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Memories of 'TF' are many, varied and vivid - his energy, learning, memory, intellect and above all his warmth, profound theological vision and personal faith. My earliest memories of him were of someone exciting whom my parents looked forward to seeing and who always asked about each of us. It was when I came to study theology under him in New College that I came to appreciate the unique intellectual and theological abilities of the person I had known as 'Uncle Tom.' Then again, it was only in the frequent visits to him at the end of his life that I had the privilege of coming to know him in a much more personal way.

Several characteristics of his life and personality stand out at once:

a) *his energy* - 'TF' (as he was popularly known at New College to distinguish him from his brother 'JB') never let the grass grow under his feet and always seemed to get things done at breakneck speed. The energy of his character and mind found vivid expression in his lectures and left his students exhilarated and enthused by the way he connected theological ideas and by the new vistas and horizons he opened up. Although known as an academic, in many ways he was primarily not so and only became such out of necessity, as part of his Christian calling. When, for example, he returned from war service, sleeping in tents and traveling with his division, he said to his mother, "I'm not cut out to be an academic, mother. I'm a man of action!"

b) *his learning* - he read voluminously and would absorb and retain ideas. In both church and university he soon became recognized as something of a polymath, at home in several fields, not only in theology itself but in philosophy and science, particularly in the field of science and theology for which he later became so well known.

c) *his warmth and pastoral concern* - TF was a man of great personal warmth and pastoral concern who notwithstanding a demanding schedule would invariably find time for students in difficulties or in need of pastoral



care and who listened intently to them and their questions. I remember being struck by the comment of the wife of a senior Scottish churchman that unlike her husband's peers, Tom Torrance always treated her as an equal. Personally I too invariably found him to be quick and helpful in responding to questions or in sending me books or articles he thought I would find useful.

d) *the centeredness of his thought* – TF would naturally focus on what he felt to be the central questions, the critical points in theological disputes. In debates, be they in the Church of Scotland's General Assembly or at academic conferences, he could be relied upon to enliven the discussion by focusing on the defining issues and providing a theological assessment of these and their ramifications, always directing us to the dogmatic center of the Christian faith in a fresh and fruitful way.

e) *his commitment to the church* – TF was committed to serving the parish ministry (his own years in the parish were among the happiest of his life) and to the renewal of the church through theology and evangelism. One of the aims of his lectures was to seek to provide students with a theology that would aid their teaching and preaching in the ministry and he would often illustrate a point he was making from his own parish experience. In *Preaching Christ Today* (dedicated to Billy Graham whose missions in Scotland he had always supported) he speaks of 'the renewal of theology in the teaching and preaching of the church in Scotland' and adds 'That is the end to which my own life has been dedicated'. This commitment was recognized by the Church of Scotland's election of him as Moderator 1976-77.

f) *his forthrightness* – the combination of his own drive, insight and focus on the central issues of theology, together perhaps with his Scottish Presbyterian background and upbringing, meant that TF spoke directly and to the point. He could therefore be rather blunt, on occasion unnecessarily so, but he always spoke the truth as he saw it. In his desire to get to the truth of the matter, he could unintentionally leave people behind and fail to carry them with him. With more patience for those who did not share his insights, and a willingness to play a longer game, he could perhaps have achieved even greater influence. The very energy, academic brilliance and theological passion which made him what he was and enabled him to achieve the output

he did also made him less patient at times and too forthright. Theological treasures in earthen vessels.

Among my own many memories, two sets in particular stand out. The first set was his second year dogmatics lectures at New College, Edinburgh which I attended in 1967-8. The second was my weekly visits to him in the nursing home during the last few years of his life when he had been incapacitated by a stroke. Both are indelibly etched into my memory. In the first he is in full theological flight – his dogmatics lectures remain by far the most exhilarating and indeed formative intellectual influence in my life. To find myself editing the same lectures was not only a privilege but also an opportunity to repay in gratitude some of the debt for all I had learnt from him.

The second vivid set of memories, of TF in the nursing home, is of him in a much more personal capacity, when, unable to walk without support and needing increasing care, he remained alert and gracious to the end. While it was immensely sad to see him so incapacitated and bereft of so many of his usual stimuli, he retained a keen interest in family and friends or other concerns, such as the editing of the lectures. It was always a privilege to visit him, to listen to his reminiscences and often to read a psalm (Psalm 103 was a common request – it had been his father's favorite) or other portion of scripture and pray with him. His reminiscences, often in response to a question, were many and various, about China, student days, experiences in the war, Princeton and numerous friends and colleagues.

I learned several details I had not known before, for example that in China he had been widely known by the locals as *Tao chee* or 'Torrance mischief,' a fact which made him chuckle when reminded of it. I also learnt of some of his sporting interests. Apart from horse riding which he had learnt in China and skiing in Scotland and Switzerland, he had as a student been a member of the Hare and Hounds, the Edinburgh University Cross-country Running Society, until the incapacitating effects of a severe bout of flu led him to take up hockey instead. One of my favorite reminiscences of his was the story of his being issued with badly fitting skis in the army for patrol during the war in Italy. When one of the skis came off and clattered down the

hillside alerting the Germans, he had to ski down on one ski avoiding enemy fire!

Throughout his time in the nursing home, I was constantly struck by his interest in others and his Christian patience and graciousness, and I always came away humbled. It is rather appropriate not only that he should die on Advent Sunday but that having been born and brought up in a missionary family in China, where he had always hoped to be a missionary himself, he should find himself at the end of his life in Edinburgh being attended by a Chinese nurse. She informed us that he had been trying to convert her when he died!

It remains to try to sum up my deepest memories of TF, my own assessment of his contribution to the church and what he meant to me personally. In the attempt to estimate his contribution to the church in general and the theological world in particular, it seems to me that the following features of his life and thought are central, the first two laying the basis for the following three, which together with them are summed in the final feature:

i) *Scripture and prayer* – at the root of TF as a man, a minister, theologian and author, is an intimate knowledge of scripture and a daily reading of it and prayer. Brought up to read the Bible three chapters a day and five on Sundays and therefore right through it once a year, TF continued to do so all his life and indeed read it two or three times a year. His daily study of scripture went hand in hand with daily devotions and intercession for others. This for him was the ‘arcane discipline’, as he called it, which lies at the heart of all ministry and of participation in the royal priesthood of Christ. Difficult and abstract as some of his writings appear, his theology is grounded in and flows out of daily reading of the word of God in worship and prayer.

ii) *following the goal* – in his reading of scripture and in the structure of his thought TF is centered around following the ‘scopus’ or goal of scripture, Jesus Christ. That for him is the nature and purpose of Christian dogmatics, orientated and structured, as it is, around Jesus Christ and his further disclosure. TF is concerned in his theology to further a deeper and more faithful grasp of this ‘scopus’ of scripture, the once for all revelation of God in Christ. The doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of Christ who

reveals the Father in the Spirit are the heart of his thought. Essentially doxological and heuristic, his theology is at once deeply biblical and deeply theological, concerned to penetrate into what he called the 'inner logic' of the Bible, to grasp the Word behind the words and in the words and therefore to understand the scriptures in their relation of depth.

TF's theology therefore operates with what might be called an 'open center,' open that is for Jesus Christ to make himself further known. In that sense, TF's theology is systematic but is not a system. In the nature of the case for him, theology cannot be a system, for it points to and is held together in the person of Jesus Christ in the Trinity and not in any logical system of human devising. His theological method is the Anselmian 'faith seeking understanding,' faith looking for a deeper grounding in and apprehension of God in Christ. Understanding his theology means following it in its goal orientated direction, which means that it cannot itself be neatly systematized since its unity is to be found in God and knowledge of him in the Spirit and not in itself.

iii) *originality and the making of connections* – TF's theology is highly original, which does not mean first and foremost that he developed new concepts, although he did, but that he made new connections between known theological ideas and concepts. For him, originality was not necessarily thinking new thoughts but making new connections.

On the basis of the first two features of his thought outlined above (his intimate dwelling upon scripture and his interpretation of it in terms of its center in Jesus Christ), TF was able to take his knowledge of the history of classical theology, in particular of Athanasius, Calvin and Barth, not to mention Anselm, Kierkegaard and H.R. Mackintosh (to name just a few of the seminal influences on him), and reshape it around Jesus Christ as the dogmatic centre of theology. It is, it seems to me, precisely because his own theology is not a system but is open to its center in Christ, that the dogmatic material of historical theology can, in his theology, be reshaped, knit together and structured in a new and dynamic order around Christ. The openness of theology and of all its concepts to its transcendent Object, or Subject, means that the primary connection of theological concepts is not to themselves or to other theological concepts as such but to their object or referent.

When theological concepts are realigned with their referent they are naturally realigned among themselves. Theological concepts are in any case aligned naturally together in certain groupings, since it is only together, structured in human language around certain leading metaphors, that they act as disclosure models. Through structuring the various concepts and doctrines of Christian theology around the center in Jesus Christ, TF realigns them in relation to him as their centre but also to one another. It is their transcendent reference that enables them to be connected together in new ways.

Interpreting scripture and theology in terms of their ontological ground in God in Christ also involves seeing them as a whole. The transcendent focus facilitates a wider vision and means that rather than dwelling and thinking within certain fixed theological concepts, or even exclusively within certain theological traditions, theological concepts are interpreted in terms of the one reality they refer to, namely, God in Christ. Interpreted not simply out of themselves, but regrouped and re-schematized in interrelation with other theological concepts, they find themselves given a new and enriched meaning by and in the unique reality to which they jointly refer.

The structure of TF's theology and of his theological mind, therefore, is such that in endeavoring to allow Christ (in the Father through the Spirit) to be the open focus of theology, he sees everything else, all scripture and doctrine, in a wide and comprehensive theological vision. The logic of theology here can be thought of as following the pattern of Christ and as having analogies to his ascending that he might fill all things. If he had remained on earth, he would have been in one place at one time, but by ascending Jesus Christ is through the Spirit present to all everywhere. Similarly, if Christ is not fixed on earth as it were within certain doctrines, he becomes related to the whole of doctrine. Rather than endeavoring to encapsulate him in its formulations, theology allows Jesus Christ to be their ascended terminus, so allowing its concepts and doctrines to be seen much more as a comprehensive whole in their pointing together to him as their one and only true referent. The more theology cuts loose from thinking in theological concepts and doctrines to thinking *through* them (necessarily *through* but *not apart from* them), to the risen ascended Christ, the more

theological concepts and doctrines become part of a wider and deeper whole held together in God in Christ.

The result of this openness to Christ in the Trinity is that while TF's theology does find its basic shape early on in his career, it is continually making new connections and putting theological concepts and doctrines together in a new enriched whole.

iv) *balanced vision* – a further consequence of TF's method and theology, it seems to me, is that like Calvin, whose method seems in many ways very similar (if lacking in Barth's and TF's attempt to present the whole truth of Christ more dynamically and in spiral fashion), his theology succeeds in having a comprehensive and balanced vision. The attempt to relate all of scripture and doctrine to Jesus Christ has the effect of ironing out under-emphases and over-emphases in Christian doctrine. There is of course no such thing as a totally balanced theology – all theology suffers from the limitations of its time – nevertheless a method such as that of Calvin or TF does, it seems to me, provide more of a balanced vision to a theology than would otherwise be the case.

v) *fruitfulness* – in its heuristic nature, in looking to Jesus Christ as the 'scopus' and in connecting biblical and theological concepts and doctrines together as refined windows for Christ's further disclosure, TF's theology is fruitful. The range and depth of his knowledge, not just in theology particularly but in philosophy and science also, the wideness of his vision and the connections of thought which he forged all make his thought exceptionally fruitful and fertile. Even if he is not always right (and which theologian or thinker is?), his thought is richly stimulating, illuminating and suggestive of new avenues. And even if following up his thought does not always lead to the same conclusions it is almost always very fruitful.

The fertility and fruitfulness of TF's theology at the same time leaves it open to a certain weakness. TF's habit of seeing things as a whole, of seeing scripture and doctrine in terms of their 'scopus' in Christ, of interpreting theological statements not just in terms of their syntactical and historical setting but in terms of the reality they refer to, means that his focus on the ultimate reference of statements can lead him sometimes to jump to conclusions in interpreting historical theologians. He can interpret their

theological statements in terms of the reality as he sees it, in a way which seems to go beyond their author's own immediate thought and setting. TF is sometimes accused here of being 'a-historical' and of making other theologians appear too much to have the same theology as he has.

TF's search for a comprehensive theological vision, his habit of working very fast and his sheer volume of work and research does leave him vulnerable on occasion to jumping to inadequate or wrong interpretations and failing to be as historically precise as he might have been. But his principle of interpreting the statements of historical theology in terms of the eternal realities of God (which we know only in the historical but which at the same time transcend it) is valid. The scale of what TF is attempting to do is such that his theology and research is inevitably fragmentary and inadequate at points. Its value is not in its completeness as such but in the extent of its basic adequacy and heuristic capability and fruitfulness.

vi) *integration* – TF's chief legacy to the church and to theology is the personal theological integration he forged and expressed in his lectures and writings. While there were significant portions of that integration still awaiting final writing up and publication (for example, his great three volume manuscript on the history of hermeneutics, only part of which ever appeared in print), and while much of it is, in Polanyian terms, tacit and lost with his passing, a great deal of it is bequeathed in his many books. In his theology, TF has left a unique integration quarried from the classical doctrine of Christ from the fathers to the Reformation and Barth. His thought represents a unique interpretative tool that is biblically informed, evangelically centered on Christ in the Trinity and richly balanced and fruitful.

The uniqueness of TF's theological integration lies not simply in his integrated understanding of Christian doctrine around Christ in the Trinity, but in the breadth of its historical range. In his doctrine of the knowledge of God, for example, or of the nature of theological truth and statement, TF incorporates elements from all eras, patristic, mediaeval, Reformation and modern, and has in mind such thinkers as Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Hilary, Anselm, Richard of St. Victor, Scotus, Reuchlin, John Major, Calvin, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Barth. His own understanding is deeply shaped



by what has gone before in the history of theology as well as by the contemporary influences on him.

The uniqueness of TF's integration lies also in its rational depth. He had naturally an inquiring mind, but there is no doubt that his theological understanding owed much to the Scottish intellectual tradition in philosophy and theology. His grounding in Scottish philosophy gave him a conceptual and epistemological awareness that significantly deepened his theology and his understanding of other theologians. He was able to appreciate the meaning and significance of their thought as he would not otherwise have done. This was reinforced by his linguistic training, in Latin, Greek, German and Hebrew, which meant that he was better equipped to appreciate nuances of meaning and thereby make his distinctive contribution to the field of biblical and theological hermeneutics. Though philosophical training may be a considerable assistance, the rational depth of faith and of theology for TF stems from the nature of knowledge of God. It is the deep intelligibility of God in his Word that creates in us an answering or correspondent rationality. Through the Spirit we participate in the mind of Christ and are opened up in a profound way to the inherent intelligibility of God. Faith here has both a rationality and a depth: a rationality of the 'converted reason' through being 'transformed by the renewal of our mind' and a depth through sharing in Christ in the very rationality of God. TF always endeavored to hold the two together. Even if his thinking at times seems to become too complex as he struggles to express his thoughts, his theology is characterized not only by a profound rationality but also by a depth of understanding which comes from faith. The two belong together. It is precisely the combination of the two that enabled him to make such a contribution in so many fields of theology, not least in the fields of patristics, hermeneutics, Calvin studies, ecumenical dialogue, Barth studies and, of course, dogmatics.

His 'main love' remained Christian dogmatics, the positive ordering of doctrine around Christ and the proclamation of him. But he felt that a key ancillary part of that for him personally was evangelizing the foundations of scientific culture, as he put it, so that the gospel might not be unnecessarily hindered by the deep rooted presuppositions which, in spite of being superceded by modern science, still bedeviled popular and even academic

thought. There is no doubt that his work here in science and theology, recognized by his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and of the British Academy, is one of his most original and important contributions to theology and its wider relations.

His most important legacy, however, in my estimate, is his Christian dogmatics, his balanced integration around Jesus Christ of the whole spectrum of doctrine, including Christology, Soteriology and the Trinity. His is a carefully articulated biblical dogmatics, utilizing the best insights, as he sees them, from the early church, the Reformation and modern scholarship. His insight and grasp, scholarship and knowledge of key periods and figures in theology, such as the early fathers (Athanasius in particular), Calvin and Barth, is seminal and outstanding. He writes with passion, concerned to present the truth of the gospel in Christ and to 'clear the ground' for its faithful articulation in the modern era. While he did not live to produce his own dogmatics as such, his New College dogmatics lectures, now in process of publication, provide a full expression of his dogmatics. In their lucid, oral style, the lectures complement his two great dogmatic monographs and provide the best entry into his dogmatic understanding. *The Trinitarian Faith* and *The Christian Doctrine of God* provide the careful scholarly articulation of the whole doctrine of the Trinity as Father, Son become flesh, and Spirit, with particular reference to its development from its patristic roots. The lectures focus on Christology and Soteriology, and articulate a Trinitarian theological understanding of Christ in the scriptures and so function more as a dogmatic key to scripture. Together, the lectures and the monographs provide the fullest account of Torrance's dogmatics and are an enduring legacy to the church.

It is impossible to sum up adequately what T.F. was to me personally, or his influence and impact - uncle (mother's elder brother), father's close friend at university, brilliant and inspiring professor, tutor and theological mentor, father in the faith and dear friend.