

**T.F. Torrance Theological Fellowship
President's Letter:
June, 2019**

Dear Members,

*God is gone up on high,
With a triumphant noise.
The clarions of the sky
Proclaim th'Angelic joys!
Join all on earth, rejoice and sing,
Glory ascribe to Glory's King*

I write this on Ascension Day and I am reminded of the lines of this great hymn by Charles Wesley and also of T.F. Torrance's *Space, Time and Incarnation*. That was published the same year as *Theological Science* and in it, Torrance presented his masterly account of the event of the Ascension, understood in the light of our contemporary scientific understanding of the universe. In *Atonement*, the published version of his lectures in Christian Dogmatics, he linked the Ascension theologically with the offices of Christ as king, priest and prophet.

In his Introduction to *Atonement*, Robert Walker emphasizes that this often neglected doctrine 'is for Torrance one of the most important of all theological doctrines'. This event 'creates a pause in the *parousia*, creating time for the gospel before the final coming of Jesus.' That is a good perspective in which to view our activities as a fellowship, concerned not just to promote the thinking of a great theologian, but concerned as he was to contribute through this to the work of the gospel.

November Meeting

The annual meeting of the fellowship will be on Friday, 22nd November this year at the AAR conference in San Diego at the anticipated time beginning at 1 pm. The committee decided to go for a somewhat different approach this year by inviting a theologian who had areas of substantial agreement and some points of disagreement with Torrance's theology. We have therefore invited Oliver Crisp till recently of Fuller Theological Seminary, but now of the University of St Andrews. Myk Habets will respond to his presentation and the intention is to engage in constructive dialogue.

Our annual business meeting will be held before the lecture. According to our constitution, it is my responsibility to name my successor, one of the co-vice presidents. But we also need nominations for the Executive Board and for a new ex-officio position as membership secretary. If you would like to nominate someone, or volunteer to serve, please contact me at Tanoble@nts.edu

Website

The Fellowship website received a Drupal 8 makeover last summer and now incorporates the Torrance bibliography project. Go to <https://tftorrance.org> and browse the navigation tabs. *Participatio* is more accessible than ever, with article-level downloads and a new open access policy. Under the Help tab you'll find a guided tour and an explanation for how to create or update your own member profile (profile access is members-only). There are pages to announce Torrance-related news and events, conferences and presentations, and dissertation projects currently underway. Check the home page often for notices of new publications, which are being added on an ongoing basis (older studies will begin to be added later this year). The editors, Kerry Magruder, Brent Purkaple and Gary Deddo, welcome notifications of new publications, new Torrance sources (>1500 sources currently), and heretofore overlooked materials. A hands-on tutorial session will be offered in San Diego at ETS/AAR.

Just to remind you of our mission statement: Our mission for the website and its resources is to create a hub for an academic community that will stimulate and sustain research carried on in a Torrancean vision.

Participatio

Todd Speidel, editor of our on-line journal, *Participatio*, reports that two volumes are currently being completed. The first of these (for 2018) has two themes. First, it is supplemental to the 2017 volume on 'Science, Epistemology and Natural Theology' and includes a rebuttal piece by Paul Molnar to Alex Irving (and Alister McGrath). The second theme relates Torrance's theology to that of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley. That includes papers by Joel Scandrett, Jerome Van Kuiken, Jacquelynn Price-Linnartz, Travis Stevick and myself. The second volume (for 2019) is concerned with Torrance and Kierkegaard. It argues that SK is rightly understood as a Christian, incarnational, and realist theologian, not as an "existentialist philosopher" or a so-called "father of existentialism." It includes articles by many top SK scholars ranging from Steve Evans to Andrew Torrance.

Todd also informs me that we have made a significant transition from a copyright approach to an Open Access method. He and the TFTTF Webmaster issue the following statement on behalf of the Executive Committee:

Since its inception, *Participatio* has been distributed online for the widest possible distribution and access, but as with print journals of old, it was restricted by copyright, which reserves all rights, including the rights of reproduction and distribution. The Exec Com has approved Open Access licensing, which offers an alternative approach that adequately protects the rights we want to protect while simultaneously allowing *Participatio* to have the greater visibility and impact we have intended from the beginning. One common method for Open Access distribution is a Creative Commons license. The Creative Commons "CC-by-nc-sa" license, now adopted for *Participatio*, requires attribution ("by"), prohibits commercial redistribution without permission ("nc"), and requires distribution of derivatives to be "shared alike" under the same terms ("sa"). This license now expressly allows, for instance, teachers to share *Participatio* content in a course packet, so long as they provide attribution and do not make money on it. Course packet use without express permission from the TFTTF was previously strictly prohibited under copyright. More open policies encouraging uses like this, of course, increase the visibility of the journal.

Participatio is a peer-reviewed research journal, sponsored by an academic society, distributed globally via the Internet, without subscription, under a Creative Commons license that removes access barriers, as a professional service to faculty, students and the general public. By changing the distribution of *Participatio* from copyright to a Creative Commons license we are now compliant with the Berlin Declaration on Open Access (2003) and the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002). For these reasons, *Participatio* now qualifies as a so-called “Gold Open Access” Journal, and becomes eligible for consideration by Open Access journal directories, platforms and indexes, which over the long term will further increase its reach and discoverability.

Here are two relevant links:

<https://tftorance.org/node/2137>

[Permissions and Licenses | The T. F. Torrance Theological Fellowship](#)

One further point on *Participatio*: we need volunteers to assist in editing - copy editors and assistant editors to help with the whole process. Contact Todd directly if you think you could help in one way or another: Todd_Speidell@tftorance.org

Firbush

Finally, much closer in time is the retreat organized by Bob Walker at the Edinburgh University centre at Firbush on Loch Tay in the Scottish Highlands from 12th to 14th June. Gerrit Dawson, Geordie Ziegler, Kerry Magruder and Myk Habets are participating in that, along with David Torrance and Robert Walker himself. Can you imagine the Highland scene - the rugged mountains like sentinels around the deep loch reflecting the luminous glow of the Scottish ‘gloaming’, when the sky is light till almost midnight? Can you hear the voices raised in a psalm or hymn floating out from our upper room on the evening air as we conclude the day with prayers - our minds stimulated to deep thought, and our spirits raised in praise and thanksgiving? Why not plan to come next November or June?

May the peace of Christ be with you.

Thomas A. Noble,
President, Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship