

into Torrance's soteriology in particular and theology in general. A word of caution should be mentioned though, because as Habets himself confesses, using *theosis* in Torrance's soteriology has its own problems (pp. 195–96), particularly as there are areas where Torrance himself did not provide comprehensive discussion. One might wonder if this is deliberate in Torrance: while *theosis* occupies a place in his thoughts, it may not occupy the same weight that Habets places on it.

*Dick O. Eugenio*

**AN INTRODUCTION TO TORRANCE THEOLOGY:  
DISCOVERING THE INCARNATE SAVIOUR**

***Edited by Gerrit Scott Dawson***  
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Over the past decade, many people, lay and academic, have asked me if there is a good introductory book for getting to know the thought of Tom or James Torrance. Often I have referred them to *Mediation of Christ* (1984), yet also with a bit of hesitation — for the layman, *MOC* can be a bit of an overwhelming experience; and for the scholar, its lack of footnoting can be frustrating. James Torrance's *Worship, Communion and the Triune God of Grace* (1996) is excellent, yet somewhat restricted in its dogmatic scope. Now that Tom Torrance's Edinburgh lectures (*Incarnation* [2008] and *Atonement* [2009]) have finally been published, a very readable and thorough work is on the market. But for those not ready to read two large volumes and who are comfortable with a secondary resource, Dawson's broad *Introduction* may be the best thing on offer.

*Introduction* is the product of pastors and theologians who have been deeply shaped and centred by the teaching and writing of the Torrance brothers. (Contributors include: David Torrance, Andrew Purves, Elmer Colyer, Gerrit Dawson, Douglas Kelly, Alan Torrance, Graham Redding, Gary Deddo, and Baxter Kruger.) It is an excellent book for those who want to test the Torrance theological waters, yet it also represents several pieces of thoughtful scholarship



which deserve the serious engagement of fellow scholars. One might balk at the suggestion that there is such a thing as “a Torrance theology” — Tom and James and David don’t claim to be “Torrancians” themselves. Rather, as David Torrance reminds us (p. 1), those who would follow in their footsteps are constantly referred back to the pages of the Old and New Testaments, and to theological forebears such as Athanasius, Calvin, Barth, and the like.

Given the nearly magisterial standing of T. F. Torrance in the latter half of the twentieth-century theological scene, the book impressively strikes a fairly even balance between material that includes the contributions of James and David too. Considering their thought together in one book is appropriate, as the three Torrance brothers shared a kindred theological instinct which manifested itself in various ways according to their gifts and calling. If there is a negative aspect to this approach, it is that lumping them together under the rubric “a Torrance theology” tends to minimize their particular distinctiveness and discourage certain kinds of critical questioning. General descriptions of a “Torrance theology” (an odd title given that this is a label that the Torrances themselves would surely not have encouraged) can be helpful in an introductory resource such as this, but serious scholarship requires more particularity and individuation. Each Torrance should be judged and assessed on the basis of his own work and not reduced to a generalized melting pot called “Torrance theology.” Those with more nuanced scholarly concerns will need to go elsewhere for more depth. (T. F. Torrance’s newly published two-volume Edinburgh lectures [*Incarnation and Atonement*] and Paul Molnar’s new book on T. F. Torrance in Ashgate’s *Great Theologians* series would be worthwhile investments.)

*Introduction* plays a bit like a symphony. Each chapter is written by an author who learned their tunes from Tom and James Torrance, and each is very consciously seeking to be faithful in passing on what they have received. In this sense, there is a consistency to the overall message that shines through each essay even in their variety of themes. Yet this faithfulness does not mean sameness. There is plenty of scope and texture in the Torrances’ thought from which to draw. The well is deep. The drum beats reverberate throughout the entire dogmatic spectrum. Some of the essays are a bit like jazz and, while the theme is still present, the cantor is unique (Baxter Kruger’s chapter, “Hermeneutical Nightmare,” is a case in point). Some of the essays are improvisations, faithfully

extending the Torrances' thought into specific applications. (Gary Deddo and Graham Redding's thoughtful essays come to mind.)

As Gerrit Dawson notes in the preface, not everyone agrees with every point each of the others has made (though none of these areas of disagreement are mentioned throughout the entire text). There are different nuances that each writer draws out, different emphases that constitute the core of the Torrances' message for them. And while many of these emphases overlap through the various chapters, the styles at times can be quite different. (For example, both Baxter Kruger and Gerrit Dawson have much to say about the curse of sin and the fallen humanity which Jesus took to himself, but formally, and in some ways materially, the registers in which they make their points are radically different.)

It ought to be said that, though an introduction, this book is not "Torrance for Dummies." While not every essay is as philosophically complex as Douglas Kelly's ("Realist Epistemology"), all of them take up the dynamic thought patterns of the Torrances' understanding of the gospel, which requires multiple concepts to be held together at once: person and work, being and act, humanity and divinity, humanward and Godward, union and participation, and so on.

One particularly helpful feature of the book is the comprehensive introductory chapter written by David Torrance. David patiently walks through each chapter in the book, distilling the key underlying doctrinal convictions it contributes, and then, most helpfully of all, giving each doctrinal theme a one-line heading. This not only gives the previewing reader an idea of what is to come, but also clearly states the core issues to be discussed and where one could find a specific discussion on that theme. If this technique has a flaw, it is that as a distillation of a distillation, it represents a fairly compressed and somewhat nonsequential line of reasoning and for that reason can make it difficult to piece together a total picture. Perhaps if one were to read the introduction *at the end* of the book the picture would come together more clearly. Regardless of the reader's method, its greatest value is that here we have Torrance the pastor (David) doing for us two things: first, focusing in on the key theological themes of these Torrance-inspired essays; and second, making practical links to church life as they arise.

Theologically, the book covers a great amount of doctrinal ground: soteriology and Christology, love and forgiveness in the covenant, knowledge of God and becoming like God, and worship and service. In an effort to distill the core

concepts even more for those who might still be wondering if the Torrance waters (or more specifically, *this book*) are worth entering, the following is my attempt to summarize the key theological issues discussed (N.B.: this is not a chapter-by-chapter summary, but more of a logical dogmatic flow):

*God's love in Christ is an unconditional covenant love.* All of humanity (not just "the elect" as Reformed scholastics would have it) are freely and eternally loved and unconditionally forgiven by God in Christ and *on this basis* are called by Christ through the Holy Spirit to love and obey him (103-14).

*Atoning reconciliation (i.e., our salvation) is worked out within Christ's own person.* The union of Christ's divine and human natures is a *dynamic personal* (hypostatic) union (81). It is worked out in an *active obedience*. We are saved by *Christ's* faith and obedience to the Father, not *ours* (62). Our salvation was not only accomplished *by* Christ but *in* Christ, *in* his vicarious humanity in which we are given to share by the Spirit (31, 44, 72, 141). We are delivered from both the (juridical) *guilt* of sin by Christ's passive obedience and submission to judgment on the cross and the (ontological) *power* of sin by Christ's obedient life (45-50). We must not separate the person of Christ from the work/acts of Christ.

*The ascended Christ is still the incarnate mediator.* The God-man forever lives for us, offering himself and the fruits of his enduring life for us, and with the Father sending his Spirit upon us to be with us and to unite us to Christ. Christ's continuing humanity as the exalted Lord makes our participation in his ongoing life possible. His enduring life *is* our living atonement (70-72).

*Union with Christ is a completed gift in which we personally participate by the Spirit.* Union with Christ is an accomplished objective fact, but *to neglect our active participation in Christ is to neglect our present salvation* which is established in Christ. We get to participate in Christ's own obedience to the Father (145-52). Through our union with Christ, every facet of our response to God (worship, ethics, prayer, social action, etc) is cleansed and actualized *in Christ* and is to be seen as the gift of participating by the Spirit in the incarnate Son's *ongoing* communion with the Father and his mission from the Father to the world. Christian worship is just such a Trinitarian event, for we do not worship alone but through the Spirit in union with Christ our high priest who both leads and mediates our worship to the blessed Trinity (127-30). Our union with Christ does not make us less ourselves, but more ourselves, more personal, more

human. As personal being is an "onto-relational" reality, union with Christ does not obliterate our "us-ness" but secures us as persons in dynamic communion of intimate giving and receiving with the Triune God (143). Our responses are not negated or replaced, but they are contextualized and relativized (115-16). Our faithfulness, love, generosity, and knowledge is only a participation in the faithfulness, love, generosity, and knowledge of Christ (147, 169-73). Union with Christ and communion or participation in Christ are twin doctrines that cannot be separated or collapsed.

For the reader who is newly introduced to the Torrances, if any of the above concepts intrigue, then by all means, take and read!

I will suggest four areas of critical assessment:

*First of all, a structural challenge.* Given the genesis of the book (a conference on "Torrance theology") the material is bound to be somewhat repetitive. Common themes come to the surface again and again, but the upside of this format is that each chapter is able to stand alone and can be read based on the reader's interest in each particular topic.

*Second, a technical limitation.* As I mentioned above, this book does not seek to draw out the distinctions between the two brothers' thought. Nor does it critically engage either one. Its purpose is exclusively expositional in nature, seeking to clear up misconceptions and misreadings of their theology in general.

*Third, a sociopsychological critique.* The tenor or register of much of "Torrance theology" is focused on the existential angst that many Christians live under as they seek to live up to the demands of Christian faith. This makes the gospel message of "not I, but Christ in me" incredibly refreshing news. Yet how does "the life I now live in the flesh" realize itself in daily life? Gary Deddo's chapter, "The Christian Life and Our Participation in Christ's Continuing Ministry," provides an important balance here, and more extended reflection is needed in Torrance scholarship.

*And finally, a theological question.* Throughout the book, the continuing high priesthood of Christ is lifted up, but little is mentioned of a continuing kingly or prophetic ministry of the incarnate and ascended Christ. Certainly the Torrances' theology provides rich resources for development here as well, and further scholarly theological reflection on the ministry of the exalted Son might prove profitable in understanding what it means to participate in Christ's vicarious humanity.

*An Introduction to Torrance Theology* is an excellent introduction that does just what it says, introducing people to the rich resources offered in the theology of Tom and James Torrance. It deserves to be distributed widely and read thoughtfully.

*Geordie (George) Ziegler*

***A CRITICAL STUDY ON T. F. TORRANCE'S  
THEOLOGY OF INCARNATION***

**Man Kei Ho**

*European University Studies, Series XXIII Theology,  
vol. 869. Bern: Peter Lang, 2008. (x + 290 pp)  
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Since his death in late 2007 a steady stream of literature on Thomas Torrance's theology has made its way off the presses. Much of the secondary literature on Torrance has, to date, focused on his contributions to science or on his epistemology, with his actual theological contributions receiving relatively little attention. This, thankfully, is starting to change, with Man Kei Ho's work being one of the latest contributions to critically examine Torrance's theology of the incarnation.

Ho is currently an adjunct lecturer at the Canadian Chinese School of Theology at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, and the present work is his PhD thesis, completed at the University of Wales under the supervision of Professor Tom O'Loughlin.

The aim of Ho's study is to critically examine Torrance's understanding of the incarnation and to expose it as being inconsistent, incoherent, and finally inadequate. Ho lays special emphasis upon the way he believes Torrance unsuccessfully tries to incorporate dualist ways of knowing into a unitary way of thinking, his supposed reversal on the role of natural theology, and finally on the fact that Torrance was unable and unwilling to address the issue of divine kenosis (a claim never substantiated in the book). To those familiar with Torrance's theology, each of these criticisms will immediately strike one as being unusual and misguided.