



Andrew B. Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian: A Kierkegaardian Account of Human Transformation in Relationship with God* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), pp. x + 217, ISBN 978-0567661210. £89.99

We can often get a preliminary sense of where a given work on Kierkegaard is going by looking at the particular Kierkegaardian texts that are chosen for discussion. As Andrew Torrance makes clear at the outset, his Kierkegaard – at least for the purposes of this book – is represented by the pseudonyms Johannes Climacus (author of *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*) and Anti-Climacus (author of *The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*). Clearly, Torrance has an extensive knowledge of Kierkegaard that goes well beyond these and he also draws on other pseudonyms as well as on some of the devotional writings that Kierkegaard published under his own name. What the prioritising of Climacus and Anti-Climacus tells us, however, is that this is a book about how to become and how to live as a Christian (Climacus being a religiously uncommitted personality who is nevertheless fascinated by the question as to how one becomes a Christian, and Anti-Climacus being a Christian whose radical account of faith far exceeds what Kierkegaard believed himself to be capable of).

Torrance's Kierkegaard shows himself to be a theologian in the Reformed tradition and, despite the title, by no means an 'Arminian' promoter of human free-will, as some (notably Timothy Jackson) have argued. Yet there is a tension here – and one could say that it is a tension that runs through much Protestant theology – since insistence on the sole agency of God not only runs counter to our sense that we are *in some way* active in faith and discipleship and also seems to undermine our motivation to accept offers of divine grace. This tension can certainly be seen in Kierkegaard himself and Torrance correctly flags Kierkegaard's insistence that God's creative power is precisely the power to create creatures who are independent of him and therefore free, negatively, to refuse the offer of grace. Yet he also argues that, on Kierkegaard's account, this original creaturely possibility has been so overwhelmed by sinfulness that 'the faithful self can only be actualised by a divine activity that is infinitely

qualitatively different from the pagan human activity that actualises the human self’ (p. 34). This priority of divine action also continues justification into the ongoing living of the Christian life.

Whether the relationship of grace and human freedom is a problem to be solved or a tension to be existentially lived out is, in my view, arguable, and Kierkegaard’s own way of dealing with it reveals manifold points of stress and even fracture – which, indeed, I find to be a part of why Kierkegaard remains both a compelling and a troubling author. In the last words he ever wrote, Kierkegaard certainly affirms that, for the believer, it is only ‘God who does it’ – and yet this conclusion is prefaced by the comment that this is because freedom wants it this way. Whether this is merely muddled or true to the existential tension of faith is, I suggest, arguable, but, at the very least, it leaves scope for interpretation. Torrance, however, is clear that overstressing the human element reduces faith to an ‘immanent’ event, a reduction typical of what he elsewhere calls ‘existentialist’ readings of Kierkegaard (p. 95), and of which, e.g. Jamie Ferreira, Clare Carlisle, and the present reviewer are representatives. In some ways this polemical edge, characteristic of a certain kind of Reformed theology, is probably (a) unnecessary and (b) distracting in relation to what is otherwise a confident, competent, and lively piece of advocacy for the theological relevance of Kierkegaard’s thought.

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Dick O. Eugenio, *Communion with the Triune God: The Trinitarian Soteriology of T. F. Torrance* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2014), pp. xxii + 242, ISBN 978-1625640369. £22.00

Dick Eugenio’s volume attempts to demonstrate the Trinitarian character of T. F. Torrance’s soteriology. Eugenio’s central contention is that Torrance’s soteriology is inseparable from his Trinitarian theology, and his Trinitarian theology is inseparable from his soteriology. In short, it is as God the Father, Son and Spirit that God