales in his *Introduction to a Devout Life*, is a monument of the high aims and indefatigable industry of the theological and ascetical writers of his time. It is usually to be met with in the shape of a large folio, containing under the same cover the three separate volumes into which the whole work is divided. The title of the book in the original Spanish seems to have been simply, *Of the Imitation of Jesus Christ*. It

is well known that, in the time of St. Ignatius, the book which we now know by the name of the *Imitation of Christ*, the immortal work of Thomas á Kempis, was commonly called by the title of the *Liber de Contemptu Mundi*. The work of Father Arias is called, in the translations in which it is now commonly known, by the second title of the original, *Thesaurus Inexhaustus Bonorum quæ in Christo habemus*. The three volumes are divided as follows. In the first we have a number of treatises on the titles of our Lord. He is set before us as our God, our Redeemer, our King, our Saviour, our Mediator, our Advocate, our Leader, our Priest and Sacrifice, our Teacher, Legislator, Master, and Pastor, our Light, our Life, and our Judge. The second volume puts before us, first a treatise on virtues in general, and then a series of treatises on the Christian virtues, Faith, Hope, Charity, Benignity, Mercy, Religion, Humility, Patience. The third volume contains the virtues of Prudence, Justice, Obedience, Fortitude, Temperance, Chastity, Poverty, and Simplicity. It concludes with a treatise on the Heinousness of Mortal Sin.

The characteristic of the writings of this famous author seems to be his combination of theological depth and accuracy with the tenderest piety. We are told that he was for some time a professor of theology, and every page of these treatises bears witness to the benefit which he must have derived, as an author and as a preacher, from the training of the theological chair. At the same time it must be noted that the original title of his work, *The Imitation of Christ*, is in one sense more fully deserved by it than by the work of Thomas á

Kempis itself. That is, Father Francis Arias never loses sight of our Lord and His example and teaching, and shows a familiarity with the details of the Gospel history which is remarkable even among the best ascetical writers of the Church. His work is a perfect treatise on the life of our Lord considered as our example, and, in respect of this intimate knowledge of the Gospels, he rises far above any modern writer who can be named as having written on the Christian virtues. Many of his illustrations of the example of our Lord will be found to throw a new and beautiful light on the Gospel narratives.

The present specimen of this great work has been now published, not only with the desire of increasing the number of standard spiritual books in the English language, but also with a hope that its reception may be such as to encourage those who have had charge of the translation, to proceed further in the work of making known to English readers the immense treasures of spirituality which at present lie hidden and almost unknown, except to scholars, in the glorious folios and quartos of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It can hardly be thought any disparagement to the writers of an age like our own, however brilliant their abilities and however sincere their devotion, to say that they must of necessity, in most cases, lack the solid theological learning, the deep thought and concentration, and even the vigorous industry, of the men of the age of St. Ignatius and St. Teresa. However this may be, it may not, perhaps, prove a fallacious hope, that Catholics of the times in which we live may be glad to become

better acquainted with these great writers, who were in old times the supports and guides of Christian faith and devotion, in that intelligent study of the great truths of our religion which seems to have been so much more common in former generations than in the nineteenth century.

H. J. C.

*London, Feast of the Purification
of our Blessed Lady, 1880.*

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