

T. F. Torrance: Trinitarian Faith - The Almighty Creator

Created by Ken Roxburgh for Chapter 3 of *The Trinitarian Faith*

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1. Chapter in a Nutshell

Our knowledge of God as creator is founded on our knowledge of God as Father:

‘knowledge of God as Creator is taken from knowledge of God as Father, and not the other way round...knowledge of the Father is derived from Jesus Christ his Son who is of the same being as the Father, for in him the Father has revealed himself to us as he is in his own essential nature’ (76)

Our knowledge of God is not vague, but grounded in the relationship between the Father and the Son:

‘our understanding of God as Creator must likewise be taken from the Son...the Father is never without the Son, any more than the Son is ever without the Father.’ (76)

2. Chapter in Outline

a) Main Points

The Fatherhood of God is primary: ‘To name God Father is not to name some quality in God, but ‘to signify his very being’.’ (79)

The Almighty Power of God as Creator is not to be seen as primarily ‘limitless arbitrary power’ (which we derive from a worldly understanding and projected onto God) for ‘the divine power manifest in Jesus Christ is of an altogether different kind...in terms of what God has done and continues to do in Jesus Christ that we may understand something of what divine almightiness really is.’ (82)

‘God was not always creator, but he is always the Father.’ (84ff)

‘The crucial point here is the distinction between the generation of the Son by the nature of God, and the creation of the world by the will of God.’ (84)

God does not will to be alone (89ff)

Although God is ‘transcendently free and in need of nothing beyond himself’, yet ‘God is not ‘solitary’, for as Father, Son and Holy Spirit he is an eternal communion of love and personal being in himself. (90) ...’Far from grudging the creation existence and reality beyond himself, God freely brought it into being out of his sheer liberality, in order to lavish his love upon it. (91)

Creation Ex Nihilo – pp. 95ff

This demonstrates creation is not necessitated by the being of God who is complete and self-sufficient. Yet this does not imply any disconnectedness of God from the world. Neither does it imply that creation does not know ‘a measure of genuine independence.’ (100)

At this point, Torrance focuses on the Incarnation Christ, ‘incarnation of God the creator within his creation’ (100)

‘The restoration of God’s creation was the reason for the incarnation of the eternal Son and Word of God in Jesus Christ. By taking our frail, contingent nature upon himself who is the one source and origin of all creaturely being, he transferred our origin into himself, in order to secure our being from final dissolution into nothingness, but at the same time he took upon himself our alienated and corrupt nature, including the curse of sin, in order to redeem us and renew our being in himself...Incarnation is to be understood as completing the work of creation and of consummating its contingent relation to God.’ (102)

‘Jesus Christ in his redeeming love and liberating grace is the divine pledge for our understanding of the freedom, integrity and reliability of the creation even in its physical order and behaviour.’ (108)

‘Thus in the last analysis the doctrine of creation hinges upon the homoousion, that is, upon whether it was through Jesus Christ who is of one substance with the Father that ‘all things were made’, as the Nicene Creed laid down.’ (109)

Questions:

1. Does Torrance speak to any idea of Theistic Evolution within his writings?
2. Does Genesis 1, with its reference to a formless void imply something present, prior to the divine act of creation, or does it suggest an action of God prior to creation? Does the second account of creation in Genesis 2 suggest an interaction of God with creation as the world develops?
3. Torrance clearly speaks of the act on creation as being that of the Triune God. However, the role of the Spirit in Genesis 1.2 is not given any significant emphasis. See David Fergusson’s reference to Andrew Herod’s concern that ‘the undeveloped role of the Spirit in creation proved detrimental to an adequate understanding of God’s presence and involvement throughout the created world.’ (Fergusson, *Creation*, p. 7 and A. Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 59.