

Jean Croiset



*Devotion
to the Sacred
Heart of Jesus*

Jean Croiset

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus



Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066464905

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

NOTICE.

FIRST PART.

MOTIVES. CHAPTER I. What is meant by Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in what it consists.

CHAPTER II. The means employed by Almighty God to promote this devotion.

CHAPTER III. How just and reasonable is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The extreme ingratitude of men towards Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IV. How useful this devotion is for our salvation and our perfection.

CHAPTER V. How much true sweetness there is in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

CHAPTER VI. Of the devotion that the Saints have had to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

SECOND PART.— MEANS.

CHAPTER I.

I. FIRST DISPOSITION. — A great horror of Sin.

II. SECOND DISPOSITION. — A Lively Faith.

III. THIRD DISPOSITION. — A great desire of having an ardent love of Jesus Christ.

IV. FOURTH DISPOSITION.— Interior Recollection.

Chapter II. Obstacles which prevent us from gathering all the fruit we ought, from the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

I. FIRST OBSTACLE. — Tepidity.

II. SECOND OBSTACLE. — Self-love.

III. THIRD OBSTACLE. — A Secret Pride.

IV. FOURTH ORSTACLE. — Some Unmortified Passion.

CHAPTER III. The means of overcoming the obstacles, that hinder us from gathering the fruit we ought, from the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

I. FIRST MEANS. — True Mortification.

II. — SECOND MEANS. — Sincere Humility.

III. THIRD MEANS. — The joy and true sweetness which are inseparable from the exercise of true mortification and of sincere humility.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST MEANS. — Prayer.

II. SECOND MEANS.— Frequent Communion.

III. THIRD MEANS. — Visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

IV. FOURTH MEANS. — Fidelity in accomplishing with exactness some practices of this devotion.

V. FIFTH MEANS.— A tender devotion towards the Blessed Virgin.

VI. SIXTH MEANS. — A special devotion to St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

VII. — A DAY OF RETREAT EVERY MONTH.

THIRD PART.— PRACTICE.

CHAPTER I. What are the motives and sentiments with which one should practise this devotion.

CHAPTER II. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

I. Motives that should induce us to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

II. Method of Visiting the Blessed Sacrament.

III. Practice for spending every day, a quarter, or half an hour in prayer, before the blessed Sacrament, suited to all

sorts of persons.

IV. A few words of advice on frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER III. Practice for celebrating and hearing Mass.

II. Practice for the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

III. Practice for assisting at the Sacrifice of the Mass.

CHAPTER IV. Practical reflections on Communion.

Chapter V. What are the marks of the perfect love of Jesus Christ, and of true devotion to His Sacred Heart.

I. Character of one who has a true love for Jesus Christ.

II. Effects of the perfect love of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VI. Practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the day of the Feast.

CHAPTER VII. Practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for every month, every week, every day, and for certain hours every day.

II. Practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for every week.

III. Practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for every day.

CHAPTER VIII. Exercises of this Devotion.

MEDITATIONS FOR THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

FIRST POINT. — The ardent desire Jesus Christ feels to be with us.

THIRD POINT. — The excessive desire of Jesus Christ to be united with us.

MEDITATION FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY IN EACH MONTH.

DIFFERENT SUBJECTS OF MEDITATION FOR THE FRIDAYS IN EACH MONTH.

JANUARY.

MEDITATION FOR THE SECOND FRIDAY IN JANUARY.

MEDITATION FOR THE THIRD FRIDAY IN JANUARY.

MEDITATION FOR THE FOURTH FRIDAY IN JANUARY.

FEBRUARY

MEDITATION FOR THE THIRD FRIDAY IN MARCH.

MEDITATION FOR THE FOURTH FRIDAY IN MARCH.

APRIL.

MEDITATION FOR THE SECOND FRIDAY IN APRIL.

MAY.

JUNE.

JULY.

AUGUST.

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER.

NOVEMBER.

DECEMBER.

**It has been suggested that this work
be split into multiple pages.**

If you'd like to help, please review the style guidelines and help pages.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

[Table of Contents](#)

BY FATHER JOHN CROISET, Of the Society of Jesus.
TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN. LONDON: BURNS &
LAMBERT, 17 & 18, PORTMAN STREET, PORTMAN SQUARE.
1863.

IMPRIMATUR, Westmon., die 82 Maji. 1863. N. CARD.
WISEMAN.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

[Table of Contents](#)

THE deep and extraordinary interest taken by so many, in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great fruits it has produced, and the singular esteem entertained for it, by persons of universally recognized merit, have led to the publication of this book. It is intended to instruct the faithful, and satisfy their pious desires. There might, perhaps, have been some reason to fear, at the very outset, that the mere title of Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, however it might attract many persons to read this book, might also deter many others. Arrested by the first words, they might be led to form an inaccurate idea of the devotion. To remove this difficulty, it has been thought well to explain in the beginning, what is understood by

devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Experience has proved, that there is no one, who, after seeing in what it consists, does not agree, that it is reasonable, solid, and most useful, for our salvation, as well as for our perfection.

In the first part, are developed the motives, which should attract us to this devotion. In the second, are given the means of acquiring it. In the third, the practice of the Devotion is explained, and some of the exercises supplied, which are suited to it. And since the Devotion may be wholly reduced, to the perfect love of Jesus Christ, especially in the Adorable Eucharist; this perfect love is treated of, throughout the whole course of the work. The reason why the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the august Sacrifice of our Altars, and Holy Communion, are spoken of at greater length, is, because, of all exercises of piety, there are none which bring us nearer to Jesus Christ, none more adapted to honour His Sacred Heart, and to inflame ours with an ardent love of Him.

It is hoped that the reflections here made, will help to convince many, of the reasons for practising these holy exercises, and teach them at the same time how to practise them with fruit. A portrait is then drawn of a soul that truly loves Jesus Christ, with a view of giving a true idea of real and solid piety.

The method of practising this Devotion is then given, by means of suitable exercises; and the work is closed by Meditations adapted to the Devotion. Those who know the singular merit and exalted virtue of Father La Colombière, and are aware that Almighty God especially selected him, to promote the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, will be

glad to find in various parts of this book, the thoughts and sentiments of this great servant of Jesus Christ upon this Devotion.

To lead Christians to the practice of this Devotion, it is unnecessary to adduce either authorities, revelations, or examples. It is enough to know, that it tends wholly to the perfect love of Jesus Christ. It has been thought well, however, to cite, in two or three parts of this book, such things as are found in the revelations of St. Gertrude and St. Mechtildis, bearing upon this Devotion. It would be nothing short of prevarication, were we to abstain, through fear of being considered too credulous, from pointing out the wonderful means, which Almighty God has made use of latterly, to renew the practice of this Devotion amongst the faithful. It cannot be denied, without condemning the sentiments of the entire Church, that there have existed at all times, pure and chosen souls, to whom God communicates Himself intimately. Although indeed, instances of this divine condescension and familiarity are most rare, nevertheless, there is not a century that does not furnish us with examples of it in some Saint. Those who have never received such favours, says St. Teresa, have sometimes a difficulty in believing in these extraordinary gifts: (St. Teresa in her Life, ch. 26.) But they should remember, that if, it be credulity to believe everything on such a subject, it is on the other hand, temerity to believe nothing. It is well here to state, that the revelations of St. Gertrude and of St. Mechtildis, which we have quoted two or three times in this book, were examined by all the learned persons, who were then in Flanders, in France, in Italy, in

Germany, and in the most celebrated universities. All were unanimous in asserting that they were full of the spirit of God, and that He alone was the author of them. Learned Prelates and great Saints have esteemed and approved them. They have been cited with praise by celebrated Doctors. One of them has asserted, that, after the examination which has been made of them, he did not think, that a man of true wisdom and solid virtue, could fail to esteem them.*

The Spiritual Retreat of F. La Colombière has already made many pious souls acquainted, with the wonderful means, which Almighty God has employed, to inspire this Devotion. But, the person of whom that great servant of God speaks, "to whom" he says, "our Lord, communicates Himself most intimately," took always especial care to lead an obscure and hidden life, though honoured by God with those extraordinary graces, which we read of with admiration, in the lives of the greatest saints. We therefore exhort our readers to read the life of Sister Margaret Alacoque, Religious of the Visitation, by Monseigneur Languet, Bishop of Soissons, one of the greatest and most learned Prelates, that France has produced in these times. It was translated into Italian and printed at Venice. It will be seen in the person of that most virtuous virgin, that the arm of the Lord is not shortened, and that, even if it were true that the present age is (as some not very devout minds wish to persuade themselves) an age of no miracles, at all events there is not any age of the Church, in which great Saints do not appear.

*Revelationes predictis Fceminis factce toti Orbi innotuerunt, et a piis, eruditisque vins jam olim fuerunt approbatas; nam, et Sancti Patres passim eas citant in scriptis et libris suis Revelationes sanctos Gertrudis ante et post mortem ipsius fuerunt a doctissimis, eruditissimisque viris summa cum diligentia examinatce, quorum unus post accuratam illarum lectionem, scripsit sententiam hoc modo: Ego, inquit, in veritate divini luminis sentio, neminem qui Dei Spiritu sit illustratus, posse calumniari, aut impugnare ea qua in hoc libra habentur, nam et Catholica sunt, et Sancta. Bias. Concl. Anim.fidel. C. 4. § 5. de Authent. Revelation.

NOTICE.

[Table of Contents](#)

For the greater convenience of those who may use this book, it has been thought well to place all the Meditations at the end. Some ejaculatory prayers are appended to them. They may be employed to feed devotion during the day, according to the different necessities of different persons. They are taken from the Soliloquies, the Meditations, and the Manual of St. Augustin, and also from the works of St. Teresa.

FIRST PART.

MOTIVES. CHAPTER I. What is meant by Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in what it consists.

[Table of Contents](#)

THE particular object of this devotion is the immense love of the Son of God, which has induced Him to die for us, and to give Himself wholly to us in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, and this, although He foresaw all the ingratitude and outrages which He was to meet with in this state of a victim immolated till the end of ages; preferring rather to expose himself daily to the insults and contempt of mankind, than to fail in showing us, by the greatest of all wonders, to what an excess He loves us. This is what has enkindled the piety and zeal of many. Reflecting on the little gratitude that is shown for such an excess of love, the little love that is felt for Jesus Christ, and the little value that is set upon His love for us, they have been unable to endure to see Him daily so ill-treated, without protesting to Him their just grief and their excessive desire to repair, as far as they can, so much ingratitude and contempt, by their ardent love, by their profound respect, and by every sort of homage in their power. It is with this intention that certain days in the year have been chosen in order to make a more special recognition of the excessive love of Jesus Christ for us in the adorable Sacrament; and at the same time, to make Him some reparation of honour for all the indignities and all the contempt which He has received, and still

receives daily, in this mystery of love. And certainly, this grief at the sight of the little love shown to Jesus Christ in this adorable mystery, this intense sorrow at seeing Him so ill-treated, these practices of devotion which are suggested by love alone, and which have no other aim but to repair, as far as possible, the outrages He there endures, are, without doubt, real proofs of an ardent love for Jesus Christ, and visible signs of a just gratitude.

It is easy to see that the object and principal motive of this devotion is, as we have already said, the immense love which Jesus Christ has for men, whilst they for the most part feel only contempt, or at least indifference, for Him.

The end we have in view is, first, to acknowledge and honour, as far as we are able, by our frequent adorations, by a return of love, by our thanksgivings, and by every sort of homage, the sentiments of love and tenderness which Jesus Christ has for us, in the adorable Eucharist, where He is so little known to men, or at least, so little loved, even by those who do know Him.

In the second place, we aim at repairing, by every means possible, the insults and outrages to which His love exposed Him, in the course of His mortal life, and to which the same love exposes Him still every day, in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. So that this

devotion wholly consists, properly speaking, in an ardent love of Jesus Christ, constantly residing amongst us in the adorable Eucharist, and in testifying this ardent love by our grief at seeing Him so little loved and so little honoured, and by the means we take to repair this contempt and this want of love.

But as we always require, in the practice even of the most spiritual devotions, certain material and sensible objects, which, by the strong impression they make upon us, engage our attention, and thus facilitate the exercise of these devotions, the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been chosen, as the sensible object that is most worthy of our respect, and the best suited at the same time to the end we have in view in this devotion. Indeed, even if there had been no special reason for giving to these pious practices the name of Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, it would seem that nothing could better express the peculiar character of this devotion. For it is, in fact, but an exercise of divine love. Love is its object; love is its principal motive; and love is the end at which it aims. The heart of man, says St. Thomas, is in a manner the source and seat of love. Its natural movements follow and imitate the affections of the mind, and contribute not a little, by their strength or weakness, to foment or assuage its passions. It is on this account that the most tender sentiments of the soul are generally attributed to the heart. It is this also that makes the hearts of the Saints an object of such singular veneration.

From all that has been said, it is easy to understand what is meant by devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It means an ardent love for Jesus Christ at the remembrance of all the wonders He has wrought, to testify His love, especially in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which is indeed the miracle of His love. It means a lively grief at the sight of the outrages committed by men against Jesus Christ in this adorable mystery. It means an ardent desire to omit nothing in order to make reparation, in every way we can, for all

these insults. This is what is understood by devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what it principally consists in, not exclusively, as some perhaps have supposed, in the loving and specially honouring that Heart of flesh, like our own, which forms a part of the adorable Body of Jesus Christ. Not that the Sacred Heart does not merit our adoration. It is enough to say that it is the Heart of Jesus Christ. If His Body and His precious Blood deserve all our respect, who does not see that His Sacred Heart claims our homage even more particularly? If we feel a devotion towards His Sacred Wounds, how much more powerfully should we be inflamed with devotion towards His Sacred Heart? This Divine Heart, regarded as a part of the adorable Body of Jesus Christ, is, properly speaking, the material object of this devotion. The immense love which Jesus Christ bears towards us is its form or motive principle. Now, as this love is purely spiritual, it was impossible that it could come under the cognizance of the senses. It was therefore necessary to find a symbol to express it. What more appropriate or more natural symbol of love could be found than the real Heart of Jesus?

It is for the same reason that the Church, when she wishes to give us a sensible representation of the sufferings of the Son of God, which are no less spiritual than His love, gives us the image of His Sacred Wounds. So that, as devotion to the Sacred Wounds is, in truth, a devotion to Jesus in his sufferings, so the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is, in truth, a more affectionate and more ardent devotion towards Jesus Christ in the adorable Sacrament, in consideration of the immense love He there testifies

towards us, and with the intention of making reparation for the contempt which is manifested towards it. Assuredly, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ bears as close a relation, at least, to His love, as the Sacred Wounds bear to His sufferings. Now, if there has ever existed, in every age, so great a devotion to the Sacred Wounds of Jesus Christ, and if the Church, in her wish to inspire all her children with the love of Jesus Christ, continually places these Sacred Wounds before their eyes, how powerful necessarily must be the effect of the remembrance and representation of His Sacred Heart?

It will be seen, in the course of this work, that this devotion is not new, and that its practice is confirmed by the example of many great Saints. It has been sanctioned by various privileges. Clement X., by a Bull dated the 4th of October, 1674, granted great Indulgences to an association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the Church of the Seminary at Constances, consecrated in honour of the Sacred Heart. Innocent XII. granted, by a special Brief, a plenary Indulgence in favour of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.*

It is not necessary to adduce here the numerous reasons which prove the solidity of this devotion. It is enough to say that the love which Jesus Christ has for us, and of which he gives us so marvellous a proof in the adorable Eucharist, is its principal motive; that to make reparation for the contempt with which this love has been treated is the principal end to which it is directed; that the Sacred Heart of Jesus, all on fire with this love, is its sensible object, and that a most ardent and tender love for the person of Jesus Christ ought to be its fruit.

*The reigning Pontiff, Clement XIII., at the request of many dioceses, provinces, and kingdoms, has allowed the feast to be celebrated with a proper Mass and Office. The devotion has in consequence rapidly spread over almost all Catholic countries.

CHAPTER II. The means employed by Almighty God to promote this devotion.

[Table of Contents](#)

FATHER LA COLOMBIÈRE, of the Society of Jesus, was one of the first whom Almighty God made use of to draw the faithful to this devotion. This great Servant of God was more illustrious for his glorious character of Confessor of Jesus Christ in England, than for the distinguished post which he held of Preacher to her Royal Highness the Duchess of York, now Queen of Great Britain. He is celebrated for his works, in which he unites solidity with elegance, and elegance with unction. But he is still more esteemed for his exalted virtue. He had bound himself by an express vow to aspire to it continually, and he attained to it in so short a time as to secure the admiration of all Catholics who knew him, and even of heretics. This great Servant of God conceived at once so true an idea of the solidity and importance of this devotion, and received from God such great graces by means of these holy practices, that he thought himself obliged to neglect nothing to make known this treasure, which belongs indeed to all, but which is known only to few. Let us hear what he has written on the subject himself in the Journal of his Spiritual Retreats, which he made in London, and the notes of which were published after his death.

"At the close of this Retreat," he says, "full of confidence in the mercy of God, I have resolved to procure, by every means possible, the execution of what was prescribed to me

by my Adorable Master, regarding His most precious Body in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, where I believe Him really and truly present. Full of the consolations which I receive and enjoy from the mercy of my God, though I cannot explain what they are, I have understood that Almighty God desired that I should serve Him, by procuring the accomplishment of His holy designs with regard to the devotion which He has suggested to a person to whom He communicates Himself very intimately, and for whose benefit He has been pleased to make use of my weakness. I have already inspired many persons in England with it, and I have written about it to France, and have begged a friend of mine to make it known where he is. It will be very useful there, and the number of chosen souls that are to be found in that Community makes me believe that its practice in that holy house will be very agreeable to God. Why cannot I, oh my God! be everywhere, and publish what Thou expectest from Thy servants and friends?

"Almighty God having manifested His designs to the person who, there is reason to believe, is according to His heart, from the great graces He has granted her, she consulted me regarding them, and I obliged her to put in writing what she had said to me. This I have myself written in the Journal of my Retreats, since Almighty God has deigned to make use of my weakness in the execution of this design. "

"Being before the Blessed Sacrament," says this holy soul, "one day during the Octave of Corpus Christi, I received from God excessive marks of His love. As I felt moved with the desire of making Him some return and

giving love for love, He said to me: 'Thou canst not make me a better return than by doing what I have so often asked of thee.' And disclosing to me His Divine Heart, ' Behold this Heart,' He said, 'which has loved men so much, and has spared nothing, even to consuming Itself, in order to show them Its love; and in return, I receive nothing but ingratitude from the greater number through the contempt, the irreverence, the sacrileges, and the coldness shown towards me in this Sacrament of love. But, what is more painful to me is, that these are hearts which are consecrated to Me. I therefore ask of thee, that the first Friday after the Octave of the Blessed Sacrament be dedicated to a particular festival in honour of My Heart, to make It a reparation of honour by an act of atonement, and by communicating on that day, in order to repair the indignities which It has received during the time of exposition on the Altars; and I promise thee that my Heart shall dilate Itself to pour abundantly the influences of Its divine love upon those who shall render It this honour.'

"But, oh Lord, why dost Thou address Thyself," said this person to Him, "to so miserable a creature, to so poor a sinner, that by her unworthiness she is calculated to hinder the accomplishment of Thy design, when Thou hast so many generous souls to execute Thy desires?"

"Dost thou not know," He said, "that I make use of the weakest subjects to confound the strong? that it is generally in the most insignificant and the poor in spirit that I manifest my power, in order that they may attribute nothing to themselves?"

"Grant me then," I said to Him, "the means of doing what Thou commandest."

"He then added: 'Go to my servant N. and tell him from Me, that he must do all in his power to establish this devotion, and to give this satisfaction to My Divine Heart. That he must not lose courage at the difficulties he will meet with, for they will not be wanting. But he must bear in mind, that those who wholly distrust themselves, and confide entirely in me, are all-powerful.'

"F. la Colombière was a person of very nice discernment, and was not one who would believe anything lightly. But he had received too clear a proof of the exalted and solid virtue of the person that spoke to him to fear the least illusion in this matter. He therefore immediately set himself to the work which Almighty God had entrusted to him. But in order to accomplish it in the best manner that he could, he began it in his own person. He consecrated himself entirely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He offered to It everything in himself that he thought capable of honouring and pleasing It. The extraordinary graces which he received from this practice soon confirmed him in the idea he had formed of the importance and solidity of this devotion. No sooner did he begin to meditate on the tender love which Jesus Christ entertains for us in the Blessed Sacrament, where His sacred Heart is ever burning with love for men, and ever open to pour out upon them every kind of grace and benediction, than he felt deep grief at the thought of the horrible outrages which Jesus Christ has endured therein for so long a time from the malice of heretics, and from the extraordinary indifference which the greater number even of

Catholics show for Jesus Christ in this august Sacrament. He was deeply moved at the remembrance of this forgetfulness, this contempt, and these outrages, and he was constrained to consecrate himself anew to the Sacred Heart, by that beautiful prayer which he calls An Offering to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This prayer will be found at the end of this book. The departure of the Servant of God to England, his imprisonment, and the short time he survived his return to France, did not allow him to publish more regarding it. But God has not left His work imperfect. He himself inspired this devotion, which, as he had made known to St. Gertrude (Life of St. Gertrude, book iv. c. 4), He especially reserved for these latter times, in order to arouse by these means the tepidity and sloth of the faithful. By means of a little book composed as it were by chance, without art, without study, and without design, He has inspired with this devotion even persons who had never appreciated it, and who, at one time, without knowing in what it consisted, had thrown discredit upon it. Almighty God has made use of these persons in particular to diffuse it almost universally.

In less than a year then was this devotion happily established. The wisest directors, Doctors, and Prelates have pronounced its eulogium. Preachers have successfully inculcated it. Chapels have been erected in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Pictures of It have been painted and engraved. Altars have been raised to It. The nuns of the Visitation, who, animated with the spirit of their holy Founder, have been the most zealous, or at least the first, in this undertaking, have had the consolation of

hearing the Mass composed in honour of the Sacred Heart solemnly sung at Dijon, in the chapel which they have built to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Their example has been followed with the greatest benefit by many other nuns. This solid devotion has spread and established itself with marvellous success over almost the whole of France. It has been carried into foreign kingdoms. It has passed even beyond the seas. It has been founded at Quebec, and has already penetrated by the help of missionaries into Syria, the Indies, and even China. In a word, the universal approbation this devotion has met with, the esteem entertained for it by persons of universally recognized merit and virtue, give us reason to hope that in future Jesus Christ will be less forgotten, better served, and much more loved.

CHAPTER III. How just and reasonable is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Table of Contents](#)

THE reasons which enforce the love of Jesus Christ are above any mere sentiment. Souls relish them according to their progress in grace. It seems as though to wish to seek the motives that should lead us to love Jesus Christ is, either to forget what we are, or to believe that we do not know who He is.

It might then appear useless to bring forward here the motives which should incline us to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This devotion is itself an exercise of the love we ought to have for Jesus Christ. But as all men are not always in the same dispositions, and grace is not always equal in all men, I have thought it well to make at least a few reflections on the three principal motives. They should be sufficient to convince any reasonable man.

We shall show in this and the two following chapters. 1. How just and reasonable is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. 2. How useful it is both for our salvation and perfection. 3. What true sweetness there is in this devotion. In fact, whether we consider the sensible object of this devotion, which is the sacred Heart of Jesus, or confine ourselves to the principal and spiritual object, which is the immense love of Jesus Christ for men, with what respect, gratitude, and love should we not be filled!

I. The excellence of the adorable Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Heart of Jesus is holy with the sanctity of God Himself. Hence it follows, that all the movements of His Heart, owing to the dignity of the Person from whom they proceed, are actions of infinite price and value. For they are the actions of God Incarnate. It is therefore just that the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ should be honoured with a peculiar worship. For in honouring It, we honour His Divine Person. The veneration we bear the Saints renders their hearts so precious to us, that we look upon them as the most precious of their relics. What, then, must we think of the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ? Its claims to our love are not only higher in degree but different in kind. Where is the heart that was ever animated with dispositions so admirable, and so conformable to our true interests? Where shall we find one whose movements could be a source of so much good to us? It is in this divine Heart that all the designs of our salvation have been formed. It is through the love with which this Heart burns for us, that these same designs have been executed.

This sacred Heart, says a great servant of God, is the seat of all virtues, the source of all benedictions, the refuge of all holy souls. The virtues which may principally be honoured in It, are — first, a most ardent love for God His Father, joined to a most profound respect, and the greatest humility that has ever existed; in the second place, an infinite patience in sufferings, an excessive grief for the sins which He had taken upon Himself, the confidence of a most tender Son joined to the confusion of the greatest sinner; in

the third place, a most lively compassion for our miseries, an immense love for us, notwithstanding these miseries, and with all these emotions, each of which was exercised in the highest degree possible, an unalterable equanimity, proceeding from so perfect a conformity to the will of God, that it could not be disturbed by any event, however contrary it might appear to His zeal, His humility, His love itself, and all the other dispositions He possessed.

This adorable Heart is still, as far as It can be, in the same sentiments. It is, above all, burning with love for man; always open to pour out on them every sort of grace and blessing; always full of compassion for our evils; always urged by the desire to make us partakers of Its treasures, and to give Itself to us; always ready to receive us, and to be to us a refuge, an habitation, a Paradise even in this life. For all this, He finds nothing in the heart of man but hardness, forgetfulness, contempt, ingratitude. Are not these motives to induce Christians to honour this Sacred Heart, and to repair so many insults and outrages, by manifest proofs of their love?

II. The amiable qualities which are found in the Person of Jesus Christ.

No one can apply himself to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, without finding in Him everything that is amiable in creatures, whether reasonable or devoid of reason. Every one has his own attraction to love. Some are drawn by great beauty, others by meekness. We see some who are drawn by the virtues in which they are themselves wanting, because they seem to them more admirable than those they possess. Others, again, have a greater liking for the

qualities which agree with their own inclinations. Good qualities and true virtues command the love of all. But if there were on earth a person, says a great servant of God, in whom were united all motives for love, who could refuse to love him? Now, all agree that all these are to be, found united in a most excellent degree, in the adorable Person of Jesus Christ; and yet Jesus Christ is only loved by a very few.

The most celebrated beauty, says the Prophet, is nothing but a withered flower in comparison with that of our divine Saviour. It appeared to me, says St. Teresa, that the sun cast upon the earth but a pale light, after I had seen in an ecstasy, some rays of the beauty of Jesus Christ. The most perfect creatures in this world are those which have the fewest defects. The most splendid qualities in men are accompanied by so many imperfections, that whilst we are attracted on one side, we are repelled on the other. Jesus Christ alone is sovereignly perfect. Everything in Him is equally amiable.

There is nothing in Him, but what ought to win all hearts to Him. In Him, we find united all the advantages of nature, all the riches of grace and of glory, all the perfections of the Divinity. We discover abysses, a boundless space as it were, and an infinite extent of greatness. In a word, this God Incarnate who loves us so tenderly, and whom men love so little, is the object of the love, the homage, the adorations and the praises of the whole Court of heaven. It is He who has supreme authority to judge men and angels. The destiny and the eternal happiness of all creatures is in His hands; His dominion extends over all nature. All spirits tremble in His presence. They are obliged to adore Him,

either by a voluntary submission of love, or by the forced endurance of the effects of His justice. He reigns absolutely in the order of grace and in glory. The whole world, visible and invisible, is under His feet. Is He not, then, an object worthy of the homage of mankind? Does not this Man-God, with all His titles and all the glory He possesses, and loving us as He does, deserve that we should love Him?

But what still more powerfully attracts our love in our Divine Saviour, is, that He unites all these rare qualities, these magnificent titles, this eminent sovereignty, with so great a meekness, and tenderness for us, that it is carried even to excess. His meekness is so amiable, that He charmed even His mortal enemies. He was led, says the Prophet (Isaiah liii. 9), as a sheep to the slaughter: and He was dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he did not open His mouth. He compares Himself sometimes to a father, who cannot contain his joy at the return of a prodigal son (St. Luke xv. 11); sometimes to a shepherd, who, having found his sheep that was lost, puts it upon his shoulders, and calls together his friends and neighbours, that they may rejoice because he has found it (St. Luke xv. 5). Hath no man condemned thee? He says to the adulterous woman; Neither will I condemn thee: go and now sin no more (St. John viii. 10). He exercises no less meekness towards us every day. It is extraordinary what precautions it is necessary to take in the world, to avoid offending a friend. Men are so sensitive, that often a single expression of ill-humour is enough to make them forget twenty, thirty, forty years of service. A single word, spoken unseasonably, sometimes breaks the strongest friendship.

It is not so with Jesus Christ. It seems incredible, but nevertheless it is beyond dispute, that we cannot possibly have a friend more grateful than He is. We must not imagine that He is capable of breaking friendship with us for a slight ingratitude. He sees all our weaknesses, and bears with incredible goodness all the miseries of those He loves. He forgets them, and appears not to perceive them. His compassion goes so far as to give comfort to those souls who are too much afflicted at them. He does not desire that our fear of displeasing Him should go so far as to disturb us and torment our minds. He would have us avoid the smallest faults; but He does not even wish that we should be disquieted at great ones: He desires that joy, liberty and peace of heart should be the eternal portion of those that truly love Him.

The least of these qualities, in one of the great ones of the world, would be enough to win the hearts of all those under him. The mere account of any of these virtues in a prince whom we have never seen, and are never likely to see, makes an impression on our hearts, and makes him beloved, even by strangers. Jesus Christ is the only one in whom all these splendid qualities, all these virtues, and whatever we can picture to ourselves as great, excellent and amiable, are to be found united. How is it, then, that so many motives for inspiring love do not succeed in making us truly love Jesus Christ? It often requires so little in the world to gain our hearts. We give away our heart, and are prodigal of it for ever so little. Shalt Thou alone, oh my God, have no part in it?

Can we reflect a little on these things, and not feel an ardent love of Jesus Christ? Can we fail to have at least a lively grief at loving Him so little? We owe Him our hearts, by so many titles. Can we refuse Him, then, this heart, if we add to all these titles the immense benefits with which He has presented us, and the ardour and excessive tenderness with which He has loved and does love us still, never ceasing to give us daily manifest proofs of the immense love He has for us?

III. The sensible proofs of the immense love that Jesus Christ has for us.

Of all marks of love, there is none that moves the heart of men so deeply as benefits. Either because there is nothing that marks more strongly the affection of the person who loves; or because nothing is so gratifying to our nature, ever inclined, as it is, to seek its own interest, as a love which is of service to us. Jesus Christ has used this means also, in order to oblige us to love Him. He has presented us, He has loaded us with a thousand blessings, the least consideration of which far exceeds all that we can merit, hope for, or desire. All are continually receiving His benefits. All agree in acknowledging the excess of His love, of which these benefits are themselves such striking proofs. And yet, how few are there who are gained by His benefits, or feel themselves touched by His love!

By dint of hearing the Creation, the Incarnation, and Redemption constantly spoken of, we become accustomed to these words, and to the things they signify: and yet, there is no one so unreasonable as not to be at once transported with love, for any one from whom he knew he had received