

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

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## ADDRESS II.

### *The Love of God for individual souls.*

THE subject of our thoughts is, the love of Almighty God for souls individually.

What is a soul? It almost takes away one's breath to think of it; yet the thought is the groundwork of any estimate of its value. One hardly knows, wherewith to begin, wherewith to end; yet since the soul was made by God, and God made it for Himself, we had best begin by its relation to Himself. So magnificent is the soul, such a marvellous creation of God, that thoughtful but misled minds of old have thought that, where it is said, "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," Scripture meant that God breathed man's soul into his body, as something of Himself.<sup>1</sup>

This were a very frightful heresy; for if the soul were something of God, a part of God, then, when the soul sinned, the blasphemy would follow, that God sinned. Yet such is the majesty of the soul, that some of old thought this, and some still think it; only they thereby do not exalt the soul, but degrade God. Yet what Holy Scripture does speak of, is a very near close relation of the soul to God. "God breathed into him the breath of life." It expresses more than the mere act of will, by which "God made the heaven and the earth." By an act of will, by His word, He created things in all space, "heaven and the heaven of heavens,"<sup>2</sup> heavens, to which our heavens are as earth; "He spake, and they were made; He commanded and they stood."<sup>3</sup> Man He created individually. All besides was finished. Sun and moon and stars revolved in their courses; all the living creatures in air, earth, sea, were disporting themselves; each was arrayed in all its multitudinous beauty; and God paused! Time elapsed. The angels looked on wondering. And God, to express His thought of us, represents Himself consulting within Himself and resolving to make man, "In Our Image and likeness." He saith; He, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. O wonderful soliloquy of God, Three but One! God consults within Himself as to creating man, in redeeming and restoring whom the Three Blessed Persons were again to co-operate. They, through that mutual thought, which is expressed to us as the speech of God, determined to produce in act then, him our forefather, and in him ourselves, foreshadowing His individual love for us, in that He created us in one; us, whom He had determined in all eternity to create, knowing that we should be sinners. In that eternal counsel it lay, how the Father should then create, and the Son in the fulness of time should redeem, and God the Holy Ghost should re-create, and how our wasted nature should be restored by the common counsel of the Trinity.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the Greek Fathers understood the words of the inbreathing, not of the soul but of the Holy Spirit into or with the soul of the man, already created, corresponding to our Lord's breathing upon the Apostles when He said "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (St. John xx. 22.). In this way, the words would express the truth of the Gift of original righteousness to Adam by the Indwelling of God the Holy Ghost, which man lost by Adam's fall. But in this sense, it would rather be an application of the words, than their literal meaning. See Petav. de Trin. viii. 5. 4 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. x. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxxiii. 9.

Then followed the second dignity of man; that He should form us “in the image of God, after His likeness.” Our being in His “image” consisted perhaps in the created correspondence of our being with His Divine Nature. Our mind, our knowledge, our love, have been thought to be a created image of the All-holy Trinity.<sup>4</sup> And our “likeness” has been thought to be in those moral qualities, which are shadows of the infinite perfections of God benevolence, gentleness, justice, truthfulness, and the rest; as Jesus also said to us, “Be ye then perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;”<sup>5</sup> “be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”<sup>6</sup> He made us likenesses of Himself, not in those incommunicable attributes of All-mightiness, Omniscience, Incomprehensibility, &c.; but He made us like Him in all His attributes, which are communicable to the creature, and reserved to Himself His Infinity, whereby He has ever more, and will everlastingly have more and more, to give us. He has given to the soul to be immaterial, spiritual, individual as Himself; to be henceforth eternal, deathless, ever-sentient as Himself. He endowed it with freewill, free as His own, which He Himself will not break, will not force, will not constrain, except by the drawings of love. He gave it power, absolutely to rule itself and to rule the body, in which He had given it a sort of ubiquity, so that it inhabits the whole in the whole, and yet the whole in each part of the body. But He has, further beyond these positive endowments, given it an almost boundless capacity of growth and enlargement, a capaciousness to contain His own wisdom, grace, virtue, goodness, beatitude. These are, so to speak, the soul’s natural endowments. If such is the glass, what is the pearl? All these natural endowments were ensouled by the supernatural. In the first instant of His creation, God infused the soul into the body by creating it, and created it by infusing it, and into the soul itself He, with grace, infused all virtues moral and theological, and gave it original righteousness, whereby He Himself was present to it and held it to Himself, so that, without man’s own will, no inordinate emotion could arise in it, or disturb the peace and holy uprightness, whereby all within him was subject to reason, and himself to God.

Yet even created grace were little for the soul. For God made the soul capable to contain Himself, of union with Himself by containing Him. The soul is so large that, although it may be occupied by many things, although it is occupied, in turns, by all sorts of labour or knowledge or vanity, the whole world could not fill it. “For the soul which can contain God, nothing can fill which is less than God.”

This was figured in the words: “He breathed into his nostrils.” It was not Himself that He inbreathed. Yet He wished to shew God’s especial nearness to man, and man’s to God, the likeness of our spiritual nature to God, in that God inbreathed it, and that, at one time, God would be the Indweller of the soul. O the marvellous condescension of our God, so to speak of our nearness to Him, that we have to say that we are not part of Him, that we are not what He Is! What God did, in the creation of Adam, is repeated in the creation of each individual soul. The creation of those, to us countless, souls, is part of the perpetual immediate working of God, of which our Blessed Lord says, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”<sup>7</sup> All the rest of the visible creation He either “upholds by the word of His power,” as sun, moon, stars; or those things, which are liable to decay, He ordains that they should be repaired by that mysterious law whereby He continues on

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<sup>4</sup> St. Aug. Conf. xiii. 11. and note to p. 283, 4.

<sup>5</sup> St. Matt. v. 48.

<sup>6</sup> St. Luke vi. 36

<sup>7</sup> St. John v. 17.

the generations of the world. All things around us He worketh by such regular law, that men forget Himself, the Great King, in the reign of His law. The Angels, in their several Orders, serve Him in the fixed immutable allegiance of their love. Their numbers remain unchanged, except as far as they be replenished from our race. *The* object, wherein God's immediate creative power and wisdom and love are seen, is man. He commits our guardianship to Angels; no Angel or Archangel or Principality or Power is admitted to any instrumentality in the creation of the human soul. The creation, possible to God, is infinite. Eternity could not exhaust it, if in all eternity God should create. *Now* He limits His creativeness and His will to communicate Himself anew, to His one creature, the human soul. It seems as if all His intelligent creation was to be fixed on this one transcending subject, the history of His love to our race. The Angels, we know, "desire to look into"<sup>8</sup> and know more of the mysteries of our redemption. Now all is suspended, that "through the Church,"<sup>9</sup> i. e. through the mysteries of God's love in it, "may be known unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God." And this His Church He fills up continually, and will fill up to the end, with human souls, which are, one by one, the subjects of His individual thought, of His individual care. Each one is as much the object of that Infinite Mind and Counsel, as if it was the solitary production of His Omniscience.

Nor is it a mere production of His mind. That continual companion and brother of the soul, this poor body of our's, receives its being in God's Providence, and God creates and infuses into each, just that soul, which is most fit to be associated with each body. He combines soul and body, and endows the one by His Providence, the other by His own immediate creation, with those qualities, which, together, may work most harmoniously to His glory, and to the salvation of the being which He has created to find its bliss therein. We have been tempted, some of us, to wish we had this or that endowment, that we had been born under this or that outward circumstance. Faith tells us, that He Who loved us eternally, and created us because He loved us, and for His love, so tempered us together, that He could not have given us one gift, which He has not given us, nay, not one degree of one gift, without risking our salvation. And this marvellous work is going on continuously. As, it is calculated, not a second passes but in it some human being is passing into eternity, so then, in every second, God is creating a new human soul, to replace, on this earth, the soul which has been removed from it. It may be, at one time, in England or Europe, or in China or New Zealand. Wherever it is, God's omnipotent wisdom, Whose "mercy is over all His works," is indivisibly, wholly there, in His own unchangeable rest, creating just that soul, which will be, if it wills, most adapted to glorify Him.

Yet *this* is only the general outline of His care. For He creates them not only for Himself, but as He said in the beginning, in His own "image and likeness." Every soul then bears some likeness to some perfection of God. As blade of grass differs from each other blade, and leaf from leaf, so, and much more, does soul from soul. And each soul, either in some one beauty or some ever-varied combination of different beauties, is an image of some perfection or combined perfections of Almighty God. We can think of this, more readily, as to any one natural grace. Thus we see, prominent in one, an exact uprightness; in another, tenderness; in another, benevolence; in a fourth, love; in a fifth,

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<sup>8</sup> 1 St. Pet. i. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Eph. iii. 10.

an imperturbable patience and meekness; in a sixth, fiery zeal; in a seventh, a yearning over every form of human misery; and all these and more, blended in as many proportions as there are human souls.

We are such souls; such is every soul, for whom we pray. “The piece of silver” may be trampled upon in the mire of our Babylon. It has “the image and superscription” of God. It may be cleansed anew in the Blood of Jesus, to shine for ever in that place around the Eternal Throne, which God created it to fill, and to illuminate with His indwelling Light. God Himself can, and wills to be again the Soul of that soul. He is the natural life of the soul by creation; He wills to be its Life supernaturally by grace. “Because God is the life of the soul, as, when it is in the body, it gives it vigour, beauty, power of motion, use of its every part, so, when God, its Life, is in the soul, He gives it wisdom, righteousness, charity.”<sup>10</sup> “But as the body is dead when it hath not the soul; so the soul is dead, when it is without God.”<sup>11</sup>

This is the awful reverse side of the picture. God has endowed the soul with this vast capacity, even of Himself, with this insatiable thirst even for Himself, with this incapacity of being satisfied with any thing, out of Himself. What then must it be, to be eternally shut out from God? to have this knowledge, that God Alone is the good of the soul, and yet to be incapable of loving Him? to know that beings innumerable are in the full enjoyment of bliss in Him; to be able to conceive something of the magnificence of that bliss; to know that it might once have attained to it; to remember all the graces, which God offered to it, or wherewith He arrayed it; to know, that had it used them, it would be in that unspeakable bliss; and yet to be incapable of repenting, to cast all the blame upon God, to hate Him, as being, it thinks, the Author of its misery; to accuse Him for having given it that awful freedom to choose amiss; to feel the agony of everlasting hate, and yet to be incapable of repenting; to be encompassed with beings, in whose horrible power it is, whom it hates, by whom it is hated, and this, without hope!

These are the two states of the soul, for which every choice, good or ill, prepares it. Can we need more, to make us pray earnestly for souls, who are balancing between good and ill, or who have chosen ill, and who, if any abide in that choice, must lose God eternally, whom God’s grace solicits and almost torments, but who have not yet resolved to embrace it? O were it not worth a whole life, to have won by our prayers one soul, to live for ever with God?

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<sup>10</sup> St. Aug. in S. Joann. Tract. 19.

<sup>11</sup> De cogn. veræ vitæ c. 31.