

## Foreword

THERE IS GROWING WORLD-WIDE INTEREST IN THE THEOLOGY OF THOMAS F. Torrance, the Scottish theologian who died in 2007. Many new studies are published annually. An international online journal, *Participatio*, is now devoted to Torrance theology, as it is also the subject-matter for conferences and symposia. Alexandra Radcliff is a fresh, new voice who brings gracious and impressive care to her Torrance scholarship. This book is a well-conceived constructive project and a worthy addition to the growing secondary literature.

A foreword, of course, is not a scholarly review. It is an invitation to read the book because there is thoughtful and insightful writing between its pages that breaks ground and plants thoughts for further growth. Dr. Radcliff has written an important book that pushes Torrance theology into something of a neglected area, namely, sanctification in Christ. She has identified a clear subject for discussion and in my view has moved Torrance scholarship to a deeper understanding of the way in which the doctrine of sanctification can be developed in a helpful direction on the ground of Christology and soteriology. Her work is original, provocative and helpful for a number of reasons.

The analysis of and reflection on Torrance theology is not exclusively focused on Thomas F. Torrance, but includes also the work of his younger brother James B. Torrance. Giving both brothers their place gives this book a distinct character. Although each brother has his own rightful place, the sheer volume and intensity of published work by Thomas has, perhaps, overwhelmed or dominated Torrance scholarship and led to the neglect of important contributions on the part of James. Dr. Radcliff has done a fine job in placing the Torrance brothers not just side by side, but also by showing their common base in the doctrines of the person and work of Christ.

The book is beautifully and gently written and Dr. Radcliff helpfully summarizes her expositions along the way. The book especially exemplifies mastery of the thesis statement to make clear the direction of the ensuing

discussion. This is important given the difficult and sometimes dense writing of Thomas F. Torrance. There is nothing here that is unclear.

Dr. Radcliff writes from within the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition, and as such offers a gentle criticism of Torrance theology for the absence of exploration of the subjective nature of sanctification. This criticism is then turned around, as it were, to address the opposite perspective where subjective sanctification is worked out in external, logico-causal responses by the Christian. The positive contribution is that subjective sanctification can be built on Torrance theology when it is grounded in our participation in the vicarious humanity of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is a point of profound theological, and, I believe, pastoral importance.

The heart of the book is the assessment that the soteriological categories most suitable to bring to expression the salvation wrought by the Triune God of grace are filial, ontological, and objective. The development of this foundation in Torrance theology is the major exposition in the book. Dr. Radcliff is aware that this is a direct challenge to soteriological categories that are developed in terms of federal theology, with an imposed penal instrumentality with regard to the cross of Christ. For T. F. Torrance especially, but also in J. B. Torrance, it is clear that an ontological relation with Christ on account of his incarnation and vicarious humanity calls for the human response of faith by the Spirit. This means that our response through the gift of the Spirit is a participation in Christ's response for us, which avoids a logico-causal semi-Pelagianism. Dr. Radcliff negotiates her way through this material in a masterful way. Set free from the burden of attempting to achieve sanctification, sanctification is no longer seen as a subsequent stage in the *ordo salutis*, as a second work of sanctification.

Dr. Radcliff correctly roots Torrance theology at this point in the vicarious humanity of Christ whereby justification and sanctification are held together in Christ as Christ's work for us. Now there is an easy flow to the doctrine of our participation by the Spirit in union with Christ. It would be hard to overemphasize the centrality of this for Torrance theology, and Dr. Radcliff narrates this with exceptional clarity. She rightly notes that the believer does not apply what Christ accomplished; the believer participates in what Christ has accomplished.

Dr. Radcliff argues that Torrance theology would be complimented by a greater appreciation of what humankind has received and is called to in Christ. The Torrance brothers did not much venture into what this might look like; we have in this book a worthy pressing of the issue. It is worth noting, too, that this pressing of Torrance scholarship to a deeper understanding of sanctification in Christ, especially in its subjective aspect, has impressive consequences for pastoral care. Pastoral care from a Christian

perspective must always be concerned for more than therapeutic application. And there is now a growing body of pastoral theology, much of it from within the framework of Torrance theology, developing the theological apparatus for ministry grounded in Christ. The concern, surely, whatever the life situation, must be for a person's deeper life in Christ. Dr. Radcliff has given us theological tools for our further reflections on this ministry on the basis of her reflections on the theology of Thomas F. and James B. Torrance. At the end of the day this is pastoral theology for the future.

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