

Jason Goroncy

Hallowed be Thy Name: The Sanctification of All in the Soteriology of P.T. Forsyth, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology, Vol. 20. Eds., John Webster, Ian A. Metarland and Ivor Davidson (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), xv + 290 pp., £69.99, ISBN 9780567066824.

Outside Great Britain P.T. Forsyth (1848–1921) is a relatively unknown theologian, although Goroncy notes that there was a resurgence of interest in his work after his death upon the re-publication of his works. This is no doubt one of the reasons why the author presents the reader with a thorough and comprehensive exposition of P.T. Forsyth's soteriology. In terms of his own contribution to the resurgence of interest in Forsyth, Goroncy hopes that the reader will see that the notion of the hallowing of God's name "provides a profitable lens through which to read and evaluate Forsyth's soteriology ... and ... informs the way Forsyth's readers participate prayerfully in the petition itself" (244). To achieve this objective Goroncy divides his book into five chapters.

In the first chapter Goroncy places Forsyth within the context of contemporary research. Goroncy's approach is thorough and comprehensive. He interacts with many German, European and North American scholars, theologians and philosophers. His bibliography evidences that he did not wish to omit any relevant and recent academic material on Forsyth. However, it must be observed, his interaction with orthodox and recent evangelical authors is limited.

In chapter two the author argues for the correctness of taking 'hallowing God's name' as the appropriate lens to read Forsyth. He contends that for Forsyth the moral is the real. In this context he proposes that Forsyth called for a theological re-centring of holiness (32). According to Forsyth, holiness as central theme—as God's creative power—had been neglected by Ritschl and Schleiermacher whose influence still dominated his own time. For Forsyth being critical of theologians like Ritschl and Wilhelm Hermann did not mean a return to traditional orthodoxy, however. Forsyth remained attached to them in terms of locating the holiness and actions of God in conscience. Goroncy points to the unique claim made by Forsyth that God has a conscience and that this conscience is there to regenerate the universal conscience of the world (47–48). The conscience of God is a holy conscience, "which constitutes and directs all being, binding a coherent universe in such a way as all remigrates to its source in God" (53).

In this context, Goroncy duly notes the influence of Kant and Hegel. "Kant and Hegel coalesce in Forsyth for whom the doctrine of creation is woven into the entire tapestry of Reality as moral" (54). To be sure, Forsyth certainly

goes beyond Kant and Hegel as more biblically and theologically grounded. Nevertheless, Goroncy poses the question whether Forsyth does not approach a form of pantheism. “The life of the universe is, as Forsyth would have it, ‘the immanence of the Transcendent’” (64). At this point I would perhaps pose a more appropriate question, Is Forsyth not closer to a panentheistic understanding of God and the world in the spirit of Jürgen Moltmann—to whom Goroncy connects Forsyth’s approach at important places in his book (cf. 232, 243)? Finally, with respect to the influence of the Enlightenment on Forsyth, Goroncy notes that Forsyth’s theology remains rooted in Lessing’s distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*. He happily adopts it (72). Applied to Forsyth’s own focus on the cross and sanctification this means that the cross as God’s redemptive revelation is to be located in *Geschichte* (73). With this, Forsyth can certainly be seen as a precursor to Karl Barth. Forsyth also proposes, well before Barth, the idea that grace indeed precedes nature and sin (76).

In the third chapter Goroncy exposes the Christology of Forsyth. In this section, Goroncy would like to “hone in on a somewhat overlooked aspect of Forsyth’s christology—the notion of Christ as hallower, the one in whom the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer finds its prime and definitive response” (95).

In chapter four the author discusses Forsyth’s understanding of the human being with the central theme of the book: Hallowed be Thy Name. What is the unity and identity of human existence, if not his conscience and will, reconciled with the holy, loving and creative conscience of God through the cross? “The key to history is, therefore, ... a plexus of wills—human and Divine—fully and freely engaged with one another” (148). The resolution remains the cross. “The moral malady of the race is mastered by the Saviour of conscience ... The conscience cries for forgiveness, and history brings it to the cross” (157). In this chapter it becomes more clear how the theology of Forsyth tends to be less anchored in history and more in conscience. One might pose the question—given what has been observed so far—where for Forsyth lies a genuine transition from wrath to grace *in history* located, if at all? Here more interaction with Reformed theologians like Herman Bavinck and Eduard Böhl, contemporaries of Forsyth, could have helped Goroncy enrich his discussion.

The final petition of the Lord’s Prayer, ‘Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever, Amen.’ is treated in chapter five. In this chapter Goroncy is critical of Forsyth with respect to an incoherence in Forsyth’s thought. He writes, “By denying both dogmatic universalism and annihilationism, Forsyth sets up both God and the universe for potential eternal frustration and insanity” (226–227).

In conclusion, Goroncy proposes that on the basis of the approach, thrust and centre of Forsyth’s own soteriology, his theology “bespeaks of God’s creat-

ing with a view to the sanctification of all things; that is, that all might belong to God, and exist *for* God, in holiness. ... The final sanity is complete sanctity" (240–241). I believe he is right, but that is perhaps more due to the fact that Forsyth remained a theologian profoundly influenced by nineteenth century liberal theologians alongside his own strong evangelical convictions and expressions.

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