

November, 2015

T.F. Torrance Theological Fellowship Members,

Greetings. As we approach this year's annual meeting in Atlanta, I wanted to write you all. While it would be wonderful if all our more than 300 members were to gather together in one location, that is not likely to happen. However, we can still stay in touch. I do look forward to meeting with those who can make it to Atlanta this year. If we haven't met in person, please do introduce yourself to me and to the Exec. Committee members also in attendance.

This year's guest lecture will be given by our guest speaker, Dr. W. Travis McMaken (Ph.D. Princeton Theological Seminary), Associate Professor of Religion, Lindenwood University. He will deliver a paper: "Actualism, Dualism, and Onto-Relations: Interrogating Torrance's Criticism of Barth's Doctrine of Baptism." Dr. McMaken will address the questions: Why did T. F. Torrance complain that Barth's late doctrine of baptism exhibits an uncharacteristic dualism, puzzling interpreters of Barth since? What did he mean by "dualism?" Was he right?

Find attached to this email not only this letter, but also the Minutes from last year's meeting. While not officially approved, it's accurate enough to give you an idea of what we covered there in San Diego.

Of the two initiatives mentioned in my last letter, I am happy to report that the two members who volunteered to assist me have made good progress. Dr. Jerome van Kuiken, who is Associate Professor of Ministry & Christian Thought at Oklahoma Wesleyan University, has set up and taken the responsibility to manage the LinkedIn group, the T.F. Torrance Theological Fellowship.

This group is being formed to provide a social media venue for current and past scholars who have an interest in Torrance's theology and related writings. The idea is for members of this group to get to know in some detail each other's work, geographical and institutional location, some background and to facilitate collaboration or just offer mutual assistance in research. You can start by becoming a member of LinkedIn.com. It's free. Then search the website under the "group" tab for the T.F. Torrance Theological Fellowship. You will find a place to message Jerome and request membership. He will reply via a message in Linked in. Then fill out the requested information on yourself, as you like, to let other members know who you are and what you are up to.

The other initiative involves the formation of an index or database to facilitate sharing resources used for research by or about T.F. Torrance (or one of the other Torrance theologians!) by scholars who are members of the TFT TF. Daniel Cameron heads this project up. He is currently working towards a Master of Arts in systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has already begun to assemble the database of resources. We are continuing to collect a list of journal articles related to TFT scholarship. This will eventually be made available through our moderated LinkedIn group members. If you know of articles that are hard to locate but would be willing to lend yours to a member to further their scholarship, please let me know:  
[gdeddo@tftorrance.org](mailto:gdeddo@tftorrance.org)

I am happy to note that there continues to be strong interest in Torrance's work. This is, to a significant degree, indicated by Ph.D's dedicated to researching some facet of his

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work and also by journal articles and books published. One of the most significant publications this year was the work of our own *Participatio* editor, Todd Speidell, and the late co-editor, Fr. Matthew Baker. Built on the contributions from Volume 4 of *Participatio*, Wipf and Stock published a revised and expanded version: *T.F. Torrance and Orthodoxy: Theology in Reconciliation*, see <http://wipfandstock.com/t-f-torrance-and-eastern-orthodoxy.html> Congratulations are due for both publications.

As many of you know I have emphasized the importance of T.F. Torrance's onto-relational framework for understanding his writings. Our thinking tends to be "relational" or "ontological" and our theologies often reflect one or another of these alternative frameworks. Torrance found both these categories of conceptualization inadequate. Faithfulness to the biblical revelation culminating in the self-revelation of God in Christ requires a different conceptual framework. So Torrance, following Karl Barth to a significant degree, sought not to get caught on what has become a false dilemma, and brought the two together. He coined the term "onto-relational" to indicate his approach.

Many who fail to understand or do justice to Torrance's thought fall short because they do not follow his onto-relational conceptualization, but rather, without realizing or acknowledging it (and without rejecting it) attempt to grasp Torrance in terms of one or the other horn of the relational-ontological dichotomy. What I found is that Barth, under his rubric of the "*analogia relationis*" and in his trinitarian-christological anthropology of *CD III/2*, offers us a more detailed and finely grained description than Torrance did of what TF was getting at through his onto-relational conceptual framework! Further, I noted how Barth works out in *CD III/4*, in his section on "Freedom for Fellowship." the ethical/relational aspects of the onto-relational *analogia relationis*. Barth begins to work out there a truly theological ethic. One that coincides especially with James Torrance's notion of the "all inclusive humanity" of Jesus Christ as well as TFT's identifying Jesus Christ as the "personalizing person" and the "humanizing human."

Although I'm going on about this because I think the subject is crucial for grasping most all of what T.F. Torrance taught, it is true that my book, *Karl Barth's Theology of Relations: Trinitarian, Christological and Human* has just been republished by Wipf and Stock and is now available in two volumes or a set. Go to: <http://wipfandstock.com/karl-barth-s-theology-of-relations-volume-1.html> if you are interested in this topic.

As I mentioned we now have over 300 members worldwide. The number added this year was a bit lower than previous ones, about 15. Also the donations were lower and did not cover our annual expenses for this year (so far!). Will you also allow me to ask you to consider making the suggested \$10 USD annual donation? It's easy: use the Donation button down on the lower right hand side of the [www.tftorrance.org](http://www.tftorrance.org) homepage.

Let me close by saying that I'm very grateful for the TFT Theological Fellowship and the many relationships and conversations I've been privileged to have with our members. I do hope you continue to make it known to others and invite them to participate. I hope to see many of you next year, if not this. Alister McGrath will be our guest speaker!

Faithfully yours in Christ Jesus,  
Gary W. Deddo  
President  
Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship