

Prayer of the month • May 2010

God above me, Father from whom my being descends, on whom my existence hangs, to whom I turn up my face, to whom I stretch out my hands:

God beside me, God in a man like me, Jesus Christ in the world with me, whose hands lay hold of me, presenting me with yourself, to God:

God within me, soul of my soul, root of my will, inexhaustible fountain, Holy Ghost:

Threefold Love, one in yourself, unite your forces in me, come together in the citadel of my conquered heart.

You have loved me with an everlasting love. Teach me to care.

Lord, I believe / Austin Farrer (1962)

This prayer to God as Trinity is both theological and real. The Trinitarian God can seem rather artificial and remote. Farrer, though, engages with this approach to God, making it relevant at the personal level. A prayer to God above, beside and within might remind us of Celtic spirituality, but this is no grand mystery, it is rather a mystery that is made real through personal engagement, even within the heart.

It would not be surprising to learn that Austin Farrer was a theologian. Born in 1904, he trained at theological college with Michael Ramsey, a future Archbishop of Canterbury. After a curacy in Dewsbury, Farrer became chaplain and tutor at St Edmund Hall, Oxford, in 1931, and was fellow and chaplain of Trinity College, Oxford, from 1935 to 1960. His interests were in biblical studies and philosophy. He was also a skilled preacher, and could produce a very succinct sermon in a single paragraph – see his slim volume *The Crown of the Year* (1952). He tackled the subject of theodicy in his *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited: an Essay on Providence and Evil* (1962). From 1960 he served as Warden of Keble College, Oxford, until his sudden death shortly after Christmas in 1968 aged 64.

Colin Lunt