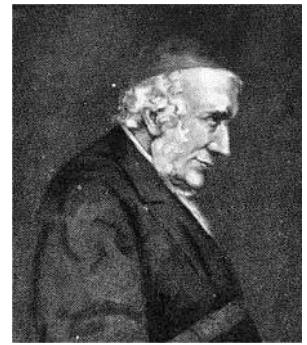


Prayer of the Month • September 2013

O God, fountain of love, pour thy love into our souls, that we may love those whom thou lovest with the love thou givest us, and think and speak with the love thou givest us, and think and speak of them tenderly, meekly, lovingly; and so loving our brethren and sisters for thy sake, may grow in thy love, and dwelling in thy love may dwell in thee, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Edward Bouverie Pusey, 1800–82



This prayer is suffused with love, at least with the word 'love'. The marriage service is also full of the word 'love'. It is a much-liked word. This prayer challenges us to not just to like using the word but to be willing to live it out. The greatest commandments, as Jesus pointed out, are to love God and to love your neighbour. A prayer like this one is very necessary, then, if we are to take the greatest commandments seriously. First of all, the prayer recognises that God is the source of love, the fountain. Next, it recognises that we can love with the love God gives us – such love does not need to be created by us, but comes by receiving it as a gift from God. Loving is a lot to do with attitude. How can we love someone if we think and say negative things about them? We would be contradicting our intentions. Loving others – difficult people, perhaps – might seem like a distraction from loving God, but in truth it is a path to dwelling in the source of love, God himself.

Edward Bouverie Pusey was born on 22 August 1800 in the village of Pusey in Berkshire. He attended Eton College, and Christ Church, Oxford, and in 1823 was elected a Fellow of Oriel College, so joining a society that included people like John Henry Newman and John Keble. He devoted himself to the study of Hebrew and other Semitic languages, and stayed in Germany where he got to know many of the leading German biblical scholars.

In 1828 he was appointed Regius Professor of Hebrew and a Canon of Christ Church, a position that he held for the rest of his life. He became a student of the Early Church Fathers and was attracted by the beginnings of Tractarianism, contributing a tract in 1834, and supporting the publication of a Library of the Fathers. His most important contribution was, however, his sermons. He was not a great orator, but made up for this by his depth and commitment. In 1843, a sermon he delivered, entitled, 'The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent', alarmed the authorities, and he was suspended from preaching for two years. The effect of his suspension, though, was that 18,000 copies of the condemned sermon were sold. Pusey became, arguably, for the next quarter of a century, the most influential figure in the Church of England.

He suffered tragedy in his personal life, his wife dying in 1839, and his son in 1880. He lived a simple, almost austere life, and became quite reclusive in later life. He died at Ascot Priory, Berkshire, on 16 September 1882, and is buried in the nave of Christ Church cathedral, Oxford. After his death his library was purchased by his friends, who bought for it a house in Oxford, known as Pusey House, which they endowed with funds sufficient to maintain three librarians. His feast day in the Church of England calendar is 16 September.

Colin Lunt