

great deal of his work was in Latin, in particular the greatest of his works, the *Incendium Amoris*, which was probably written at the beginning of the last period of his life. It would therefore be narrow-minded to exclude from present consideration the treasures of his Latin pen which can happily elucidate and enlarge the thought behind his English works. We are in duty bound to consider all his works in so far as they apply to the way of the proficients, a policy which demands the neglect of some of Rolle's more elementary writings, which will for that very reason repay a careful reading apart from this study. Moreover two of the most important Latin works have an easily obtainable 15th century translation by Richard Misyn which helps to link us directly with the pre-Reformation tongue.

It is not easy to fix any chronology in his writings except in so far as the English are usually later than the Latin. So that we make no attempt here to follow Rolle's development as reflected in the series of his own books, letters and hymns. The method most suited to our purpose is to base ourselves on the English writings and expand their content by reference to the more celebrated of his Latin works.

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## DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

BY

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.



CHILD in trouble or in disgrace goes first to its mother for comfort and forgiveness. When in fear of its father's anger it hopes for its mother's help in turning anger aside. It is not surprising that after a long period of self-sufficient rationalism, in a time of widespread misery and persecution, men should begin to show a new appreciation of their own sinfulness and weakness and their dependence on God by turning first of all to our Lady, God's Mother and ours. Unlike ours, her heart has never faltered for one moment in its love of God and its love of mankind. All its desire has been for God and the showing of his glory among men. Her heart has never lacked courage or patience; it has been always what our hearts should be and are not. Thinking of it we see our own shortcoming; we see, too, a source of sympathy and help. Our Lady is the first, most perfect, fruit of Christ's redeeming work and cooperates with him in the rescue of sinners and the perfecting of his Church. To her, as refuge of sinners, millions have turned in these last hundred years or so. They have been years

whose spiritual history is largely the story of devotion to the Mother of God, and a central place in the story is taken by the growth of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The present century has been something of a climax. The popularity of the miraculous medal, the development of the Legion of Mary, and the prominence of Fatima are all associated with this devotion. At Fatima, according to official accounts, our Lady declared in 1917 that our Lord wished devotion to her Immaculate Heart to be established throughout the world. Foretelling sufferings from war, famine, and persecutions against the Church, she continued: 'In order to stop it I shall ask for the consecration of the world to my Immaculate Heart, as well as Communion of reparation on the first Saturday of each month. If my requests are granted Russia will be converted and there will be peace. Otherwise an impious propaganda will spread its errors through the world, raising up wars and persecutions against the Church. Many will be martyred, several nations will be wiped out. The outlook is therefore gloomy. But there is a ray of hope—my Immaculate Heart will finally triumph'. Twenty-five years later the present Pope concluded the silver jubilee celebrations of the apparitions at Fatima with the consecration of the Church and the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Later in the same year, 1942, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, he renewed that consecration in St Peter's; and in May, 1944, it was decreed that the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary should be kept in future by the whole Church on the 22nd of August.

It was then only a little over a hundred years since the parish priest of our Lady of Victories in Paris, tempted to despair of making any impression on the more than 25,000 lapsed Catholics in his care, heard an 'interior voice' say: 'Consecrate your parish to the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary'. After some doubt and hesitation the priest, Père Desgenettes, made the act of consecration one Sunday evening in December, 1836. It was followed by rapid improvement in the condition of the parish and by the swift spread of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary which Père Desgenettes founded. Later raised to the dignity of an archconfraternity, it was the principal means of spreading knowledge of the devotion in the nineteenth century; when its founder died, in 1860, it had a membership of over 20 millions. The shrine of our Lady of Victories had become a great centre of pilgrimage. Among the pilgrims was Newman, there in thanksgiving for his reception into the Church. Other Englishmen were in touch with Père Desgenettes and the confraternity from its earliest years, especially the Passionist Father Ignatius, asking for prayers for the conversion of England.

The Holy See expressed a wish that on the first Sunday of each month Mass should be offered at the shrine of our Lady of Victories for that intention, one which was dear to Père Desgenettes himself. Advocating the setting up of confraternities of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in every parish in England, he pointed out that our Lady could destroy heresy at a stroke. 'Plant then the banner of the Immaculate Heart through the length and breadth of England.'

His eagerness to see the spread of devotion to the Immaculate Heart was shared by the Holy See in his own day, particularly by Pope Pius IX, who remarked more than once that the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was the work of God and would bring many blessings on the Church. It was undoubtedly in keeping with the teaching of many great saints in the earlier centuries who were marked by devotion to the Immaculate Heart. St Mechtilde was one of the first, and her salutations to the Heart of Mary are, as it were, a summary of doctrine which was expanded by subsequent writers.

O glorious Virgin, no heart can be to us as thy heart, near to the heart of Jesus Christ.

I salute thy heart in the desire it had above all patriarchs and prophets for the birth of Christ.

I salute thy heart in its love; for through burning and most humble love thou wert the Mother of God.

I salute thy heart in the goodness and gentleness with which so tenderly thou didst nourish the little Jesus.

I salute thy heart because it kept carefully all the words he spoke.

I salute thy heart, reflecting the picture of Christ in his Passion.

I salute thy heart in its unceasing prayers and solicitude for the Church.

I salute thy heart which daily in heaven makes perfect our petitions before the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, advocating our cause.<sup>1</sup>

She goes on to recall the purity, patience, humility, and the other virtues of our Lady's heart, and to pray that with our Lady's help her own heart may always be similarly disposed, united with it in the service of Christ, in true union with the divine will. That insistence on union with God as the end to which the love of Mary leads us is the centre of the doctrine of devotion to the Immaculate Heart. It is to bring men back to her Son and to their duty of living for God's glory that our Lady intervenes in the course of history. Hence the

<sup>1</sup> From *The True Prayers of St Gertrude and St Mechtilde*; translated by the Rev. John Gray. Sheed and Ward. (2nd edition, 1938, p. 83.)

appreciation of devotion to her Immaculate Heart which appears in St Bernardine of Siena, in St Francis of Sales, St Margaret Mary Alacoque, and above all in St John Eudes. With them must be associated the recently canonised Dominican tertiary, St Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. The list might be extended, and with it the record of papal encouragement of the devotion as a means of bringing the world to God and healing the ills of our own time.

It is something to which we cannot remain indifferent, especially in view of the guidance recently given by the Holy See. There is no difficulty about becoming informed about the history and doctrine involved since the publication of Fr O'Carroll's book, *Consecration to the Immaculate Heart*.<sup>2</sup> There, in plain unemotional prose in which only rarely does the choice of words sound slightly odd, the nature of devotion to the Immaculate Heart is explained clearly and concisely. The reader is shown where to go for a fuller theological treatment of the subject, but many will find Fr O'Carroll's work sufficient in itself and a convincing plea that they consecrate their lives to the service of Mary, looking towards her as little children usually do to their mothers; or, to vary the figure, placing themselves under her banner in order to hasten the coming of her Son's kingdom 'in our own hearts and in those of all men, in our country and in all the world, as in heaven, so on earth'.

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<sup>2</sup> *Consecration to the Immaculate Heart*; by Patrick O'Carroll, C.S.Sp. Mercier Press. 2s. 6d.

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## CARDS FOR CHRISTMAS

One of the strange relics of Christianity which survives the onslaught of paganism is the habit of sending cards at Christmas. Literally millions of people who know nothing of the incarnation, who have never said a prayer to our Lady, who regard the shepherds and kings (if they have heard of them) as fables, send cards to their acquaintances at this season. But their cards are usually meaningless snow, holly, robins or plum-puddings. Catholics certainly should try to recapture this relic and make it Christian once more. They at least can send cards which will remind their friends—particularly their non-Catholic friends—that Christmas is the Mass of Christ, the birthday of our Lord. They can have their needs in this matter supplied by writing for Christian Christmas Cards to C.A.G.O., 22 Bramham Gardens, S.W.5, and to Edward R. Westbrook, 11 Dorset Road South, Bexhill, Sussex.