

**Discussion questions on
Gender, Sexuality and the Trinity
by J. B. Torrance¹**

1. If, by virtue of Jesus' having used it, "father" is more than even a metaphor (even a "reality depicting" metaphor), and is basically a name, would it be fair to summarize Torrance as saying
 - a. If Jesus used a name for God, then we must empty it of our meaning and define it by our observations of Jesus;
 - b. If anyone else used it of God, we understand it only as a metaphor.
2. If we first have to "evacuate" the word "father" of all cultural and biological meaning and then fill it with meaning based on the revealed attributes of Jesus, won't we end up filling it with all of Jesus' maternal attributes as well? (And if so, is there a problem with this?)

Doesn't Torrance's argument make it impossible to *learn* anything from Jesus' use of "father", since we must define it solely by the economy of salvation, and Jesus on the cross?
3. Torrance writes that the biblical writers
 - do not use *mother* as a metaphor for God... They were too aware of the feminine deities of the fertility cults, Astarte or Aphrodite, and indeed the danger of making any images of God as in the prohibition of the second commandment... (p. 10, col. 2, par. 2).

Here he gives two reasons why the biblical writers didn't refer to God as "mother": (1) to avoid similarity to fertility cults, and (2) to avoid violating the second commandment.

 - a. Is (1) a valid concern in our culture? Do you think Torrance is right, that the biblical writers were concerned about this?
 - b. Why wouldn't (2) also prohibit Jesus from referring to God as "father"?
4. What does Torrance mean by "the doctrine of the Trinity is the grammar of the church's faith and worship" (p. 2, par. 4)? Do you agree?
5. If God is beyond gender as Torrance says (p. 6, par. 4), why did Jesus use a gendered term for God?
6. J. B.'s brother Thomas argues elsewhere² that we are made in the image of God our inter-relatedness with one another, which reflects the transcendent relations between the members of the Trinity. Do you agree. If so, doesn't this sanctify our relatedness, including fatherhood, motherhood, &c.?

¹ From *Worship, Community & The Triune God of Grace*, James B Torrance (IVP: Downer's Grove), 1996.

² Thomas F. Torrance, *Modern Theology*, 4, 309 (1988).