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*Living in Union with Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance.* By Kye Won Lee. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003. ISBN 0-8204-5715-9. Pp. xi + 357.

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The theological contribution of T. F. Torrance is at once pastoral, interdisciplinary, and historically rich. However, Torrance's work strikes the uninitiated, quite simply, as dense theological treatises on only marginally related topics. In recent years, attempts have been made to show the coherence and progression of Torrance's thought. Kye Won Lee's text has succeeded in tracing one of the central themes through many of Torrance's most influential texts. Lee highlights the "union with Christ" motif and seeks to exposit Torrance's thinking from this vantage point.

Lee rightfully notes the importance of the union theme in Torrance's theological epistemology and hermeneutics. As he points out, Torrance repeatedly emphasizes the importance of God's self-revelation in Jesus and humanity's incorporation within the divine life as the crucial facet to how we can know God. Our union with Christ, as established by the vicarious humanity of Jesus and gathering together by the Holy Spirit, ensures that divine self-disclosure is possible. This characterizes Torrance's hermeneutics and doctrine of Scripture as well, drawing out the sacramental character of these areas of his work. Lee also points out that Torrance's doctrine of "union with Christ" is the theological solution to the dualism that has become rampant in the Western world. In his conception, Christ becomes the "place" where we meet God. The Scriptures, in turn, become the "place" where we meet Christ. This is at once personal and realist.

In the second part of the book, Lee focuses on the vicarious humanity of Christ himself. Here he highlights the Nicene *homoousia* relationship between Jesus with God and with humanity and fleshes out the significance of it for the atonement and soteriology. It is because Jesus is intimately united with God by partaking of the divine nature that humans are truly and ultimately granted forgiveness of sins. It is because Jesus is intimately united with humanity by partaking of the human nature that humans are brought into the divine life. Jesus acts as God for humanity and he acts as humanity for God. Thus, the incarnation is just as soteriologically essential as the cross.

The third and final part of Lee's work attempts to expose the union motif in Torrance's ecclesiology. Here Lee is concerned with showing that in Torrance's doctrine of the church, ministry, and sacraments, Christ does not do away with or negate human involvement. Instead, Christ assumes the strengths and weaknesses of the church, which is created and gathered by the Spirit, and presents them to

God as an effectual act of worship. All human actions—conversion, prayer, worship, evangelism, etc.—are assumed by Christ and brought to God the Father, and made perfect by Christ's work of mediation. Similarly, Christ ministers and transforms the church through the Spirit, bringing the church to completion at the *eschaton*.

Kye Won Lee does a masterful job of exposing the importance of "union with Christ" for Torrance's theology. Clearly, this is integral to Torrance's program. Pointing the neophyte of Torrance scholarship in this direction, Lee helps one make sense of the broader picture and movements within Torrance's own work. However, *Living in Union with Christ* is anything but an entry-level text. In fact, I found the book more jargon-filled and dense than Torrance's own books. The better way into Torrance's large corpus would be to begin with some of his own "accessible" works, such as his *Mediation of Christ* or *Reality and Evangelical Theology* and move from there to some of his other short monographs. As a secondary source, Lee's book does not engage the breadth of Torrance's work. While he does interact with what I would take to be Torrance's most critical and original books, Lee does not even cite the multitude of Torrance's many articles or historically-oriented books. One cannot help but think that Lee's treatment of Torrance's view of soteriology and theological anthropology would be deeply enriched by, for example, exploring Torrance's dissertation on grace in the Apostolic Fathers, his heavy reliance on Athanasius, and his seminal work on Calvin's view of anthropology.

This leads to another weakness in Lee's work, namely, his methodology. Lee's approach was to create a database of Torrance's entries in his books on the subject of union with Christ and then to categorize and synthesize them in each of the three parts of Lee's text. While I am not prepared to say that Lee has misquoted Torrance or even misrepresented him, I am suspicious that such a mechanistic methodology is sufficient to exposit someone's view. In particular, I suspect that a genealogical study of the Union with Christ motif would be more readable, comprehensive, and "contextual." Though I can agree with Lee that Torrance is remarkably systematic and consistent, no one's theology is spontaneously generated. This is the impression with which Lee leaves us.

In addition, and probably most importantly, though the sheer bulk of references to "union with Christ" may attest to the centrality of the motif within Torrance's work, I would suggest that union with Christ is subordinate to Torrance's important use of *homoousia*. In the introduction, Lee unabashedly deploys such phrases as the "heart of Torrance's theology", the "central theme", and the "axis of his Trinitarian understanding of the faith." I am inclined to disagree with such rhetoric because Torrance himself appears to be fond of harping on the *homoousia* relationship of Christ to both God and humanity as the axis, central

theme, and heart of his theology. Of course, no one ought to doubt the importance that Union with Christ does play in Torrance's program. However, the union motif finds its grounding and significance in Torrance's appropriation of the Nicene category.

With those things said, *Living in Union with Christ* provides a helpful overview of some of the main texts in Torrance's corpus. Especially helpful is Lee's concern to integrate Torrance's work within a Korean context. Lee's pastoral heart shines through and resonates with Torrance's theological contribution.

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*St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology.* By Andrew Louth. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-19-925238-6. Pp. x + 326.

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There is an inconsistency between the importance of John Damascene (c. 675–c. 749) as a theologian who seals the Greek patristic period and the scarcity of modern studies on his life and works. Andrew Louth points out that John has generally been dismissed as unoriginal thinker, a mere compiler of patristic *florilegia* (viii). According to the author, it would be anachronistic to expect originality from John in the modern sense of the word, for like any other author of late antiquity, when any novelty in the matters of religion was dismissed as invention and falseness, John understood originality as remaining faithful to the traditions of the orthodox church.

John Damascene is an exceptionally important figure of Christian history for many reasons: for Byzantine theology and the Eastern Orthodox Church, he is the most important theologian, who summarized and interpreted the whole patristic tradition. For Western Christianity, his work turned out to be very important because it became the model for the later *summa* tradition. In addition, during the iconoclast controversy, he was the leading figure of the iconophiles who defended the veneration of the icons very successfully through his sophisticated arguments in which he established the veneration of the images on the reality of the incarnation as a matter of Christian faith of primary import. He was also an important figure in the apologetic relations between Christianity and new-born Islam due to the argumentation in his apology against Islam which constituted the pattern of later Christian apologetics.

Andrew Louth undertakes a very important project writing an overall account of John Damascene's life and work. Unlike previous studies which have