

Annotated Extracts from Torrance

Right from the start, Torrance nailed his colours to the mast, and hoisted them high for all to see:

It has been the purpose of [my] dissertation, by inquiry in the literature of the Apostolic Fathers, to probe into the early Christian understanding of grace, and to discern how and why there came about in the history of that doctrine so great a divergence from the teaching of the New Testament. It is my firm conviction that the misunderstanding of the gospel which took place as early as in the second century, with the consequent relapse into non-Christian ideas, has resulted in a doctrine that is largely unbiblical, and that has been only partially corrected by the work of Augustine and the Reformers.¹

As you can see, Torrance was making a very serious claim – one which cannot be brushed aside: the Apostolic Fathers fatally corrupted the new-covenant doctrine of justification. So much so:

In the Apostolic Fathers, grace did not have [the] radical character [that it had – still has, and always will have – in the New Testament]. The great presupposition of the Christian life, for them, was not a deed of decisive significance that cut across human life and set it on a wholly new basis grounded upon the self-giving of God. What took absolute precedence was God's call to a new life in obedience to revealed truth. Grace, as far as it was grasped, was subsidiary to that. And so religion was thought of primarily in terms of man's acts toward God, in the striving toward justification, much less [than] in terms of God's acts for man which put him in the right with God once and for all.²

That is to say, while the New Testament teaches that the sinner's justification is by faith alone on the basis of God's grace alone, the Apostolic Fathers said that justification is a

¹ Torrance v.

² Torrance p133.

matter of the sinner's obedience, his works, his observances. Thus, instead of justification being a finished – once and for all time – work of God's sovereign grace, grace which is utterly free, justification, for the Apostolic Fathers, has become the sinner's work; it is his own work which justifies him. In short, instead of justification being a decisive, completed act of God on the sinner's behalf at the point of faith,³ the sinner is *being* justified as a result of a life-long process, based on his own efforts. Consequently, believers under this system can no longer say:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have [or, let us have, let us enjoy the sense of our] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice [or, let us rejoice] in hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:1-2).

Rather, they must say: 'We hope that we are making enough progress in our works, and will keep on doing so until the end, so that one day we might be justified, and thus – one day – we might have peace with God'.

³ There is a fourfold aspect to justification: 'Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God' (Rom. 5:1). Justification by faith. And yet, a few verses later the apostle declares: 'Having now been justified by [Christ's] blood' (Rom. 5:9). Justification by the blood of Christ. Yet again, in the closing verse of the previous chapter, the apostle states that Christ 'was raised for our justification' (Rom. 4:25). Justification in the resurrection of Christ. And, going back to Romans 5:9, what Paul goes on to say is: 'Much more then, having now been justified by [Christ's] blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him' (Rom. 5:9). Believers are 'eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm [them] to the end, that [they] may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:7-8); that is, justification at the final judgment. And, of course, at the root of it all, we have God's eternal decree to justify his elect through Christ. But the issue here is whether justification is a decisive act of God in time – at the sinner's conversion – or a process.

How did the Apostolic Fathers come to make this disastrous change? Torrance:

Two major factors contributed to that change. The first was the religion of Judaism with its insistence upon law by which the church⁴ was enormously influenced.⁵

In other words, the Apostolic Fathers returned to the old covenant, and that led to this catastrophe.⁶ To put it another way: they capitulated to the Judaisers who had attacked the early churches with their insistence on obedience to the law. The apostles – primarily Paul – stoutly resisted this attack on the gospel, and categorically refuted the teaching of the law men – as the apostle’s letters amply testify.⁷ The truth is, the Apostolic Fathers actually turned back to the very teaching Paul had demolished, and built again an emphasis on law. In short, faced with Judaism, the Apostolic Fathers quickly moved away from the new-covenant principle of grace, and went back to the old-covenant principle of salvation by works; in effect, in biblical terms, they returned to attempted justification by observance of the law. The way of righteousness under the law was: ‘Do and live’ (Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Ezek. 20:11,13,21; Rom. 7:10; 10:4-6; Gal. 3:12). As Moses declared to the Israelites: ‘It will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us’ (Deut. 6:25). In essence, this is what the Apostolic Fathers reinstated – under the new covenant! They were reinstating the old covenant as the ‘path’ to righteousness!

⁴ As always, I have had found it difficult to be consistent in distinguishing between ‘church’ and ‘Church’. Basically, when I use ‘church’ I am thinking in terms of the *ekklēsia*, but it is not always easy to be definite, especially when quoting others. By *ekklēsia*, I mean the New Testament – the new-covenant – people of God, ‘the called-out ones’. See my *Battle; Infant; Gadfly* and my ‘*A Gospel Church*’: *A Warning*, and the brief article with the same title.

⁵ Torrance p133.

⁶ See my *Pastor* and *The Priesthood* for the way they did it over *ekklēsia* life.

⁷ See my *Christ Is All*.

The new covenant could not be more different. Of course, Christ had to fulfil the old covenant (Matt. 5:17-18), to earn righteousness for his people; for that very reason, he was born under the law (Gal. 4:4), and this means far more than that he was a Jew – he was, it goes without saying, but he was born under the law in order to obey it so that he might redeem his people (Gal. 4:5), becoming ‘the end of the law for righteousness’ for them (Rom. 10:4). And this he did perfectly, without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26), thus earning salvation for his people, his entire obedience culminating in the offering of himself a perfect, spotless sacrifice on the cross. The law’s regulations fully typified this – the sacrificial beast had to be without blemish (Ex. 12:5; 29:1; and scores more) – and Christ, fulfilling the old covenant and its law in every aspect, was without blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). His obedience under the law fitted him to be the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 5:9).

But there is more to it even than that. As I have said, the Lord Jesus became a man for the very purpose of living a life of obedience to the law, which culminated in the offering of his body on the cross. And he underwent all this in order to establish the righteousness that would justify his people. He became, therefore, the perfect Saviour for sinners for ever (Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:28).

So, although Scripture lays heavy stress on the death of Christ, the shedding of his blood in atoning sacrifice, as the justifying act, it also speaks of his obedience (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8-9; 10:5-14,19-20). ‘By one man’s obedience many will be made [constituted] righteous’ (Rom. 5:19). Without question, this obedience, as I said, culminated in his death (Matt. 26:39; John 10:18; Rom. 5:18-19; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8; 10:10), for ‘Christ... offered himself without spot’ – ‘without blemish’ (NASB); ‘unblemished’ (NIV) – ‘to God’ (Heb. 9:14). Nevertheless, his entire existence as a man leading up to the cross is also a vital and integral part of this ‘righteousness of

Christ? It is that obedience that is imputed to the believing sinner.⁸ Hence:

Mary... will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:20-21). The word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Jesus Christ... was born of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3). You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law... (Gal. 4:4-5). Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross... (Phil. 2:5-8). God was manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in the same [their humanity – NIV], that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15). When he came into the world, he said: ‘...a body you have prepared for me... “Behold, I have come... to do your will, O God”...’...By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:5-10).

How often Christ spoke of the will of his Father, of his doing that will, of his finishing the work his Father had given him to do (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 9:4; 17:4), all culminating in his triumphant cry on the cross: ‘It is finished!’ (John 19:30). Truly, as his Father’s ‘servant’ (Isa. 42:1; 52:13), he kept his vow to him (Ps. 40:6–8; Heb. 10:5-9).

In justifying sinners, God graciously pronounces them righteous by constituting them righteous in union with or ‘in Christ’ (Rom. 6:1-5; 8:1; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Tim. 1:9). What does this mean? In his grace, God regards the

⁸ See my *Christ’s Obedience Imputed*.

sinner in question as united with Christ so that Christ's obedience is reckoned to the sinner, imputed to the sinner – the sinner's sin having been reckoned to the Saviour (Rom. 5:9,12-21; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 Pet. 3:18). Imputation, putting to the account of, crediting with – like the deposit of credit in someone's bank account, say – is one of the great principles of the gospel.

Leaving aside all illustration, just as Christ bore the sin and guilt of the sinner (Gal. 3:13) – all having been laid by God to Christ's account – so the sinner is accounted righteous by God because God imputes the righteousness of Christ to the sinner. And all is brought about in the experience of the sinner by his believing, trusting God in Christ for salvation. As he believes, as he trusts God in Christ, the sinner receives his justification. This is what the Bible means by being justified by faith (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:20-31; 4:1-25; 5:1; Gal. 2:16-21; 3:8-14; 5:1-5; for instance). The sinner is accounted righteous because he is clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

By their return to the old covenant, the Apostolic Fathers lost this. Let this sink in! Torrance:

Particularly... in... the *Didache*... the gospel became erected into a new law... It is easy to see how this entailed a doctrine of salvation by works of righteousness, with grace introduced in an *ad hoc* fashion as enabling power.⁹

In short:

The Christian life was not for them [that is the Apostolic Fathers] an overmastering imperative which is also an indicative, but only an imperative. They did not live from God so much as toward him.¹⁰

In other words, by stressing man's responsibility for obedience, the Apostolic Fathers fell grievously short of asserting what God in Christ has done – and is doing – for, in and to his people. Oh yes, they still spoke of grace, but they

⁹ Torrance p134.

¹⁰ Torrance p135.

had, in effect, desiccated the biblical meaning of the word; they had drained it of its essential freeness, leaving a dried-up shell. Grace had been replaced by law.

Of course, we should not polarise this interaction between God and men: it is not either/or; it is both. But – and how important is this ‘but’ – the connection *and the distinction* between justification and progressive sanctification¹¹ must always be maintained. That is to say, we must be clear on the question of works:

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

Scripture teaches that God justifies the believer – it is his work, God’s work – following which – following which, I stress – the believer, in his progressive sanctification, works out the salvation which God has already accomplished and applied to every believing sinner. Man is responsible, while God is sovereign. Moreover, the will and work of God in justification precedes the action of man. And man’s work is not *in order to be justified* but *because he is justified*.

The Apostolic Fathers got this upside down, with disastrous consequences.¹² To change the figure: they put the cart before the horse. The new-covenant position is that the believer works *because* he is justified, not that he *might* be justified; he works *from* his justification, not *for* it, or *towards* it.

Torrance explained that, in addition to their return to the old-covenant principle of law, the Apostolic Fathers combined Jewish and Greek ideas. He further explained how they did it:

What facilitated the syncretism of Judaism and Hellenism was the idea, common in principle to both [systems – Jewish

¹¹ See my *Fivefold; Positional*.

¹² Some new-covenant theologians so emphasise the believer’s liberty, and so dislike all talk of law for the believer – including the law of Christ – that they verge on the mystic. See my *Believers; Liberty*.

and Greek], of self-justification, but it was Christianity which provided the sphere in which the two could come together, for as opposed to Hellenism it brought the principle of revelation, and as opposed to Judaism it did away with the... law.¹³ As opposed to both, the gospel of Christianity was so astounding just because it taught a doctrine of justification by grace alone. This was unpalatable to both sides. Judaism refused to accept it because of its revolutionary character and its attitude to the law. Hellenism simply failed to see the New Testament problems. Both of these attitudes to grace are found in the Apostolic Fathers. Their theology represents a corrosion of the faith both from the side of Judaism and from the side of Hellenism, because *the basic significance of grace was not grasped*.¹⁴

How important an observation is this: with the Apostolic Fathers, ‘the basic significance of grace was not grasped’. How frequently the same needs to be said today! Far too often we are subjected to law-preaching, and not grace. Let a believer stress free grace, let a believer give grace its biblical weight, and it is not long before that believer is dismissed out of hand as an antinomian! How men – not merely unbelievers – love law!¹⁵ Grace is abhorred by the natural man and feared by many saints.

Torrance drove on:

[With the Apostolic Fathers,] the basic significance of grace was not grasped. That is seen very clearly in their attitude to all the main doctrines of the New Testament gospel. It was not that they were opposed to them, but that they did not grasp them properly. They were willing to give lip service to them, but all unconsciously their preaching was shaped by the meagre and basically wrong categories of the natural mind, and their Christianity became, in consequence, greatly impoverished as a gospel. *The most astonishing feature was the failure to grasp the significance of the death [and, I*

¹³ Torrance, using Calvin’s mistaken template on the law, had ‘the ceremonial law’.

¹⁴ Torrance p137, emphasis mine.

¹⁵ The natural man talks much about ‘doing’. See John 6:28; Acts 2:37; 16:30; 22:10.

would add, the preceding life under the law, and then the resurrection]¹⁶ of Christ.¹⁷

Phew! This takes us to the heart of that ‘alone’ I said that I want to add to the definition of justification. It is so easy to set out a definition of justification which sounds biblical but which is not: if the word ‘and’ can be slipped in, it ruins all. It is not justification by faith ‘and’...! It is not by the finished work of Christ ‘and’...! There is no ‘and’. The sinner’s justification is based entirely on Christ’s completed work.

By turning to the Jewish law and Greek wisdom, and forging a hybrid – a combination of both – the Apostolic Fathers went back to that which Paul had so resolutely opposed in the early chapters of 1 Corinthians:

Since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord”.

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved

¹⁶ See my *Christ’s Obedience Imputed*.

¹⁷ Torrance p137, emphasis mine.

[was determined] to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: 'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived' – the things God has prepared for those who love him – these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for: 'Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?'

But we have the mind of Christ...

Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become 'fools' so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness'; and again: 'The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile'. So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God (1 Cor. 1:21 – 2:16; 3:18-23).

I make no apology for such a lengthy extract. Paul's words, Paul's confrontation of the Jewish and Greek cultures with the gospel, must sink in! And we must follow in his footsteps.

The Apostolic Fathers, by ignoring the way Paul confronted Jewish and Greek cultures, made the grievous mistake of turning the *means* of justification into its *ground* or *cause*: the sinner has to repent and trust Christ to be justified, yes, this is true, but his repentance and faith are not the *basis* of his justification – that, from first to last, is God's free and sovereign grace by the application of the finished work of Christ to the trusting sinner.¹⁸ And when I say 'finished work', I am referring to Christ's perfect life culminating in his death, and his resurrection.

Torrance, concentrating (alas)¹⁹ on the death of Christ, showed how the Apostolic Fathers warped and ruined this:

Salvation is wrought, [the Apostolic Fathers] thought, certainly by divine pardon, but on the ground [of] repentance, not apparently on the ground of the death of Christ alone... It was not seen that the whole of salvation is centred in the person and the death of Christ, for there God has himself come into the world and brought a final act of redemption which undercuts all our own endeavours at self-justification, and places us in an entirely new situation in which faith alone saves man, and through which alone is a man free to do righteousness spontaneously under the constraining love of Christ. That was not understood by the Apostolic Fathers, and it is the primary reason for the degeneration of their Christian faith into something so different from the New Testament. Failure to apprehend the meaning of the cross and to make it a saving article of faith is surely the clearest indication that a genuine doctrine of grace is absent.²⁰

¹⁸ And repentance and faith are God's free gift in grace – John 6:37,44,65; Acts 5:31; Eph. 2:8.

¹⁹ As I have explained, we need to include Christ's preceding life under the law, and then his resurrection.

²⁰ Torrance p138.

Let me repeat what I am arguing for:

Justification is by faith alone, on the basis of God's grace alone, through the person and finished work of Christ alone.

Torrance made it clear that not only did the Apostolic Fathers fail to grasp this, but that they compounded their error with their defective view of Christ's person:

Consonant with the failure to apprehend the death of Christ went the failure to appreciate the person of Christ. The cross is the central act in the life and work of Christ. To misunderstand that is to misunderstand Christ, and thrust him into the background. That is just what happened in the literature of the Apostolic Fathers. The person of Christ was thrust well into the background and its place was taken by God in the role of Lawgiver, Judge and Creator. We do not find the warm, intimate relationship with Christ that we have in the New Testament...²¹ God was not seen through Christ, for Christ was not the Mediator... It was the teaching of Christ, the new way of life, that was [the Apostolic Fathers'] chief concern. What occupied the foreground of their thought was how they were going to walk in the way of this life, and conform to its high standards. So concerned were they about right and wrong behaviour that everywhere they were driven into legalism and formalism. The Christian ethic was codified, and the charismatic life²² under the constraining love of Christ [was] reduced to rules and precepts. The centre of gravity was shifted from the mainspring of the Christian life in the person of Christ himself to the periphery of outward conformity and daily behaviour.²³

Christ and his work are not to be relegated to the background, stifled by rules, regulation and law. Nor is he and his work to be buried beneath rites such as baby sprinkling, confirmation or the Supper; or replaced by any process, programme or procedure such as 'church attendance'; or locked up in icons, confined by priestcraft, and the like. Christ, and Christ alone,

²¹ Torrance conceded the possible exception of Ignatius and Polycarp.

²² That is, spiritual life – life in and by the Spirit.

²³ Torrance p139.

justifies sinners – no rites, no ceremonies, no observances, no process. As soon as the sinner trusts Christ he is justified (and positionally sanctified),²⁴ and beyond condemnation for ever (Rom. 8:1).

Torrance went on to speak of the way in which the Apostolic (and later)²⁵ Fathers' failure over justification played out:

In the Apostolic Fathers... grace became related to the continuance of the Christian life, rather than to the decisive motion of God's love as the presupposition of the whole Christian life. Because [for the Apostolic Fathers] the prime concern of the Christian was with the struggle of obedience in conformity to the new law, grace was related more to the receiving of divine aid than to the objective act of salvation in Christ. That means that grace lost the primary eschatological²⁶ character it had in the New Testament, the presence of the amazing love of God in Christ which unaccountably overtakes the believer and sets him in a completely new world. Instead, grace became an *ad hoc* matter, an aid to the main work of sanctification, a *donum superadditum* [that is, something tagged on – DG].²⁷ In other words, grace was something given by God to those who worthily strive after righteousness to enable them to attain their end [heaven]. It was something to be acquired.²⁸

²⁴ See my *Positional*.

²⁵ As I have explained, the Apostolic Fathers lived in the first two centuries. The later Fathers were men living in the 3rd – 7th centuries. Some, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Cyril, were Greek Fathers; some, such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, were Latin Fathers.

²⁶ The way in which God, in time, works out his eternal decree to save his elect, and thus exalt his Son in their final glorification. The key words are 'but now'. See Rom. 3:21; 5:9,11; 6:22; 7:6; 8:1; 11:30; 11:31 (second 'now' in NIV, NASB); 16:26; along with John 15:22,24; Acts 17:30; 1 Cor. 15:20; Gal. 4:9; Eph. 2:12-13; 5:8; Col. 1:26; Heb. 8:6; 9:26; 12:26; 1 Pet. 2:10. See my *Christ Is All*.

²⁷ Technically, a *donum superadditum* is a gracious gift from God. My rendering is colloquial, but I think it conveys the sense of what the doctrine of the Apostolic Fathers led to.

²⁸ Torrance p139.

Speaking of the *Didache*, Torrance set out the essential errors of the Apostolic Fathers in regard to this question of justification:

The failure [in the *Didache*] to distinguish between law and gospel is most characteristic. If it were not for the fact that Lordship is accorded to Jesus, the *Didache* might well be a Jewish document... Salvation has become a doubtful case of enduring to the end... The new life in Christ is not conceived of as a gift, but something to be striven after during a period of probation in which men are subject to strict conformity to law.

Divergence from the New Testament may be considered in three respects:

1. In relation to the person of Christ... The person of Christ is not central, and there is very little apprehension of the amazing love of God in salvation and election. On the contrary, God is viewed almost exclusively as the Law-giver and Judge who will reward the righteous, and as Master Almighty.

2. In regard to the work of Christ... it is not realised that pardon and justification are the present position of the believer in Christ. Therefore the baptised believer is under obligation to strive to live in such a way as will keep him blameless and void of offence, knowing the reward of the righteous. By becoming a Christian, man only sets foot on the right way which he must follow through to the end in order to be saved. Salvation therefore is thrown forward to the future, and tends to be regarded in terms of reward to righteous living. Because the believer is not already justified by the grace of God, he must justify himself... It follows then that... Christ has not borne the whole burden of sin. There is still much left for the believer to do.

3. In regard to the Christian life. If salvation is still an uncertain quantity, a matter of future reward dependent on present behaviour, life lived toward that end is bound to be entangled in bondage. It cannot be the free spontaneous life which is the result of justification through God's grace. If God in Jesus Christ is not thought of as having given his all to men in their faith in Jesus Christ, the point of focus will not be on the man hid with Christ in God, but on the man still

in this world who is constantly striving towards a heavenly goal.²⁹

As I have hinted in passing, all this, in time, led to priestcraft, sacramentalism, sacerdotalism and Churchcraft, all of which are with us today, wreaking havoc for millions. Torrance:

Grace was taken under the wing of the Church in an official way. The Church was regarded as endowed in some way or another with this spiritual power which made the believer godlike, and in fact united him to God. The Church as the body of Christ was looked on as the depository of pneumatic grace, which might be dispensed in sacramentalist fashion after the analogy of the mystery religions. The Church, in other words, possessed the means of grace.³⁰

And that led to Rome, the Orthodox Church, and so on. The Reformed, alas, failed to reform fully in this vital area – the grievous consequences of which, as I have said, remain with us today.³¹

Indeed, as I noted, some Reformed men and women get very close to the Orthodox. I also said I would speak of a remarkable example of it; I refer to Thomas F. Torrance! Yes, incredible as it may seem in light of the material I have quoted in this booklet, Torrance did indeed move towards the Orthodox. As Robert Arakaki explained:

[Torrance] played a key role in the theological dialogues between the Reformed and Orthodox communities.

Torrance saw much value in the Orthodox liturgical tradition and sought to incorporate this into the Church of Scotland.

Donald Fairbairn's article 'Justification in St Cyril of Alexandria, With Some Implications for Ecumenical Dialogue'... is an attempt to flesh out one of Torrance's insights. Torrance once noted that Cyril of Alexandria was the best expositor of the Evangelical doctrine of justification by grace but made no attempt to elaborate on that statement

²⁹ Torrance pp39-41.

³⁰ Torrance p141. See my *Pastor*.

³¹ See my *Infant, Luther*.

Annotated Extracts from Torrance

and so the task of doing so fell on Fairbairn's shoulders... The challenge here lay in finding in Cyril the Protestant [better, biblical] understanding of justification as a passively received righteousness, and sanctification as a cooperatively produced holiness/righteousness... [This] distinction is key to Protestant [better, biblical] theology. In light of the fact that Cyril conflates justification with sanctification it has been inferred [and rightly so, I would add – DG] that he is advocating an active works righteousness [that is, justification by works] that the Reformers strenuously opposed.³²

Thus we see that Torrance came to think 'that Cyril of Alexandria was the best expositor of the Evangelical doctrine of justification by grace'! Really? Cyril – who conflated justification and progressive sanctification; that is, who propounded doctrine that would form the massive error at the heart of Rome and the Orthodox – Cyril propounded the biblical doctrine of justification? that is, according to Torrance? Remarkable! It just shows – it sounds a warning to us – that a man can be solid today, wobbly tomorrow and capitulate the day after.

³² Quoted from Robert Arakaki: 'T.F.Torrance and Reformed-Orthodox Dialogue'.