

Eleven Addresses during a Retreat of the Companions of the Love of Jesus,  
engaged in perpetual intercession for the conversion of sinners.

By the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D.

ADDRESS X.

*Helps for keeping up intercession.*

WE have seen and felt that, if we would pray as Christians, we must pray for others, that we cannot rightly say the public prayers, or use our Dear Lord's own prayer without it. In joining this Company we took, each our part, in carrying on those intercessions further, and that, for one particular class of souls the most necessitous, those who seldom pray for themselves, the souls which need conversion. The necessity of additional prayer was borne in upon the Foundress' soul some one and twenty years ago, through the dreadful sounds and words which went up to heaven against those who used them, in the midnight or early morning hours of a great town, where she lay sleepless. She set herself at once to unite others in this plan, by which no second should pass, so long as this Company should by God's mercy continue, without its own prayer for sinners. And seeing the difficulty of all continuous effort, she did much to prevent monotony by those nine offices or characters, under which, united with the nine choirs in heaven, as the lot may fall in each month, we pray to Almighty God. But as monotony is always a great difficulty in devotion, I would, on this occasion, suggest some ways, by which we may vary the devotion, so as to come fresher to it, remembering always that all perseverance in every thing, and so in prayer too, is the gift of God the Holy Ghost; and that from Him, Who is the Advocate Who prays in us, Who makes our prayers acceptable, we must obtain the grace of persevering prayer. "If ye, being evil, give good gifts unto your children,"<sup>1</sup> our Lord says, "much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Him then let us ever ask, at the beginning of these prayers, that we may make intercession according to the Mind of God.

The chief object of the Association, as you know, is for the conversion of sinners. Special intercessions (not strictly or not at all coming under this head) have been allowed, because members of "the Company of the love of Jesus," must have a special claim on each other's love, and on each other's prayers. And God has heard some of these prayers marvellously and by a spiritual miracle. But the chief object of the Association lies beyond them, as it was also antecedent to them. That chief object is, the restoration of God's grace to those who have lost it; or the gift of grace, such as it is in Christ, to those who never had it, as the Jews, Heathen or Mohammedans; or, (one may surely add) that those in danger of losing it may be kept in it.

Now these objects may be promoted in so many different ways, that one might almost say that there is no end of the variety of them; and those ways might be combined together or taken separately; and each would pray best, as they themselves were drawn by God the Holy Ghost to pray.

Only one class one would wish always to remember, "those who are to die in the next twenty-four hours," and to pray for all of these, as to whom it is possible that they should be saved, because to-morrow it will be too late to pray for *them*. The secret of those last moments no one knows on earth; not those nearest to them. A whole world of life goes on, after they have ceased to be able to express any thing. Men call powerlessness of expression, being "insensible." Such creatures of sense are we, that, in despite of known and repeated experiences to the

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<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. vii. 11.

contrary, in which those, who were reputed to be insensible, have, on recovery, shewn that they knew all which went on around them, we still go on taking it for granted, that, when the soul is withdrawn into itself, it is gone. And so we ante-date the close of the trial, and, since so few comparatively pray for the departed, the living often lose the prayers they desire at that last decisive moment; and survivors do not pray for the living, for fear they should be praying for the departed. One often hears, after long silence, some broken half-framed words of prayer. What an amount of prayer may they not be the indication of what concentrated prayer may there not have been, condensing into a brief time years of common-place prayer! Who knows whether, in that death-struggle, all the sins of a life may not be brought before the soul, to be repented of for the love of God, so that the soul should be washed anew in the Blood of Jesus? Who knows whether that fixed gaze, which we often see towards death, is not a pleading for mercy? Satan is very busy about death-beds; it is his last chance with “the lawful captive,”<sup>2</sup> who has sold himself by his sins and been led captive by his lusts. “Will he be delivered? If, by the grace of God, he repents, for the love of God, that he offended God, if he renounces his sins for ever, Jesus has the victory. That soul is saved. Jesus’ love for souls will not let one think, that He who gave such grace to the robber at His side after his blasphemy, will part at that last hour with one soul, the price of His Blood, if even now it will turn to Him. It hangs on the balance, whether his soul be for ever with the angels or the devils. God may have appointed you to be His instrument of mercy for that soul. Your prayers may help it. I do not believe that God will part with any soul, unless it have said to Him face to face, “On Thine own terms, I will not have Thee.” To become as devils, there must be the wilful rejection of God, such as the devils used. There is so much patient, almost sacramental suffering among the poor, among those whom men call outcasts, whom we neglect, who, perhaps not through their own fault, have not heard the Name of Jesus. That still, often uncomplaining, suffering must have been God’s unknown, unperceived grace. Now God is waiting to be gracious to that soul. I doubt not that much mercy is shewn in that last hour, although I should expect it least for those, who delayed repentance to that hour. For their’s was a continued present rejection of God. Then another class, for whom it is very healthful to pray, for whom our prayers are likely to be at once earnest and humble, are they, who are under the same temptations, by which we have been or are tempted, whether they or we have fallen by them or no; but especially perhaps for those who have fallen. For such prayers keep in our memory our past sins and temptations—not vividly or in detail, for so we might be tempted to that horrible consent to them in mind again, but—that we have sinned in such and such ways, and that it has been of God’s grace and mercy alone, that we have not done worse. Who should say, from what we have not been saved by want of opportunity, or by ignorance of sin, or of the ways of sin? Who can think, what they might not have fallen into, had they been under the circumstances of the poor? Such prayer may gain grace and deeper repentance for ourselves. Humble intercession is most likely to be heard at the Throne of grace. “God be merciful to me a sinner,” was given us by Jesus, as a pattern of acceptable prayer. “God be merciful to us, miserable sinners,” is the prayer of the Litany formed upon it. Such prayers have deep sympathy. They call out sympathy to those, to whom, if we were not like, it was of God’s great mercy; to whom if we are not like, it is of God’s great mercy still; to whom, if we were like, it is of God’s yet more outstretched mercy, that we are not now like. Such prayers are full of the love of God. In us too they maintain that indispensable condition of spiritual progress, nay often of perseverance itself, a loving sorrow for forgiven sin. They are likely to be specially heard by Him Who speaketh of Himself, as “He Who dwelleth in the high and holy place, with him also

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<sup>2</sup> Is. xlix. 24.

who is of a contrite and humble spirit,”<sup>3</sup> and “who forgetteth not the cry of the humble.”<sup>4</sup> They would also help much to mould our habitual prayers, and gain us great grace through them.

At another time we might pray for those who have the temptations which we have not, and which God has spared us. And this too might be a prayer of humility and love. For it is obvious to think that, having failed as we have, wherein we have been tempted, we should have failed in those other temptations *too*, if God had not kept them from us. It would be the very contrary to the Pharisee’s prayer, “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men.” It is to own that we should have been as other men, had we had the temptations which those others had.

Such are for instance, in comparison I suppose with most of us, the wealthy in this city or in other cities, who, we know, are in special peril of losing their souls, that they may rather so “make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,” that they may be “received into everlasting habitations.”

What a life of temptation their’s must be. What a life from their earliest childhood! The life of Dives from infancy! To have been ever fenced out from suffering (as far as it was possible), to have been lapped in luxury and pomp; to have been ever waited on; to have had no wish, which was not forestalled; to have had no future to provide for, no necessary work to do; to have been exempted from the blessing of Adam’s chastening, “In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread;” to have had nothing to look onto, save that unhappy self-indulgence; “tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.”<sup>5</sup> How unlike our Lord’s lot! nothing in common with it; no mention of them by our Lord, except by a warning woe.

But their temptation is as nothing, compared to *their’s* who, in our wealthy land, as it is called, “make” their money; who create it, so to speak, create what, to save their souls, they must at least in some measure part with. What a contradictory life! Their very profession bids them accumulate wealth; it is carried on more efficiently with greater means; luxury is the solace of their cares. God bids them to give abundantly out of their abundance, and to impoverish themselves comparatively for love of Jesus in His poor. What a grace of God must be needed, that they should not fall down and worship the god, “which their own fingers have made.”<sup>6</sup> We *do* know of the rich man, Joseph of Arimathea. Yet so strange was it, that it was singled out in prophecy, as one of the paradoxes of our Lord’s supernatural history, that He “Whom man despised”<sup>7</sup> should be “with the rich in his death.”<sup>8</sup> We know that, in the early years of the Gospel, “not many mighty, not many noble were called.”<sup>9</sup> But that God had given them the poor, to have mercy upon, how should they be saved? And yet what might they not do for God’s glory! what abundant thanksgiving to God might they not occasion! What numbers of orphans might they not rescue from misery and degradation! What missions might they not support, even if they should not themselves be called to be missionaries, to give up this world for the next! The blindness of the rich to their true interests is one of the most appalling blindnesses of this poor blind world. What pearls of great price might they not buy for their heavenly crown! How they might make God their debtor! We confess to God, that we are, as dogs, not “worthy to gather up the crumbs which fall from” our Master’s “table.” O if the rich would but take as much care of Jesus, as they do of their horses and their dogs! It might make saints of them. We remember how

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<sup>3</sup> Is. lvii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. ix. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Is. lvi. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Is. ii. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ib. xlix. 7, liii. 3, Ps. xxii. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Is. liii. 9.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. i. 26.

John the. Almoner became a saint. We do the rich great mischief by flattering them, by accounting much of those little doles, of which they should be ashamed. I have never preached a sermon to the rich on almsgiving, but I have felt afraid, lest I should occasion them to sin against light. We are so inured to our little gifts out of our large revenues; not “of our little, gladly to give of that little,”<sup>10</sup> but out of an abundance to give but little! And yet there are such crowns hovering over the heads of the rich, which they might gain, which are ready for them. There is our Lord ready to say to them, “Ye have done it unto Me,” and they do not do it; He has said, “I will repay,”<sup>11</sup> and they give Him nothing to repay. He has promised the hundred-fold, and they prefer their six per cent, if they can get it. He has provided the hundred fold for charity; and they prefer their six per cent to be spent on things of time “which perish in the using.” And yet they might do so much good to souls! Well! preaching cannot teach them; for God preaches to them in His Word, which they profess to acknowledge; and they hearken not. There is nothing left, but prayer. One day in a week would be well spent in prayer for the conversion of rich people; if only we thank God, that He has exempted us from their temptations, and look well to ourselves, that, being exempt from their temptations, we are not acting as badly with our lesser temptations, and are not making idols of our comforts, as they of their wealth.

Then, again, the fashionable. They too have been taught from their cradles, to live for this world. Alas! as if the world had not attraction enough of its own, without people being taught to love it! And yet, what else is the one lesson which underlies all the education of almost all the daughters of at least our fashionable classes, of those who are to be the future mothers of our aristocracy, who are to form the characters of their children in this world? Wherein should all this education for this world end, except in perishing with the world? And yet the conversion of the rich and great has always been a subject of interest with the Church.<sup>12</sup> For, although all souls are of equal value in God’s sight, the conversion of those who have position in this world may spread wider towards the conversion of the world. It were a charity to pray God, to teach those so mistaught the nothingness of all passing things, that all below is but vanity, that God taught this to one to whom He had given the world to possess, and wisdom to invent fresh delights in it;<sup>13</sup> and then to pray that He would give them some taste of the sweetness of things eternal.

Then the intellectual! Every gift of God has its own special temptations, and intellect has temptations, more like those of Satan than of mankind. Others forget God, ignore God, steal away from Him, rob Him of their hearts, and give them to the world. But they do not come face to face with Him. The temptation of intellect is to measure itself against God, to criticise God, to dispute His Being, to dethrone Him in His creation, to set up His laws against Himself, to question His Providence, to doubt His Wisdom, to pull to pieces His revelation, to mend it for Him, to make conditions with Him, on what terms it will acknowledge Him, to require Him to abdicate His absolute sovereignty, to set up an idol in His room; to re-create their Creator, instead of being “re-created by Him in Christ Jesus.” And yet withal they often mean, poor things, nothing less. They have got loose from the old beliefs in God; they have lost all knowledge of things supernatural, nay, even of their own eternal existence. Yet some of them have gifts, which might be used to the great glory of God, if they would but cease to measure by their own created Intelligence the Mind of the Uncreated, which conceived their’s, and of which their’s is a little spark. These, and especially at the Universities, where intellect has often not yet

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<sup>10</sup> Tobit iv. See Communion Service, 2 Cor. ix.

<sup>11</sup> St. Luke x. 35, Prov. xix. 17.

<sup>12</sup> See. S. Aug. Conf. viii. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Solomon, Ecclesiastes.

taken its side,—either to be willingly beneath God or to be against Him,—would be a special subject of prayer, that they might find their wisdom in Uncreated Wisdom and their knowledge from the Omniscient.

The happiest objects of intercession are those, whose outward lot is most like our Lord's, to whom the Gospel especially belongs, who, if they do not belong to it, we are ourselves most eminently in fault,—the poor. These are the great dowry of the Church; here are the great multitude of the redeemed; here is the largest choice for grace to work upon; here are the simplest and truest hearts. God has marked them for His own. If they do not belong to Him, it seems a violence to nature almost, as well as grace. Here are most candidates for Angelic thrones; here are most unspoiled hearts, for God, Who is Love, to reign in. Only, when we pray for them, let us pray with great reverence, as for our superiors, in patience, in meekness, in long-suffering, in forbearance, in submission to and conformity with the Will of God! Let us pray that God would sanctify their sufferings by the Sufferings of Jesus, and make them wholly His.

Others might add other classes, or they might select out of these classes, those to whom they themselves are drawn; and thus the week might be distributed, so as to pray especially for some class every day.

Or, again, we might pray for God's blessing on the instrumentality of others, as for missions, religious schools, preachers, the efforts of the religious who have given themselves wholly to God (as in this Society), that God would convert people through them. There might be less of self, in praying that God would convert souls through the instrumentality of others. Our zeal for their conversion might be the purer from all vain-glory.

Or, we might pray God to bring to nought the counsels of those who are knowingly against the truth.

It would take away from us much unlove, and be a great source of deepened love to us, if we look on all who oppose the truth as under grievous loss, (as we know they are,) and if we prayed for them instead of censuring them.

Or, we might leave to God's Wisdom the persons to be converted, and pray for those, who are the nearest to accepting the grace of God; or who, He knows, will accept it; or we might pray for those who (He knows, leaving it still to Him) would gain greater glory to Him if they were converted, and the like. Only let the glory of God in the salvation of souls be our one object, and He will hear us as He knows best. But let us not distract ourselves by the multiplicity of our objects. Simplicity is a great help in devotion.

And as in the objects, so in the language of our prayers. God does not need our words. We waste ourselves often, in casting about for words. We think it becoming to pray in good set words. We are afraid of irreverence in stammering out our broken thoughts. It is well to be afraid of irreverence. But there is more fear of irreverence in thinking about ourselves at all. One thing we should desire, the glory of God in the salvation of souls. Our Lord taught us in His great prayer of resignation, that the deepest prayer may consist in saying the same words. How short are the words of His own prayers on the Cross! Yet the Psalmist says in His Person, "I am (all) prayer."<sup>14</sup> They were but short outward utterances, gushing forth from the Fountain of love, His full Heart, full and overflowing with love for us, sinners. If we have but the picture of those for whose conversion we pray, before our mind; and then our whole prayer is but one voiceless commendation of them to the love of Jesus; one long-drawn "Lord, have mercy, mercy, mercy;" like the dying away of soft pathetic music on the ear, we shall very likely have prayed more deeply, than by the use of any words. Words are needed to instruct ourselves as to our wants, or,

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<sup>14</sup> Ps. cix. 4.

in the Church's long intercessions, to teach us for whom we ought to pray, not for God.

We joined this Company, in order to increase our own intercessions, and to gain greater glory to God; and, perhaps, to vent our own desires that the great misery of this sinful world, sin, might be diminished, and because we hoped to contribute more to this by such united prayer. And as far as the Association is concerned, we have fulfilled our own obligations, when we have prayed for the conversion of sinners during the time for which we have undertaken to pray for them. This we should esteem one of the most sacred duties of our lives, that, if we are able to undertake any special time, we should not be wanting to it, lest through us the chain of perpetual prayer should be broken. In cases of most absolute necessity, we might carry on a mental prayer together with the absolute imperative obligation, and perhaps our Guardian Angel would fill in the break. Only, nothing but the most imperative duty, something which it would be absolute undoubted sin to neglect, must constrain us (if it does constrain us) to miss any one fulfilment of the obligation, which we have undertaken. It is in itself no such great matter to which we have pledged ourselves, that we should think it any vainglory to own it, if necessary to keep us free from interruption. It would be making too much of our poor prayers, to think so.

But this fulfilment of our own office should not be enough for us. Intercession should spread through our lives, so as to become part of our being. When we have an interval in our occupations, when we are kept waiting, when we are held in necessary idleness, being with others yet having nothing special to do ourselves, when we are walking, when we cannot sleep by night, intercession should be the passion of our hearts. What matters to us all the news of the world, except as events advance, if they do, the glory of God? We should read a paper, if we do read one, interceding for those about whom they write, or, if they write amiss, for themselves. But, as for many of those things about which the so-called religious world is so busy, it seems to me greater, more delusive, "Vanity fair," than the world itself. It is more like children with their toys, than the outward expression of the inward life; as if the glory of God and the salvation of souls was promoted by the use of a stole the more, worn by some "crucifer," that this were an event to chronicle! Externals too may be for the glory of God; symbolic beauty may raise our thoughts upwards to Him Whose Beauty it symbolises. But to make much of the increased use of those outward things, as if they were any indication of the progress of the cause of God among us, it would end in what the adversaries of the truths which they symbolise, denounce them for, the forgetting of the intense reality of our existence, of the inward growth of God's reign in our hearts, the oneness with God, which is the end of all His revelation and of His sacraments, the salvation of souls, for which He became Man and put His Holy Spirit within us, in some outward accidents of worship. It is an evil to look out for signs, to speak of success here and success there. If it were success, one could only say, "Thanks be to God." It would even then be what our Lord forbade us to attend to, when they say "lo Christ here, and lo Christ there;" but He said "the kingdom of God is within you."

"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin."<sup>15</sup> People plan, boast, speak of what they should do or should not do, if they were this or that Bishop, or if they could direct, in fact, the whole bench of Bishops, or they speculate about political or religious parties or persons; what does it all end in? I fear we might sum it all in one word,—uncharitableness.

Let us cherish the inward life, let *us* make prayer more the end of our lives. There are plenty of persons, to theorise, plan, scheme, criticise! Let *us* look to ourselves and to our prayers. Let us look back to our own prayers formerly, and, if we find that our intercessions have been poor and infrequent, let us pray our Lord to "pour out upon us the Spirit of grace and

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<sup>15</sup> Prov. x. 19.

supplication,” and be diligent to use that grace, and let it spread over our lives.

O, what a joyous reunion it will be, to see the souls, unknown to us probably in the flesh, whom our prayers shall have won to God! What a joyful surprise in the Great Day! O what an endless source of joy! oh what a jubilee of praise! O what sweetness of smiles, what overflowing congratulations, what gladness, to see those who were once degraded in the world, through our prayers, on higher thrones than we! Oh what wonderful sight of the grace of God, and, above all, oh that sweet look of love from our Dear Lord, saying, “Yes! these pearls of My crown you have won for Me!” Here we know only of a result here or there; but we have God’s infallible word, that such prayers are heard. Better not to know how they are heard. We can have no vainglory. We can only tell, that our prayers are very poor, very unworthy to be heard, and the poorer we believe them to be, the more likely they are to be heard; but, we have God’s own word; He, Who is the Truth, has said, they will be heard. They will be heard, not according to the poverty of our desires but according to the love of the Great Lover of souls, Who associates us with His availing Intercession, to do, in our measure, upon earth, which He makes efficacious by His merits, and by the yearnings of His Spirit, Whom He hath given us. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.