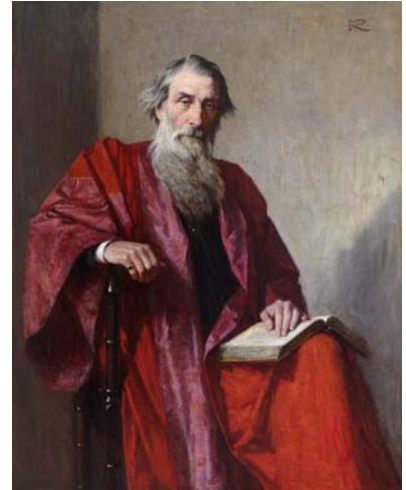


Prayer of the Month • December 2014

Write upon our hearts, O Lord God,
the lessons of your holy word,
and grant that we may all be doers of the same,
and not forgetful hearers only;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Alexander Campbell Fraser, 1819–1914



‘In one ear and out the other’ is not only a colloquial expression, but a common human weakness, especially in regard to God’s ‘holy word’. The question is often whether we really notice that we have not grasped the meaning of what we have heard or, if understanding, then whether we have striven to apply it in our own lives, or whether we have let it slip away in our forgetfulness. This prayer is admirably clear and straightforward, as befits a professor of logic. We need God’s help to write his word ‘upon our hearts’, that we may truly apply it in our lives.

Born in 1819, Alexander Campbell Fraser was the eldest child of the Reverend Hugh Fraser, a parish minister in Argyllshire. He had a strict upbringing where reading the novels of Scott was looked on with disapproval. He was home-schooled and went to Glasgow University at the age of fourteen. He stayed there a term before moving to Edinburgh and studying under Sir William Hamilton. He also studied divinity under Thomas Chalmers. He followed Chalmers during the 1843 Disruption, which led Chalmers to break away from the established Church and form the Free Church of Scotland, together with 469 other ministers who were determined to resist civil interference in church affairs. Fraser was ordained into the Free Church in 1844. He left two years later to take up a teaching post in the church’s theological college, later being appointed to the chair of logic at Edinburgh University, where he stayed for the next thirty-five years. He married in 1850 and had three children. In his philosophy, Fraser propounded the ultimate mysteriousness of the world and empirical human ignorance, as well as the more optimistic theme of harmony between moral and empirical knowledge. He writes most fully about himself in his 1904 work, *Biographia philosophica: a Retrospect*. He died in Edinburgh on 2 December 1914 and is buried in Lasswade churchyard.

Colin Lunt