

# ***The Trinitarian Faith – T.F. Torrance (1991)***

## **Chapter 1**

Notes by Geordie Ziegler (August 5, 2021) for Torrance Reading Group

Background: An expansion of his 1981 Warfield Lectures for Princeton Seminary. Book is devoted to the theology of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed which was developed in two stages: at the Council of Nicaea in 325 (on the divinity of the Son) and at the Council of Constantinople in 381 (on the full humanity of the Son and the divinity of the Spirit). It is meant to be a handbook for students trinitarian theology in the light of the Church fathers.

### **Chapter 1: Faith and Godliness**

Background: originally appeared in a Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britain (1985)

**Chapter in a Nutshell**: the oneness of being between Jesus Christ and God means that in our knowing of God through Christ, God in Christ is the one who witnesses to himself.

#### **Chapter in outline: Main Points**

1. The faithfulness of the Creed to the apostolic tradition recorded in the Scriptures.
2. The association of faith with 'piety' or 'godliness' (*eusebeia* or *theosebeia*): speaking worthily, not irreverently, about the holy God.
3. Nicaea's mode of speech is a confession of faith (not a set of 'decrees'), and as such, it calls for a commitment of faith.
4. "Faith" plays a key and central role – direct personal reception; "a shift away from a centre of thinking in the in-turned human reason...to a centre in God's revealing and reconciling activity in the incarnation of his Mind and Word (Logos) in Jesus Christ." (19)
  - a. Faith is in God, not in the Bible
  - b. Faith is personal - It takes the form of 'listening obedience' to the address and call of God's Word.
5. True faith has a two-fold character: determinate/bounded and indeterminate/unbounded
6. Faith has an 'open range' toward 'infinity'
7. Godliness (*theosebeia*, *eusebeia*) is part of faith
  - a. Godliness = God-orientedness; a relational/personal stance toward God. Facing God; thinking in a manner worthy of God; humble worship; reverent service; obedience of mind and of life.
8. Godliness exercises a directive force in all 'sound doctrine'.

9. *Eusebeia* in the pastoral epistles is more or less a technical word for what had been called 'the Way' in the Acts of the Apostles. It is an embodiment of faith. It is right thinking and right living, both in alignment with the truth as it is in Jesus.
10. 'The mystery of godliness' (1 Tim 3:15—16). Paul correlates the 'great mystery of godliness' with the incarnation.
11. 'the deposit of faith'. Primarily refers to Jesus' own self-witness in the Church of 'the event' of his saving life; secondarily it refers to the apostolic *kerygma* as it is mediated to us through the Scriptures (of the NT) and through participation in the mystery of godliness in the midst of the Church through the Spirit.
12. Irenaeus: Scripture is faithfully interpreted and appropriated only within the framework of the Faith entrusted to the Church.
13. Origen: spiritual training in godliness is necessary in order to think rightly (worthily and reverently) of God.
14. *lex orandi – lex credendi* (see fn 108 for background of phrase)

### Key Insights

1. Jesus himself is the primary voice to whom the Church is to continue to listen
2. Torrance places ethics at the center of the gospel. Living the truth cannot be separated from knowledge of the truth.

### Questions, Implications, and quotes worthy of discussion

In the ultimate analysis, however, '*we must learn from God himself what we are to think of him, for God cannot be apprehended except through himself.*' (in reference to Hillary, TF 21)

The Holy Scriptures...fulfill their divinely intended function when they mediate *God's own self-witness.* (TF, 22)

It is, then, in Jesus Christ, *through 'union and communion' with him in love,* and through sharing in the love of God incarnate in him, that we are enabled to know God in such a way that our knowledge of God is firm and sure... That would not be possible without the aid of the Spirit of God. But in and through the Lord Jesus Christ God has accustomed his Holy Spirit to dwell in human nature and at the same time has adapted human nature to receive the Holy Spirit, which enables us through the gift of the Holy Spirit to share in the relation of mutual knowing between the Father and the Son and thus in God's knowledge of himself. (in reference to Irenaeus, TF, 32)

What we need is "a disposition of mind attuned through constant prayer to God, godly knowing, and supplications offered not in some casual way but with the whole consent of the heart." (in reference to Athanasius, TF, 43)

“Theological activity...must constantly be interlaced with prayer” (in reference to Hillary; TF, 44)

“Trinitarian worship and trinitarian faith thus provided the implicit controlling ground both for a faithful restructuring of the life of the Church and for a godly renewing of its understanding of the Mind of Christ.” (46)