

COMMUNION WITH GOD:  
THE TRINITARIAN SOTERIOLOGY OF THOMAS F. TORRANCE

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## ABSTRACT

University of Manchester

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Doctor of Philosophy

“Communion with God: The Trinitarian Soteriology of Thomas F. Torrance”

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This thesis presents Thomas F. Torrance’s Trinitarian soteriology, and as such seeks to combine the two most common but often separately treated doctrines in his theological cogitation: Trinity and soteriology. It argues that in a circular manner, Torrance’s Trinitarian theology is explicitly soteriological and his soteriology is explicitly Trinitarian. This is because he (1) follows Barth’s proposal that God’s Being is inseparable from his Act, and *vice versa*, and (2) consistently employs his comprehensive theological rule that the Trinity is “the ground and grammar of theology.” As such, this thesis also argues that not only is Torrance’s soteriology Trinitarian, but that his soteriology could only be presented, understood and appreciated as Trinitarian. Non-trinitarian or implicitly Trinitarian readings of his soteriology cannot but fail to do justice to Torrance’s theological consistency and genius.

Furthermore, this thesis argues that Torrance’s Trinitarian soteriology is consistent with his scientific and evangelical theology. On the one hand, Torrance’s soteriological formulation follows scientific principles because he understands both the *arche* and *telos* of human salvation in strict accordance with the Being, Persons and Work of the Triune God. This is referred in the thesis as Torrance’s *kataphysic soteriology*. On the other hand, Torrance’s soteriological formulation follows an evangelical procedure grounded in the evangelical content of revelation. Because the content of God’s Self-revelation is the Triune God reconciling the world to himself, Torrance understands that the Three Persons are actively involved in the salvific economy in strict accordance with their hypostases as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The evangelical procedure and sketch that Torrance employs is derived from 2 Corinthians 13:14, “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”

For Torrance, the ultimate *telos* of human salvation is participation in the very Life and Love of the Triune God. This may be referred to as humanity’s *perichoretic* participation in the Communion of Love that God is. Humanity’s sharing in the Triune Communion, however, is a *mediated* participation, encapsulated in the Athanasian aphorism “from the Father through the Son in the Spirit and in the Spirit through the Son to the Father.” All three Persons of the Triune God fulfil distinct salvific agencies in accordance to their hypostases, but their distinct agencies have a united source and goal: the mediation of reconciliation with the Triune God. It is also argued that our participation in the Triune Communion is a *human* participation, or that we relate with the Triune God as humanized humans rather than as metamorphosized divine beings.

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## DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Dick Eugenio (*author*)

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Date

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*Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinang-galingan,  
hindi makakarating sa paroroonan*

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And most importantly,  
Praise God from whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him I, a creature here below  
Praise Him above, joining the heavenly hosts  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen

to *Mary Ann* and *Heloise*,  
the two ladies of my life

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>APWC</i>	<i>Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ</i>
<i>AT</i>	<i>The Apocalypse Today: Sermons on Revelations</i>
<i>BSCL</i>	<i>Belief in Science and in Christian Life</i>
<i>CDM</i>	<i>Calvin's Doctrine of Man</i>
<i>CDG</i>	<i>The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons</i>
<i>CFM</i>	<i>The Christian Frame of Mind</i>
<i>CTSC</i>	<i>Christian Theology and Scientific Culture</i>
<i>CAC I</i>	<i>Conflict and Agreement in the Church, vol. 1</i>
<i>CAC II</i>	<i>Conflict and Agreement in the Church, vol. 2</i>
<i>DCO</i>	<i>Divine and Contingent Order</i>
<i>DM</i>	<i>Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics</i>
<i>DJC</i>	<i>The Doctrine of Jesus Christ</i>
<i>DGAF</i>	<i>The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers</i>
<i>GR</i>	<i>God and Rationality</i>
<i>GGT</i>	<i>The Ground and Grammar of Theology</i>
<i>IESNCC</i>	<i>The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed AD 381</i>
<i>IPLC</i>	<i>Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ</i>
<i>JLPL</i>	<i>Juridical Law and Physical Law</i>
<i>KBIET</i>	<i>Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology</i>
<i>KBET</i>	<i>Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian</i>
<i>KC</i>	<i>The Kingdom and the Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation</i>
<i>MC</i>	<i>The Mediation of Christ</i>
<i>PCT</i>	<i>Preaching Christ Today: The Gospel and Scientific Thinking</i>
<i>RET</i>	<i>Reality and Evangelical Theology</i>
<i>RST</i>	<i>Reality and Scientific Theology</i>
<i>RP</i>	<i>The Royal Priesthood</i>
<i>SF</i>	<i>The School of Faith</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell</i>
<i>STI</i>	<i>Space, Time and Incarnation</i>
<i>STR</i>	<i>Space, Time and Resurrection</i>
<i>TDORC I</i>	<i>Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches, vol. 1</i>
<i>TDORC II</i>	<i>Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches, vol. 2</i>
<i>TNS</i>	<i>Theological and Natural Science</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Science</i>
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West</i>
<i>TR</i>	<i>Theology in Reconstruction</i>
<i>TCFK</i>	<i>Transformation &amp; Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge</i>
<i>TF</i>	<i>The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church</i>
<i>TP</i>	<i>Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement</i>
<i>WCCCA</i>	<i>When Christ Comes and Comes Again</i>

## INTRODUCTION

Elmer Colyer and Alister McGrath extol Thomas Forsyth Torrance as one of the premier theologians of the twentieth century, particularly in light of his voluminous works and contributions on the relationship between science and theology, ecumenism and Trinitarian theology.<sup>1</sup> Torrance was born in West China on August 30, 1913 to missionary parents, which explains his heart for evangelism and evangelizing theology. When recession hit the world in 1927, the family returned to Scotland and Torrance pursued his education in Scotland. At New College, Edinburgh, while doing his Bachelor of Divinity, he studied under Hugh Ross Mackintosh, who introduced him to Karl Barth's theology. In 1937 he won a scholarship that provided him the opportunity to be under Barth's supervision while writing his thesis, later published as *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (1946). It is not an exaggeration to conclude that the lifelong and prominent themes of Torrance's theological *oeuvre*, namely: Trinitarian theology, engagement with science and emphasis on scientific theology, and commitment to patristic theology, were fuelled by his engagement with Barth. In some areas, however, Torrance has surpassed Barth, such as his engagement with the natural sciences, which won him the Templeton Prize for the Progress in Religion in 1978. Torrance died on 2 December 2007, eighteen years after his retirement from New College as the Professor of Christian Dogmatics.<sup>2</sup>

Among Torrance's accomplishments as theologian, philosopher of science, and churchman is his consistent Trinitarian theology. As such, he deserves Paul Molnar's assessment of him as a "theologian of the Trinity."<sup>3</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity not only permeates Torrance's large theological corpus, but is the consistent "ground and grammar" of his theology. Even his ecumenical engagement with other theological traditions is fuelled by this biblical and patristic doctrine, particularly evident in the two volumes of the *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*. It is

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<sup>1</sup> Elmer M. Colyer, *How To Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 11; Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), xi.

<sup>2</sup> For Torrance's biography and introduction, see McGrath, *An Intellectual Biography*; I. John Hesselink, "A Pilgrimage in the School of Christ—An Interview with T. F. Torrance," *RR* 38 (1984), 49-64; and T. A. Noble, "Thomas Forsyth Torrance," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 823-824. See also the several eulogies and recollections in *Participatio* 1 (2009), 6-48.

<sup>3</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

not an exaggeration to say that as a *Christian theologian*, the doctrine of the Trinity is the *canon* by which Torrance engages theological traditions (including his own), and approaches and formulates his whole theological programme. As Eric Flett writes, “no particular feature of Torrance’s theological project can be understood apart from a deep appreciation of [the truth of the Trinity].”<sup>4</sup> Consequently, presentation of any aspect of Torrance’s theology should be evaluated through Torrance’s own hermeneutical dictum that the Trinity is “the ground and grammar of theology.”<sup>5</sup> Flett’s project of construing a theology of culture by understanding the world in light of the Triune Creator is an example of a faithfully-articulated Torrance theology.<sup>6</sup>

The primary interest of this thesis is Torrance’s soteriology, but it could not but be a Trinitarian soteriology. For Torrance, the doctrine of the Trinity is always soteriological and soteriology is always Trinitarian. To isolate one from the other means to separate the Being of God from his Act, and *vice versa*. Elmer Colyer’s *How to Read T. F. Torrance* and Paul Molnar’s *Theologian of the Trinity* are excellent publications offering a comprehensive presentation of Torrance’s doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>7</sup> But although there are sections in these books where soteriology is discussed, there is a discernible lack of *explicit* connection between Torrance’s doctrines of the Trinity and salvation that Torrance himself asserts. The distinct contribution of this thesis, therefore, is that, building on Colyer’s and Molnar’s contributions, it consciously presents Torrance’s soteriological Trinity and Trinitarian soteriology at the same time. In this thesis, *soteriological Trinity* refers to the fact that Torrance’s doctrine of the Triune God is always a God *with* and *for* us. The Being of God is inseparable from his Acts. As such, even presentations of each of the Persons of the Triune God require a soteriological outlook: there is no Christology which is not soteriological Christology, there is no Pateriology which is not a soteriological Pateriology, and there is no Pneumatology which is not soteriological Pneumatology. Reciprocally, *Trinitarian soteriology* in this thesis means that (1) salvation is the work of the Persons of the Triune God, and that (2) because, in addition to (1), salvation is grounded in the Being of the Triune God, (3) the ultimate *telos* of salvation is relationship with the Triune God. Chapters II, III and IV present the Works of each of the Triune Persons, arguing

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<sup>4</sup> Flett, “Persons, Powers and Pluralities: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Culture” (PhD thesis; Kings College, London, 2004), 220.

<sup>5</sup> Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Flett, “Persons, Powers and Pluralities,” especially chapter 1.

<sup>7</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance* (2001); and Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity* (2009).

that all three Persons are soteriologically involved in the mediation of reconciliation. In these chapters, it will be argued that Torrance employs a *kath hypostasin* Trinitarian soteriology, or that the Persons of the Trinity fulfil distinct agencies in the salvific economy in strict accordance with their hypostases as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Secondly, Chapter V presents the Being and Work of the Communion of Love that God is, and it will be argued that Torrance employs a *kat'ousian* Trinitarian soteriology, or that the origin and *telos* of salvation are in strict accordance with the Being of God as Personal Communion.

Inasmuch as Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity is soteriological, this thesis also argues that his soteriology is a *Trinitarian soteriology* and nothing else. As such, presentations of Torrance's soteriology that fail to be fully Trinitarian should be revised and reformulated in order to do adequate justice to Torrance. Most of the studies of Torrance's soteriology focus on Christ, and to a certain degree, these works faithfully depict Torrance's Christocentric theology. It is beyond doubt that one of the many contributions of Torrance to contemporary theology is the recovery of the Irenaeus-Athanasius axis of incarnational redemption. Kye Won Lee's *Living in Union with Christ* and Cass' *Christ Condemned in the Flesh* are examples of the fascination with this significant Torrance soteriological distinctive.<sup>8</sup> The question, however, is whether or not these studies do sufficient justice to Torrance's more holistic and Trinitarian orientation. The danger that lurks in this microscopic analysis, especially owing to Torrance's integrative approach, is that it can lead to serious misinterpretations. Man Kei Ho's *A Critical Study on Torrance's Theology of Incarnation*, for instance, is an unfortunate cornucopia of awkward theological critiques because it only looks at one aspect of Torrance's thought while evaluating it from many sides.<sup>9</sup> If Ho approached the incarnation primarily in light of Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology, his conclusions would have been different. The closest to Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology is Myk Habets' *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance*.<sup>10</sup> Habets rightly discerned that the origin and *telos* of salvation is participation in the life and love of the Triune God. He also appropriated the works of the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation. In terms of a robust Trinitarian soteriology, however, its weakness lies in

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<sup>8</sup> Lee, *Living in Union with Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); and Cass, *Christ Condemned Sin in the Flesh: Thomas F. Torrance's Doctrine of Soteriology and Its Ecumenical Significance* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study on T. F. Torrance's Theology of Incarnation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008). Responses to Ho's critiques of Torrance are scattered throughout the thesis.

<sup>10</sup> Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009).

the absence of a fuller treatment of the Person and Work of the Father. At best, his presentation is therefore binitarian.

Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology could be explored and elaborated from various angles. This thesis, however, is concerned mainly with two things, namely (1) the specific works of the Persons of the Triune God in Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology, and (2) the *telos* of being saved by the Triune God, respectively. On the first, Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology is informed by his insistence on a *kataphysic* and Gospel/revelation-founded theology. This thesis insists that Torrance's theological methodology could not but affect his soteriological formulation. Chapter I thus discusses the interrelation of Torrance's scientific theology, evangelical theology, and Trinitarian soteriology. Then, following Torrance's Gospel-oriented starting point, Chapter II begins to explore the Person and Work of Christ in the economy of salvation, followed by two chapters on the Persons and Works of the Father and the Holy Spirit, respectively. This sketch follows the Pauline benediction formula "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Corinthians 13:14), which for Torrance "constitute[s] the Trinitarian structure of all Christian faith and life."<sup>11</sup> This is what makes Torrance's theology *evangelical*: it considers the whole Triune God revealed in the salvific economy and follows the revealed Trinitarian *taxis* of the salvific economy. Finally, Chapter V articulates the nature and shape of our salvation in light of the Being of God as Communion mediating reconciliation in the world. It will be argued that just as the origin of salvation is a Communion of Love, so the *telos* of salvation is participation in the Life and Love of the Triune God.

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<sup>11</sup> Torrance, "Crisis in the Kirk," in *St. Andrews Rock: The State of the Church in Scotland* (ed. Steward Lamont; London: Bellows, 1992), 21-22; and *SF*, xxi.

## Chapter I

### SCIENTIFIC, EVANGELICAL AND TRINITARIAN SOTERIOLOGY

In Daniel Hardy's evaluation, in respect to content and form, Torrance's theology is both *declarative* and *relational*. First, it is declarative because it determines and demonstrates core Christian doctrines as they developed through the history of the church, particularly in relation to the patristic conciliar declarations on the doctrine of the Trinity. Evidence is found in his conspicuous preoccupation with the doctrinal formulations of Athanasius and the Reformation in his writings. In this sense, Torrance's theology is more analytic than constructive, but it is false to assume that Torrance possesses no originality.<sup>12</sup> His recurrent recourse to historical theology is apologetic, in that he seeks to show that his theology is grounded upon and is an exposition of canonical beliefs. Furthermore, as T. A. Noble writes, Torrance approaches classical theologians "as a 'historical theologian' interested in the profound convergence of thought, rather than as a 'theological historian' concerned with cultural relativities."<sup>13</sup> Secondly, his theology is relational because it is not only integrative, but also unique.<sup>14</sup> A theological glue holds together Torrance's over six hundred published materials, and makes the several interrelated themes and aspects within them consistent and coherent. This is why an introductory presentation of other aspects of his thought is necessary for us to understand his Trinitarian soteriology. There are two important aspects in particular: (1) scientific theology, and (2) evangelical theology. Torrance admits that the nature of Trinitarian theology requires a circular procedure in presentation, but adds that this does not imply "operating with a vicious cycle, begging the question, or falling into the fallacy of a *petitio principii*."<sup>15</sup> Rather, this procedure actually prevents theologizing from moving outside of its own theo-logic, or arguing from some starting point of our own choosing through which theological truths may be judged or validated.

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<sup>12</sup> John Webster thinks of Torrance as a performer, not a composer, and refers to him as "the British *ressourcement* theologian," in "Editorial: T. F. Torrance, 1913-2007," *IJST* 10 (2008), 370.

<sup>13</sup> Noble, "Thomas Forsyth Torrance," 824.

<sup>14</sup> Hardy, "T. F. Torrance," in *The Modern Theologians* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; ed. Daniel F. Ford with Rachel Muers; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 165-167.

<sup>15</sup> *CDG*, 27. In a circular manner, Torrance employs Claude Welch's two approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity, *synthetic* and *basic*, or summative and starting point. See *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf&Stock, 2005), 47-48.

## SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY AND TRINITY

Torrance ranks among a few recent theologians whose interest in science overlaps and influences their theology. In Torrance's case, the awareness came early. Upon H. R. Mackintosh's introduction of the theology of Barth to him in 1935, and his consequent reading of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* I/1, Torrance was "immensely exhilarated by the insight of Barth... and by his presentation of dogmatics as a science."<sup>16</sup> Equally enlightening to him was Barth's scientific-Trinitarian theology, as also manifest in the canon and the creeds. Torrance was immediately convinced that any serious scientific attempt at knowledge should be governed by the given. In the case of theology, therefore, theologizing should be governed by the Self-revelation of God as recorded in the Scriptures, and particularly by the Self-manifestation of God in history in the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit. As will be seen later, this has profound consequences in Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology.

### General Relationship between Science and Theology

Torrance acknowledges the animosity between the church and the sciences,<sup>17</sup> and his attempt to reconcile these two often bifurcated fields is primarily apologetic.<sup>18</sup> Firstly, he shows scientists that theology is a science in its own right; and secondly, which comprises the larger part, he enlightens the church that science and theology inform one another, and that science is not inherently an enemy of the Christian truth. Torrance even asserts that thinking the interrelation of theological and natural science is a part of the calling of both Christians and scientists.<sup>19</sup> The church's hostile disposition against science and its agenda, Torrance states, is grounded upon false and obsolete presuppositions. The idea that science is an enemy of the Christian faith is no longer true: science's arrogant superiority complex has already been abandoned by contemporary science. Forced by the very advances of science itself, scientists are

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<sup>16</sup> *KBET*, 121. Stephen D. Wigley argues that Torrance's concern for theological science has its origin in an Anselmian epistemology, and also through Barth's influence, in "Karl Barth on St. Anselm: The Influence of Anselm's 'Theological Scheme' on T. F. Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel," *SJT* 46 (1993), 79-97.

<sup>17</sup> See also Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Problems between Science and Theology in the Course of their Modern History," *Zygon* 41 (March 2006), 105-112. Pannenberg argues that it is misleading to speak of warfare between science and Christian theology as if it was on a grand scale.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas A. Langford, "T. F. Torrance's *Theological Science*: A Reaction," *SJT* 25 (1972), 157.

<sup>19</sup> *GGT*, 7. In particular, Torrance comments: "Theology cannot operate on its proper ground in complete detachment from cosmology," in *DCO*, 63-65.

beginning to realize the boundaries of natural investigation and the futility of the modern agenda for a methodological secularization. Since natural science is concerned not simply with the convenient arrangements of observational data which can be generalized into universal explanatory forms, but with the intrinsic structures of the universe, the relation of the universe to God seems to be steadily forced on scientists by their own limitations to explain certain events and principles.<sup>20</sup> This is encapsulated by Albert Einstein's redefinition of physics: "a finite but unbounded universe with open, dynamic structures grounded in a depth of objectivity and intelligibility which commands and transcends our comprehension."<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, the church is appropriating an outdated science. Torrance asserts that modern science has already moved on, but the church has failed to recognize it. This unawareness on the part of the church portrays her inability to take on the challenge of keeping up-to-date with new discoveries and trends. Torrance's favourite example is the obsolete dualist frame of thought that still pervades theology today. Augustinian and Thomist dualism should now be replaced with a holistic framework, just as Newton's dualistic and mechanistic concept of the universe has already been discarded by science in favour of Einstein's unitary and integrative science. Indeed, as Torrance desires, the church should undergo a "conceptual surgery," where old patterns of thought should be changed.<sup>22</sup> When this happens, one great benefit will be "a profounder grasp of the created or contingent order within which both natural and theological science have to operate and to cooperate in fidelity to the nature of the universe that God has made."<sup>23</sup>

### **Scientific Methodology and Theology**

Torrance's interest in the dialogue between science and theology goes beyond his desire to appropriate scientific discoveries to theological formulations. Although he exploits the *contents* of scientific investigation, his greatest aspiration is for theology to learn from the *methods* of scientific inquiry, although not in the sense that theology should borrow something new from modern science, but that it should return to the biblical and patristic theological approach. That *scientific methodology* constitutes Torrance's main focus is important to note. Frank Schubert argues that Torrance's theological science

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<sup>20</sup> *DCO*, 1, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in *DCO*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> *RST*, 148, 154.

<sup>23</sup> *CTSC*, 22. See also Walter J. Neidhardt, "Thomas F. Torrance's Integration of Judeo-Christian Theology and Natural Science: Some Key Themes," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 41 (1989), 87-98.

fails to solve the historically restrained relationship between science and religion, but this reflects his misunderstanding of Torrance, because nowhere does Torrance say that his intention is to fully resolve the tension between the two.<sup>24</sup> In fact, Torrance argues that similarity and distinction between science and theology should be maintained. The similarity lies in the mode of inquiry, in that the objects of investigation are studied according to their own intrinsic nature and rational structure, allowing them to reveal and speak for themselves. The difference lies in the approach. Torrance was suspicious of any notion of *scientia universalis*, a universal principle or methodology applicable to all experimentations.<sup>25</sup> It is necessary for each field of inquiry to develop its own distinctive methods that are faithful and in accordance to the nature of the object of their investigation. Thus, for instance, it is illogical to study a frog using the experimental apparatus employed in astronomy. Torrance identifies the similarity and dissimilarity in terms of *formal* scientific procedure and *material* scientific procedure.<sup>26</sup> That the majority of scientists are wary of granting Torrance's argument consideration (as Schubert narrates) is probably due to Torrance's insistence that theology is a science in its own right.

#### *Kata Physin and Scientific Questioning*

Torrance understands and uses "science" in terms of the German *Wissenschaft*, or "a rigorous and disciplined inquiry of the object according to its unique nature," and argues that this approach is not unique to the natural sciences, but was actually employed in the early Alexandrian tradition, in which Athanasius stood.<sup>27</sup> According to Torrance, Alexandria, influenced by the developing Greek science, espoused an investigative procedure in strict accordance to the nature of the reality under scrutiny, or *kata physin*, which is also "to know things... in accordance with their truth or reality (*kat' aletheian*) and thus to think and speak truly (*alethos*) of them."<sup>28</sup> Thus, *kata physin* requires that theologians begin a discussion of the knowledge of God by looking at God himself. "If we are to have any true and precise scientific knowledge of God, we must

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<sup>24</sup> Schubert, "Thomas F. Torrance: The Case for a Theological Science," *Encounter* 45 (1984), 123-137.

<sup>25</sup> Torrance critiques Descartes' vision of a *scientia universalis* to be applied to all *scientiae speciales* as illogical and inappropriate. See also Torrance's discussion of general and special sciences in *TS*, 106-131.

<sup>26</sup> *TS*, 112-113.

<sup>27</sup> *TS*, 116; *DM*, 180. Concerning the scientific atmosphere in early Alexandria, see Torrance, "Alexandrian Theology," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 52 (1970), 185-189.

<sup>28</sup> *TF*, 51.

allow his own nature, as he comes revealed to us, to determine how we are to know him, how we are to think of him, and what we are to say of him.”<sup>29</sup> This is what Torrance refers to as the “ethical dimension” of knowing, and the *dogmatics* he wishes theology to employ.<sup>30</sup> In terms of methodology, like Barth, Torrance rejects the notion that we can develop an account of *how* we know apart from our actual knowledge and its material content.<sup>31</sup> To start speculating on the doctrine of God apart from the givenness of God’s revelation, Torrance says, follows Arius’ *mythological* thinking, or “thinking from a subjective centre in ourselves, in which we project our fabricated patterns and ideas upon the divine Reality and will accept only what we can conceive in terms of what we already know or what fits in with our own prior self-understanding.”<sup>32</sup>

To know things in accordance with their nature requires a proper questioning procedure. Torrance honours Lorenzo Valla as the one who re-introduced the new kind of inquiry that is most suitable for scientific theology, in which there is an interrogative, rather than a problematic form of inquisition. This is the change from *quaestio* to *interrogatio*.<sup>33</sup> Like Calvin, Torrance prefers the latter because it is “a mode of inquiry in which questions yield results that are entirely new, giving rise to knowledge that we cannot derive by an inferential process from what we already know.”<sup>34</sup> Truth is known through revelation, or through a “disclosure method,”<sup>35</sup> and is apprehended through the mind’s obedience and submission to the given data. Ho argues that this epistemological procedure constitutes a key weakness in Torrance’s revelational theology, because it proposes a non-inferential knowledge of God and consequently downgrades humanity’s reasoning capability.<sup>36</sup> Ho understands Torrance’s emphasis on the objectivity of the object and humanity’s obedient response to imply humanity’s passive reception, which

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<sup>29</sup> *TF*, 52.

<sup>30</sup> Torrance, “The Transcendental Role of Wisdom in Science,” in *Facets of Faith and Science*, vol. 1: *Historiography and Modes of Interaction* (ed. Jitse van der Meer; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 139-140; “Reformed Dogmatics, not Dogmatism,” *Theology* 70 (1967), 152-156.

<sup>31</sup> *TCFK*, ix.

<sup>32</sup> Torrance, “The Eclipse of God,” *BapQ* 22 (1967); reprinted in *GR*, 46; *GGT*, 114-117.

<sup>33</sup> *TCFK*, 267; *GR*, 33-35. Valla borrowed the process from the Stoics and from Cicero. See Torrance, “The Historical Jesus: From the Perspective of a Theologian,” in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke* (vol. 2; ed. William C. Weinrich; Macon, Ga.: Mercer U. Press, 1984), 512.

<sup>34</sup> *TCFK*, 268.

<sup>35</sup> P. Mark Achtemeier, “The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T. F. Torrance,” *SJT* 47 (1994), 355; John D. Morrison, “Thomas F. Torrance’s Critique of Evangelical Orthodoxy,” *EvQ* 67 (1995), 54. In his other article “Heidegger, Correspondence Truth and the Realist Theology of T. F. Torrance,” *EvQ* 69 (1997), 139-155, Morrison argues that Torrance is indebted to or at least appropriated Heidegger’s assertion of the priority of Truth as disclosure over truth as correspondence.

<sup>36</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 24, 230, 232-233, 236, 238.

for Ho is more fideistic than scientific.<sup>37</sup> Following Jason Yeung, Ho thus confidently concludes that “Torrance’s theological science is simply another fancy name for a personal belief which is totally independent of science.”<sup>38</sup> Ho’s harsh critique here is but one of the many theological criticisms he has of Torrance, and actually reveals his one-sided reading of Torrance. Firstly, Ho conveniently skips Torrance’s argument that the *interrogatio* mode of questioning actually enables the knower to be actively self-critical, because it allows what we already know or hold as knowledge to be called in question by the object.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, Ho misses the whole point of Torrance’s balance between scientific objectivity and subjectivity, to which we now turn.

### *Scientific Objectivity and Subjectivity*

One of Torrance’s major concerns was for theology to begin with and be grounded upon objective reality, not some antecedent external presupposition imposed upon reality. Continuing on Barth’s theological mission, he consciously combats residues of Descartes’ “return to the subject,” Kantian transcendental *a priorism*, and liberal subjectivism in theology,<sup>40</sup> and uncompromisingly asserts that an important constituent of a scientific theology is “devotion to its proper object, sheer respect for objectivity.”<sup>41</sup> The compelling evidence given by the objective content of reality should govern theology, and that theology should begin with an objective reference which is always outward looking—away from the self to a focus on the other reality. This is what Torrance calls “*a theological way of thinking*, not from a centre in ourselves but from a centre in God, not from axiomatic assumptions which we make but from a frame of reference that derives from God Himself through His Word.”<sup>42</sup> As A. E. Taylor argued,

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<sup>37</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 2, 24, 29, 274.

<sup>38</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 25, 237.

<sup>39</sup> *TS*, 120-123; *TR*, 67. See also Walter J. Neidhardt’s defence of Torrance’s disclosure analogy in “Reflections on Remarks of David F. Siemens, Jr. Concerning the Theology/Science Integration of Thomas F. Torrance,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 43 (1991), 114. Siemens also critiques Torrance’s preference for auditory epistemology, in “Two Problems with Torrance,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 43 (1991), 112-113.

<sup>40</sup> *BSCL*, 95.

<sup>41</sup> *TS*, 116; Langford, “Torrance’s *Theological Science*,” 159. As such, both *KBIET* and *KBBET* are not only about Barth’s theology, but about aspects that Torrance gleaned from him.

<sup>42</sup> *TS*, 281 (italics mine). What should be avoided is the “Hellenization” or “Eurocentricization of Christianity.” See Alan Torrance, “Being of One Substance with the Father,” in *Nicene Christianity: The Future of a New Ecumenism* (ed. Christopher Seitz; Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 50; and on the history of Protestant theology’s lapse into this feared Eurocentricization, see Alasdair I. C. Heron, *A Century of Protestant Theology* (reprint; Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1985). Torrance also refers to this as the “subjectivization of Christianity,” in “Hermeneutics According to F. D. E. Schleiermacher,” *SJT* 21 (1968), 263-265. But this does not mean that the Christianization of Hellenism Torrance advocates is completed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed (IESNCC, 73-76). It is, rather, incomplete as Robert

authority lies “in a reality that is wholly given and transubjective, and simply and absolutely authoritative through its givenness,”<sup>43</sup> not in the experimental methodology the scientist or theologian invents. Furthermore, this controlling given is not constructed but is received.

But “why the massive, redundant, and presumptuous assertion of the actuality of the Object of theological inquiry, God Himself?” Donald Klinefelter asks.<sup>44</sup> Ho follows Klinefelter’s critique that Torrance’s optimism for receptive knowledge in particular and Torrance’s theological science in general are founded on a few implicit and explicit presuppositions or ultimate beliefs that are above verification by any other field of inquiry,<sup>45</sup> which is also why Ronald Thiemann and Douglas Morrison see theological foundationalism in Torrance.<sup>46</sup> In all these critiques, the general tenor is that even knowledge of God should be validated by an accepted universal canon of truth. Objectivity is measured by verifiability, and anything beyond proof is considered subjective understanding. Thus, Klinefelter could say that Torrance’s use of science and philosophy, “rather than supporting an advance to new theological frontiers... serve instead as bulwarks protecting a sophisticated Barthian fideism.”<sup>47</sup> It is true that Torrance does not provide evidence for the validity of the presumption that God has revealed himself in Jesus of Nazareth using philosophical apparatuses of verification. Torrance’s defence is that objectivity in theology and the validity of its claims should be measured not by canons of truth derived from philosophy or any other field, but from theology itself. Because all special sciences should develop their own investigative

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Jenson argues in “Second Locus: The Triune God,” in *Christian Dogmatics* (eds. Carl E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), esp 118ff on “The Initial Christianization of Hellenism;” Christoph Schwöbel, “Christology and Trinitarian Thought,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act* (ed. Christoph Schwöbel; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 115. Interestingly, Jenson adds that although the Western church has struggled with Hellenic theology through the ages, he argues that “so long as the Western church endures, it must be Hellenic,” in *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1982), 161.

<sup>43</sup> *TS*, viii. See A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist* (series 2; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1931), 241.

<sup>44</sup> Klinefelter, “God and Rationality: A Critique of the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance,” *JoR* 53 (1973), 123.

<sup>45</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 26- 29. Achtemeier however adds that the objectivity of God as God is “an indispensable presupposition,” in “The Truth of Tradition,” 355. See the basis of Ho’s critique in Torrance, “Ultimate Beliefs and the Scientific Revolution,” *Cross Currents* 30 (1980), reprinted in *TCFK*, 191-208.

<sup>46</sup> Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 40; and Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 65-68. See Tom McCall’s illuminating discussion in “Ronald Thiemann, Thomas Torrance and Epistemological Doctrines of Revelation,” *IJST* 6 (2004), 148-168. McCall concludes that Torrance offers a much more coherent epistemology than Thiemann.

<sup>47</sup> Klinefelter, “God and Rationality,” 128.

procedures to discern objective truths, so does theology have its *theo-logical* procedure, that is, that objectivity should be measured through the “logic of grace.”<sup>48</sup>

The central thesis of Torrance’s argument is simple: objective reality and self-evidence are given priority over all precedent knowledge or opinion, although Torrance also realizes that an anthropological element is inescapably present in every human endeavour, including theology. But the subjectivity that Torrance recognizes is different from that of the subjective *a priorism* which he strongly repudiates, i.e. subjectivism. Critical here is the difference between subjective *starting point* and subjective *participation*. The former refers to the procedure of approaching reality with fixed presuppositions, opinions, and sets of standards to quantify or qualify data. The latter, on the other hand, gives priority to the reality under investigation, but considers the personal element involved. Participatory subjectivity, therefore, refers to the realization that a personal engagement is necessary in order to acquire knowledge of another reality. Torrance redefines *objectivity* and *subjectivity*. Contrary to the claims of old science for a detached experimentation which aims to exclude from scientific knowledge all subjective bias and prejudice so that it can be genuinely objective, Torrance argues:

It must not be forgotten that only a person is capable of self-criticism and of distinguishing what he knows from his subjective states, and therefore of appreciating the bearing of human thought upon experience. In fact, it is only a person who can engage truly in objective and scientific operations... any scientific inquiry pursued in a detached, impersonal, formalistic way isolates itself from man’s higher faculties and thereby restricts its range and power of insight and understanding.<sup>49</sup>

In sum, precisely because ontological openness to reality is an essential ingredient in the objectivity of a scientific theory, it “inevitably throws the maintenance and fulfillment of objectivity back upon the personal responsibility of the scientist himself: he and he only is capable, as an active centre of rationality, of establishing the bearing of his knowing upon reality in this way.”<sup>50</sup> It is here that Michael Polanyi, Clerk Maxwell and Einstein have their important bearings in Torrance’s scientific theology. Among the three, it was Polanyi, however, who brought the particular point of restoring

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<sup>48</sup> *TR*, 37-41; *TS*, 128-133.

<sup>49</sup> *CTSC*, 61-62.

<sup>50</sup> Torrance, “The Place of Michael Polanyi in the Modern Philosophy of Science,” *Ethics in Science and Medicine* 7 (1980); reprinted in *TCFK*, 115.

to rigorous scientific activity what he called “the personal coefficient of knowledge” and the centrality of “ultimate beliefs or normative insights.”<sup>51</sup>

### Scientific Theology and Trinitarian Thinking

Scientific theology—in which the nature and Being of God take priority and authoritative control—is inevitably Trinitarian. Torrance must have realized this upon reading Barth’s *Dogmatics I/1*, because the volume exemplifies what scientific theology should look like. Torrance admits the insights he gained from Barth’s scientific approach in the volume, but even more gripping was how Barth accomplished his scientific theology in structuring the book’s contents in explicit Trinitarian style.<sup>52</sup>

#### *Stratification of Knowledge*

The circular relationship between scientific theology and Trinitarian theology becomes more apparent in Torrance’s appropriation of Einstein’s and Polanyi’s hierarchical epistemology.<sup>53</sup> In a realist account of knowing, conceptual knowledge arises from the ground level of human intuitive apprehension of reality, as characteristic of all *a posteriori* investigation. Then from the tacit, experiential level of knowledge, there comes a conceptual advance to another level, although the advance is not a movement away from concrete reality, but a progressive and deepening apprehension of reality.<sup>54</sup> Formalized knowledge remains coordinated with the basic experience of reality. In theology, Torrance writes:

Formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity develops a stratified structure arising on the ground of our evangelical experience, knowledge and worship of God in the life of the Church, deriving from the historical revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit mediated to us in the incarnate life and work of Jesus Christ, and directed to the transcendental mystery of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as he is in his one eternal Being.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *CTSC*, 61-71; *BSCL*, 1-27; “Ultimate and Penultimate Beliefs in Science,” in *Facets of Faith and Science*, vol 1, 151-176; and “The Influence of Reformed Theology on the Development of Scientific Method,” *Dialog* 2 (1963); reprinted in *TR*, 69-72. Polanyi has shown Torrance that positivist and objectivist philosophies of science are inadequate since they try to establish the objective validity of science on impersonal grounds. See Walter R. Thorson, “Scientific Objectivity and the Listening Attitude,” in *Objective Knowledge: A Christian Perspective* (ed. Paul Helm; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1987), 61; and for an extensive treatment of Polanyi’s influence on Torrance, see Colin Weightman, *Theology in a Polanyian Universe: The Theology of Thomas Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

<sup>52</sup> *KBET*, 121.

<sup>53</sup> *RST*, 131-136; *GGT*, 156-172.

<sup>54</sup> *GGT*, 34-35. Torrance grounds his stratification of theological knowledge from the stratified nature of the universe, based on Einstein’s physics. See “Cheap and Costly Grace,” *BapQ* 22 (1968), reprinted in *GR*, 83; *CTSC*, 37; *DCO*, 20; *TCFK*, 159.

<sup>55</sup> *CDG*, 83; *RST*, 136, 140.

Torrance calls this “Chalcedonism,” because the creedal formulations of both Nicea and Chalcedon exemplified a rise to a higher level of knowledge.<sup>56</sup> Borrowing from Einstein’s *Physics and Reality*, Torrance describes this Chalcedonian hierarchical model of knowing in three ascending orders.<sup>57</sup>

The level of personal encounter with Jesus Christ in worship and fellowship in the church represents the first level of theological knowledge: what Torrance calls the “*evangelical and doxological level*.”<sup>58</sup> Torrance admits Polanyi’s direct influence on his understanding of this level, particularly his discussion of the tacit or inarticulate dimension in human thought.<sup>59</sup> Like the experience of the early church, in this level, an implicit awareness of the threefold act of God expressed in 2 Corinthians 13:14 is imprinted in the Christian psyche: “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” However, while such a Trinitarian awareness is present at this stage, the focal point of the *evangelical level* is “personal encounter with Jesus Christ within the structures and rationalities of our historical existence in space and time... where we are summoned to live and think not out of a centre in ourselves but out of a centre in the Lord Jesus.”<sup>60</sup> This *incipient theology*, as Torrance also calls it, although involving no speculative or logical analysis, remains as “the *sine qua non* of the other levels of doctrinal formulation.”<sup>61</sup>

T. A. Noble, however, discerns an apparent inconsistency in Torrance’s view of the evangelical level, especially because Torrance argues that conceptualization and theoretical understanding only proceed in the second level of knowledge: the *scientific or theological level*.<sup>62</sup> The problem is that a completely unconceptual knowledge at the first level seems to contradict the fact that the Christ we encounter in our evangelical experience is “Christ clothed with his gospel,”<sup>63</sup> or that revelation is always in and through the eloquent Word in his Self-communication. Because our knowledge of God is also always *a posteriori* – achieved through an encounter with the Self-revealing

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<sup>56</sup> *BSCL*, 104-106.

<sup>57</sup> *GGT*, 156-159. Torrance considers Einstein as a “disguised theologian,” in “Einstein and God,” *Reflections* 1 (1998), reprinted in *TNS*, 17.

<sup>58</sup> *GGT*, 156; *CDG*, 88.

<sup>59</sup> *RST*, 132. See also Benjamin Myers, “The Stratification of Knowledge in the Thought of T. F. Torrance,” *SJT* 61 (2008), 6.

<sup>60</sup> *CDG*, 88.

<sup>61</sup> *CDG*, 90.

<sup>62</sup> Private conversation with T. A. Noble, 20 May 2011; Myers, “Stratification of Knowledge,” 7.

<sup>63</sup> *SF*, lxxx; *RET*, 9.

Christ – then our knowledge is not merely tacit or unthematic, but is to a certain degree already conceptual. If the tacit dimension is to be truly a *prolepsis*, or “a forward leap of the awakened mind in laying hold of some aspect of reality,”<sup>64</sup> then a conceptual understanding, limited it may be, should be present already. Moreover, one should not forget that the gospel we receive today is the gospel as it was already conceptually articulated by the apostles and biblical writers. It may be that Torrance’s desire to neatly categorize the three levels of knowledge led him to exaggerate their differences from one another, instead of giving space for an elaboration on the overlapping intersections between the levels. It would be evangelically more accurate to say that even in the first level of knowledge, an articulate knowledge is already achieved, although not as astutely as that which is achieved in the second level, where a movement of penetration into the logical relation between the reality-in-itself and the reality as it is experienced in space and time is reached. Torrance argues that this process requires the invention of theoretical tools and concepts, which should: (1) be grounded upon the tacit experience of reality, and (2) function as freely chosen “fluid axioms” that are open to revision in light of further discoveries.<sup>65</sup>

According to Torrance, the movement from the evangelical to the theological level of knowledge is the attempt to “apprehend more fully the economic and ontological and Trinitarian structure of God’s revealing and saving acts in Jesus Christ as they are presented to us in the Gospel.”<sup>66</sup> As we experience God in worship and in our daily lives, we become aware of the threefold movement of God’s revealing and saving nature as Father, Son and Holy Spirit underlying all our Christian experiences, enabling us to speak of the *economic Trinity*.<sup>67</sup> As such, early creedal formulations represent an example of the ascent from the first to the second level of knowledge. Torrance particularly refers to the development of the all-important concept *homoousios* to give expression to the reality which they had grasped intuitively with God through Christ. In their personal union and communion with Jesus Christ, the Nicene fathers knew themselves that they had entered into union and communion with the very being of God.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *RST*, 84.

<sup>65</sup> *RET*, 49-51; *RST*, 77-78.

<sup>66</sup> *CDG*, 91.

<sup>67</sup> *GGT*, 157.

<sup>68</sup> Myers, “Stratification,” 9. See also *CDG*, 93-102 on the centrality of the *homoousion* in the stratification of knowledge.

Finally, building upon the progression from the first to the second level of knowledge, we move from an awareness of the Trinity *ad extra* to the Trinity *ad intra*, which Torrance calls the *metascientific or metatheological level* of knowledge. It is here that “we discern the Trinitarian relations immanent in God himself which lie behind, and are the ground of the relations of, the Economic Trinity—that is, we are lifted up in thought to the level of ‘the Ontological Trinity’ or ‘the Immanent Trinity,’ as it is variously called.”<sup>69</sup> Arrival on this level, Torrance describes, is the arrival at the “ultimate theoretic structure,”<sup>70</sup> not because of its superficial abstractive speculation, but because of its logical economy and simplicity.<sup>71</sup> This level of refined conceptualization is “the supreme point in our knowing of God in the inner perichoretic relations of his triune Being.”<sup>72</sup> This is because the perichoretic relations are “the ultimate constitutive relations in God,” and as such also constitute “the ground upon which the intelligibility and objectivity of all our knowledge of God finally repose.”<sup>73</sup>

#### *Trinity as Nature and Being of God*

Torrance’s stratification of theological knowledge using scientific investigation ends up with the doctrine of the Trinity *in se* as the nature and being of God. He believes that this stratified structure of knowing, using an inductive bottom-to-top pyramidal paradigm, enables him to enter into the inner cohesion of the evangelical narratives so deeply in a way which was not possible before.<sup>74</sup> In Christian theology, there would be no greater theological articulation that could be claimed as a scientific truth beyond the ontological Trinity.

The interrelation between scientific theology and the doctrine of the Trinity is therefore irreversible. The circular interconnectedness may be expressed as several movements within one act of knowing. Firstly, a faithful and rigorous scientific

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<sup>69</sup> *GGT*, 158.

<sup>70</sup> *GGT*, 171.

<sup>71</sup> *GGT*, 171-172.

<sup>72</sup> *CDG*, 103.

<sup>73</sup> *CDG*, 107. As Noble suggests (Private conversation, 27 July 2011), Torrance’s stratification of knowledge, owing perhaps to his dedication to the Nicene formulation, possesses apparent difficulties. Because Torrance points to the Nicene *homoousion* as the moment of ascent from the first to the second level, the question of when the third level of knowledge is achieved remains unanswered. Torrance hints that the ascent from the theological to the meta-theological level happens around the Nicene-Constantinopolitan period, but Torrance does not make a clear argument. Noble’s suggestion that the ascent to the second level (the economic Trinity) was achieved as early as the second century by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria and that the ascent to the third level (the immanent Trinity) during the Nicene-Constantinopolitan period through Athanasius and the Cappadocians, offers a better chronological explanation of the stratification of knowledge.

<sup>74</sup> *TCFK*, 94-95.

theology should be undertaken *kata physin*, according to the nature of the object of investigation. Since theology is primarily a discourse on God, the Being of God becomes the unquestionable starting point and controlling centre. The question, however, is: “Who is God?” or “What is the nature of God?” It is here that scientific theology, secondly, through the stratification of knowledge, is particularly helpful. A multi-leveled view of reality, accompanied by an ascending hierarchical order of knowing, reveals that the nature of God is Triune. In one sense, the doctrine of the Trinity is to be seen as the culmination of a scientific theology. The doctrine of the Trinity, being who God is in Himself, therefore, constitutes the “ground and grammar of theology.”<sup>75</sup> Thirdly, while the Trinity *ad intra*, or the perichoretic relations, forms the basis of all theological reflections, a faithful scientific investigation does not do away with the data found in the evangelical level of knowledge. In fact, a continuous retrospective return to the evangelical data and the theoretical constructs is a necessary component. This means that the centrality of Christ, and the fundamentality of the concepts *homoousios* and *hypostatic union* should always be referred to. This is one of the reasons why Torrance claimed that the use of scientific theology carries with it an evangelical thrust.<sup>76</sup>

### EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY AND TRINITY

Admittedly, the description “evangelical theology” is vague,<sup>77</sup> so we need to provide a definition here. Firstly, we are not concerned with evangelicalism as a movement, nor will we follow the prevailing consensus of understanding “evangelicalism” primarily in non-theological ways, as David Bebbington and Mark Noll, two most influential historians of Evangelicalism today do.<sup>78</sup> To a certain extent, Stephen Holmes’ assessment that “any attempt to define eighteenth-century British evangelicalism as a

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<sup>75</sup> This Torrance dictum is also his response, following Barth, to the neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity in modern theology that Rahner brought the church to awareness, in *The Trinity* (trans. Joseph Donceel; New York: Crossroad, 1974), 10-15. For the history of this neglect, see Welch, *In This Name*, esp. chapters 1 and 2. Because of this neglect, Timothy Lull asserts that “the doctrine of the Trinity should be subtitled the guilt-producing doctrine,” in “The Trinity in Recent Theological Literature,” *WW* 2 (1982), 61.

<sup>76</sup> *GR*, viii.

<sup>77</sup> Donald W. Dayton, “Some Doubts above the Usefulness of the Category ‘Evangelical’,” in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (eds. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1991), 245-251; and see Roger Olson’s attempt to offer useful definitions in *The SCM A-Z of Evangelical Theology* (London: SCM, 2005), 3-10.

<sup>78</sup> Stephen R. Holmes, “British (and European) Evangelical Theologians,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology* (eds. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier; Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2007), 241.

theological movement is destined to failure”<sup>79</sup> could be applied to the worldwide evangelical movement, but still, to relegate theological developments to be of lesser importance than the *evangelistic* spirit displays the serious error of assuming that ministry can operate without biblical-theological grounds. As such, secondly, we will not follow Timothy Larsen’s procedure in emphasizing the community that identifies itself as “evangelical.” Rather, our concern actually lies in what Larsen intentionally considers as peripheral: *theological* evangelicalism or evangelical *theology*,<sup>80</sup> and on how theology is in itself evangelical and evangelizing.

Torrance understands evangelical theology as an evangelizing movement. He writes: “Evangelical theology is an evangelizing theology, for it is concerned with the winning and transforming of the human mind through conformity to the mind of Christ—not simply the minds of individual human beings but the mind of human society and culture in which individual human beings exist.”<sup>81</sup> But this evangelizing mission could not be accomplished without a theology that is eminently self-critical, “for it is continually exposed to judgment and never relieved of the crisis in which it is placed by its object, or rather to say, by its living subject.”<sup>82</sup> This is what Torrance speaks of as theology’s “evangelical task.”<sup>83</sup> As will be elaborated later, Torrance’s evangelical-evangelizing theology is related to the scientific theology that he learned from Barth: “This is the God who reveals himself in the Gospel, who himself speaks to men and acts among and upon them. Wherever he becomes the object of human science, both its source and its norm, there is *evangelical* theology.”<sup>84</sup> Two considerations immediately emerge from the quotation from Barth, which will constitute the outline of this section: the *procedure* and *content* that makes theology evangelical.

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<sup>79</sup> Holmes, “British (and European) Evangelical Theologians,” 242.

<sup>80</sup> Timothy Larsen, “Defining and Locating Evangelicalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, 1-14.

<sup>81</sup> *APWC*, 444; “The Reconciliation of the Mind,” *TSF Bulletin* 10 (1987), 6; Hesselink, “A Pilgrimage in the School of Christ,” 60. See also his project *The Christian Frame of Mind* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1985). At the centre of this should be Christ. See “Putting First Things First,” *PresSur* (October 1981), 10-12; “The Tide has Turned,” *LW* (March 1984), 14-15; “Where is the Church of Scotland Going?” *LW* (May 1989), 24-26; “The Kirk’s Crisis of Faith,” *LW* (October 1990), 15-16; “The Crisis of Community,” *LW* (December 1990), 16-17; “A Right-about-Turn for the Kirk,” *LW* (April 1981), 20-21.

<sup>82</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (trans. Grover Foley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 10; and Torrance’s appreciation of Barth’s theological “ruthless criticism,” in “Karl Barth,” *ExT* 66 (1955), 205; *KBIET*, 21.

<sup>83</sup> *GR*, viii. Torrance believes that even the future of ecumenism lies in the Evangelical church, in “Ecumenism and Rome,” *SJT* 37 (1984), 62.

<sup>84</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 6.

### The Evangelical *Procedure* of Theology

Because theology should be grounded and guided by the very nature of God as God, according to Torrance's *kataphysic* principle, then theology is also inevitably concerned with the doxological-evangelical approach of the early church and Barth's emphasis on revelation, wherein God is known only through his own self-manifestation in the economy of salvation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Knowledge of the Triune God comes *a posteriori*, i.e. from the *euangelion*, with a controlling centre

... constituted by the incarnation of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ the Son and Word of God and by the Holy Spirit sent by the Father through the Son who are of one Being and Act with God the Father, for it is through union and communion with them that we are given to know God as he really is in the inner relations of his Triune Being, and all our understanding of God in his Trinitarian self-revelation is governed.<sup>85</sup>

Knowledge of the Triune God, therefore, is evangelical, i.e. it is grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ obeying the Father's will in the power of the Holy Spirit. As such, evangelical theology necessarily employs Christocentrism, which McCormack defines, as "a methodological rule—not an *a priori* principle, but a rule which is learned through the encounter with the God who reveals Himself in Christ."<sup>86</sup> This is not an arbitrary invention, but is grounded in God's decision to reveal and reconcile us to himself in Christ. Because Jesus is himself the content of God's objective revelation, all genuine theological knowledge is to be found *via* Christology. This is why, in his 1981 Payton Lectures, Torrance specifically aimed "to cut a swath through the prevailing confusion about the nature of theological and biblical interpretation of divine revelation, so that Christ clothed with his gospel may be allowed to occupy the controlling centre of the church's life, thought, and mission in the world today."<sup>87</sup> Evangelical theology operates "on a Christological basis."<sup>88</sup> This is also why Torrance refers to Barth as a "biblical and evangelical theologian," for at "the heart of Barth's theology is the doctrine of Christ as the divine Reconciler."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *CDG*, 29-30.

<sup>86</sup> Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 454.

<sup>87</sup> *RET*, 9.

<sup>88</sup> *KBET*, 71.

<sup>89</sup> Torrance, "Karl Barth," *SJT* 22 (1969); reprinted in *KBET*, 20. This is what Torrance refers to as the "uniqueness and centrality of Christ and his Gospel," in "Why Karl Barth Still Matters so Much," *LW* (June 1986), 16; "Tom Torrance's Reply on Israel," *LW* (July 1989), 33-34. See also Kang Phee Seng, "The Concept of the Vicarious Humanity of Christ in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," (PhD thesis; University of Aberdeen, 1983), 8.

Marc Cortez convincingly argues that the term “Christocentric” is ambiguous, and everyone who has a Christology could claim to be Christocentric.<sup>90</sup> In order to understand Torrance’s evangelical-Christocentric procedure then, we must follow Bruce McCormack’s distinction between *formal* and *material* Christocentricity.<sup>91</sup> McCormack is concerned that while many theologians may place Christology at the centre of their theologies at the *formal* level, the *material content* of their specific Christologies may vary from each other. The issue is: “Who is the Jesus placed at the centre?” Like Barth, the *formal* Christocentricism of Torrance is grounded in his evangelical Christology, the Christ revealed in the Gospels. Theology must proceed in the same manner as Torrance views preaching: “The Gospel must be preached in an evangelical way, that is, in accordance with the nature and content of the Gospel... or else it is ‘another Gospel.’”<sup>92</sup> Because Jesus Christ is “the very centre of God’s self-revelation,” he is also “the framework of the New Testament message.”<sup>93</sup> Even our understanding of the Triune God, Torrance writes, “must be *soteriologically* conditioned from end to end.”<sup>94</sup>

Torrance’s evangelical starting point overflows into other aspects of his theology. Firstly, one of the theological imports of his stratification of knowledge is the significance of “our evangelical experience”<sup>95</sup> as the ground through which deeper knowledge of the Triune God could be attained. The theological constructs that we enjoy are but an articulation of the church’s most basic evangelical knowledge, experience, and worship of God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Doctrines are conditioned by the realities and events of God’s self-revelation and our evangelical and doxological encounter with them.<sup>96</sup> Secondly, Torrance rejects cultural-philosophical ways of thought imposed on theology as starting points. Concerning Barth, he writes:

It was only through penetrating and subverting the prevailing anthropocentric framework of knowledge, and reconstructing the foundations of modern

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<sup>90</sup> Cortez, “What Does it Mean to Call Barth a ‘Christocentric’ Theologian?” *SJT* 60 (2007), 128.

<sup>91</sup> McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 453-454.

<sup>92</sup> GR, 58. Knowledge of Jesus Christ, John Webster argues, comes from “an orderly intellectual exposition of the divine self-exposition” recorded in the Gospels, in “Incarnation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Theology* (ed. Gareth Jones; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 204-226.

<sup>93</sup> CDG, 49.

<sup>94</sup> CDG, 49.

<sup>95</sup> Elmer Colyer, “Thomas F. Torrance, 1913-” in *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians* (eds. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 463.

<sup>96</sup> Colyer, *The Nature of Doctrine in T.F. Torrance’s Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 209.

theology strictly in accordance with the nature and constraints of God's self-giving and self-communication through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, that Barth was able to build up his massive *Church Dogmatics*, in which evangelical and reformed theology of the Word is given its fullest and most rigorous expression... Karl Barth's theology is at once evangelical and catholic.<sup>97</sup>

Torrance also follows Barth's rejection of the medieval understanding of natural theology as an autonomous approach to the knowledge of God. Although he deviates later in his theological career from Barth's absolute refusal to grant natural theology any bit of consideration, Torrance still follows Barth's fundamental suspicion of an independent approach to God behind the Gospel revelation in Christ and the Holy Spirit.<sup>98</sup>

### **The Evangelical Content of Theology**

The first clue to knowing what Torrance considers as the evangelical content of theology is in the descriptive subtitle of his book *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*. The book can be considered as Torrance's "dogmatics in outline" because it incorporates his major theological interests in one book: soteriology, Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity. Torrance admits later in life that of the [many] books he has published, he was "most pleased with *The Trinitarian Faith*."<sup>99</sup> What interests us here in particular is that he considers the doctrine of the Trinity as the unchanging content of our evangelical and catholic faith, although, as David Ford properly detects, the book is not just focused on a conceptual presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity, but also on the doctrine's truthfulness and salvific import.<sup>100</sup> Evangelical faith has an inseparable salvific and ontological content: it is (1) the Gospel of (2) the Triune God.

Firstly, the content of an evangelical faith is *the Gospel* of the Triune God. It is no wonder, therefore, that Torrance prefers to call the Trinity *ad extra* the "evangelical

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<sup>97</sup> Torrance, "The Legacy of Karl Barth," *SJT* 39 (1986), 292.

<sup>98</sup> Torrance, "Science and Access to God: Epistemological Perspectives," *Jian Dao* 10 (1998); reprinted in *TNS*, 93. Torrance's reconstruction of natural theology, which Colyer concludes as one of the most difficult aspects of his theology (*How to Read*, 192fn179), is beyond the scope of this thesis. But see Torrance's formulation in *GGT*, 75-109; *RET*, 30-34; "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," *SJT* 39 (1986), reprinted in *KBET*, 136-159; and *RST*, 32-63. See also Timothy Charles Gill, "The Doctrine of Revelation in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," (PhD thesis; University of Leeds, 2007), 107-195; and McGrath, "Thomas F. Torrance and the Search for a Viable Natural Theology," *Participatio* 1 (2009), 66-81. Weightman claims that the main figure behind Torrance's later disagreement with Barth's position on natural theology is Polanyi, in *Theology in a Polanyian Universe*, esp. chapters 12 and 13.

<sup>99</sup> Michael Bauman, "Thomas F. Torrance: An Interview," in *Roundtable: Discussions with European Theologians* (ed. Michael Bauman; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 117.

<sup>100</sup> Ford, "Review of *The Trinitarian Faith*," in *SJT* 43 (1990), 263.

Trinity” instead of the more common “economic Trinity,” because the former highlights more clearly the “truth content of the Gospel.”<sup>101</sup> Torrance’s purposive opting for “evangelical Trinity” portrays his vision to integrate the doctrine of the Triunity of God with the evangelical message of his saving and redeeming activity in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is theologically convincing, because our knowledge of the content of the Gospel is only made possible by God’s actual, dynamic and salvific relation to the world. “We know nothing of God and can know nothing of him completely isolated in himself and apart from the fulfillment of his creative and redeeming purpose.”<sup>102</sup> We do not know a God apart from the God who saves. This affirmation is also evident in Torrance’s stratification of knowledge, where he calls the first level of knowledge *evangelical*, because it is knowledge that arises in our salvific and doxological encounter with the Triune God. Although it is primarily Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that the church personally encounters, as Colyer beautifully summarizes it, “in hearing the gospel and coming to know God the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, we encounter the Trinity as a whole simultaneously.”<sup>103</sup> Also, it can only be called evangelical knowledge because it is knowledge through “an intimate and saving relationship with [God] in Jesus Christ.”<sup>104</sup>

But the salvific content is essentially inseparable from the ontological content, because “if the economic or evangelical Trinity and the ontological or theological Trinity were disparate, this would bring into question whether *God himself* was the actual content of his revelation, and whether *God himself* was really in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to himself.”<sup>105</sup> Thus, secondly, the evangelical content of evangelical faith is the Gospel of *the Triune God*. Evangelical theology is concerned equally with the Act and Being of God. This is in line with Torrance’s refusal to separate the empirical from the theoretical, form from content, or experience from its objective ground.<sup>106</sup>

Lee argues that Torrance has a “critically realist evangelical approach.”<sup>107</sup> In a sense, Torrance’s realism is an epistemological principle: “an epistemological

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<sup>101</sup> *CDG*, 7.

<sup>102</sup> *CDG*, 9.

<sup>103</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 136.

<sup>104</sup> *TF*, 3.

<sup>105</sup> *CDG*, 7.

<sup>106</sup> *RET*, 10, 39-42; *CFM*, 38-39; *TCFK*, 61-105; *CTSC*, 22-24, 124-125; *GGT*, 122-124.

<sup>107</sup> Lee, *Living in Union*, 20-34; Colyer, *The Nature of Doctrine*, esp. chapter 4; and for an extensive elaboration of Torrance’s realist theology, see Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-revealing God*, which is devoted precisely to evaluate this aspect of Torrance’s thought.

orientation of the two-way relation between the subject and object poles of thought and speech, in which ontological primacy and control are naturally accorded to reality over all our conceiving and speaking of it.”<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, realism emphasizes ontological factuality. The key issue in a realist evangelical theology is “the connection between form and being” or between conceptual signs and the realities they signify.<sup>109</sup> In short, critical realism makes sure that the content of theology is grounded in an ontological reality, which, in Torrance’s evangelical theology, is the Triune God. Without an ontological reality on which revelation and salvation are grounded, theology is but a speculative exercise. This is what Torrance calls “the principle of coherent integration from above.”<sup>110</sup>

Torrance’s concern is the objective actuality of the Triune God because “it is finally in our understanding of the Trinitarian relations in God himself that we have a ground and grammar of a realist theology.”<sup>111</sup> From the evangelical to the meta-theological level of knowledge, the objective content is the Triune God in the unity of his Being and Act. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a speculative movement of thought, but an articulation of the received knowledge of God through God’s own Self-revealing presence in the actual evangelical and doxological life of the church. It is the *homoousios* that makes it possible for us to know that who God is in his Act is who God is in his Being. As Myers states, *homoousios* “expresses our most basic and profound evangelical intuition about God: namely, that God is inherently in himself what he is towards us in Jesus Christ, and that the economy of God’s grace in Jesus Christ is nothing other than a revelation of the Trinitarian relations of God’s own being.”<sup>112</sup> As such, *homoousios* is “the ontological foundation for Christian theology” because it points us to knowledge of the Triune God.<sup>113</sup> Colyer is right that Torrance’s theology is

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<sup>108</sup> *RET*, 60.

<sup>109</sup> *RET*, 65-73, 127-134; “Theological Realism,” in *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology: Essays Presented to D. M. MacKinnon* (ed. B. Hebblethwaite and S. Sutherland; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 169-173. The connection between content and form, however, is not a relation of identity. See “‘The Substance of the Faith’: A Clarification of the Concept in the Church of Scotland,” *SJT* 36 (1983), 327-338.

<sup>110</sup> *CTSC*, 36.

<sup>111</sup> *GR*, xi. Torrance argues that a realist thinking is not only applicable to theology, but also to our understanding of political and social laws, in *JLPL*, esp. chapter 3; and “Revelation, Creation and Law,” *HeyJ* 37 (1996), 276-278.

<sup>112</sup> Myers, “Stratification,” 9. See also *CDG*, 93-98 on the centrality of the *homoousion* in the stratification of knowledge.

<sup>113</sup> McGrath, *Intellectual Biography*, 158.

fundamentally evangelical because it is ultimately focused on the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>114</sup>

### SCIENTIFIC, EVANGELICAL TRINITARIAN SOTERIOLOGY

Peter Cass distinguishes two major theological camps within the Reformed Church: Federal Calvinism and Evangelical Calvinism. Federal Calvinists, according to Cass, possess an essentially forensic doctrine of atonement and salvation, Aristotelian logico-causal form of rationality, and teach the doctrines of two covenants with a priority of law over grace, double predestination and limited atonement. Evangelical Calvinists, on the other hand, possess a “trinitarian and Christocentric approach to soteriology.”<sup>115</sup> Then Cass identifies Torrance as an Evangelical Calvinist.<sup>116</sup> What interests us here is Cass’s recognition of the interpenetration of evangelical theology, Trinitarianism and soteriology. The scientific character of Torrance’s theology should be added in Cass’s trilateral, but Cass could be acquitted for missing it, because such a theme is beyond the focus of his study. The interrelation between Torrance’s scientific theology and Trinitarian thinking is highlighted by Colyer’s book, but the chapters are treated not in a progressive, sequential manner but as “different facets of an integrated whole.”<sup>117</sup> As such, although Colyer presents the evangelical *content* of the Gospel (the Trinity), the fact that he thought of his outline as “different facets of an integrated whole” means that he was not consciously appropriating the evangelical *procedure* that Torrance argues for. Also, along with Molnar’s *Theologian of the Trinity*, Colyer’s concern is primarily to offer an introduction to Torrance’s Trinitarian theology as a whole. As such, although these two books are extremely helpful in providing a fairly comprehensive guide to Torrance’s doctrine of the Trinity, and although they discuss aspects of Torrance’s doctrine of salvation, they are not written specifically with the agenda of explicating Torrance’s Trinitarian soteriology or formulating it in the manner that Torrance would have formulated it.

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<sup>114</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 25, 29.

<sup>115</sup> Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh* 5-6. See also Peter Toon’s elaboration of the various soteriological trends in Reformed theology in *Justification and Sanctification* (London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1983), 75-87. Particularly interesting is Toon’s similar comparison of the different Reformed Confessions with Torrance’s *School of Faith* (1959).

<sup>116</sup> Alasdair Heron asserts that Torrance cannot really be called a Calvinist because of his aversion to scholastic Calvinism, in “Calvin in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance: *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man* (1949),” *Participatio* 2 (2010), 46-51.

<sup>117</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 26.

This thesis, in contrast to the above publications, seeks to integrate all four important factors: scientific theology, evangelical theology, Trinitarian theology and soteriology. In fact, Torrance's integrative approach to theology is best evidenced in his soteriology, which is guided by three principles: (1) theological investigation should proceed *kata physin*, (2) theological formulation should follow the evangelical *taxis* of God's Self-revelation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and (3) the Trinity is "the ground and grammar of theology." With this, I argue that Torrance espouses a unique and distinct *scientific, evangelical and Trinitarian soteriology*.

### ***Scientific Evangelical Trinitarian Soteriology***

In general, Torrance's *kataphysic* soteriology is related to his insistence that God's Being is Triune. He writes: "The pattern of coactivity between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the economic Trinity is... a real reflection of the coactivity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the ontological Trinity."<sup>118</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity is the ultimate knowledge of *Theos*, and theological formulation, if it is to remain *theo-logical*, should be guided by an awareness of the Triune Being of God. Torrance writes:

In the strictest sense the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is *theologia*, that is, theology in its purest form, the pure science of theology, or *episteme dogmatike*. I myself like to think of the doctrine of the Trinity as the *ultimate ground* of theological knowledge of God, the *basic grammar* of theology, for it is there that we find our knowledge of God reposing upon the final Reality of God himself, grounded in the ultimate relations intrinsic to God's own Being, which govern and control all true knowledge of him from beginning to end.<sup>119</sup>

As such, Torrance's doctrine of salvation reposes in his doctrine of the Trinity. But he argues that this procedure is not just one option among many, but is the only plausible *theo-logical* procedure. Scientific-Trinitarian soteriology *is* theological soteriology. This is even more so because soteriology is primarily an inquiry about the *who*, not the *what* or the *how*. The Subject of salvation is the Triune God. The nature, range, and attainment of human salvation is inseparable from the Being of the Saviour, which is another way of affirming that God's Being is his Act and his Act is his Being. "[Salvation] is indeed more than a reflection of [the Trinity], for it is grounded in it, is altogether inseparable from it, and actually flows from it."<sup>120</sup> Torrance's critique of

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<sup>118</sup> CDG, 198.

<sup>119</sup> GGT, 158-159.

<sup>120</sup> CDG, 198.

federal Calvinism's reliance on abstract concepts and principles instead of grounding soteriological formulations on the revealed personal Being of God is motivated by his commitment to a *kataphysic* theology. His difference from federal Calvinism is primarily theological.

However, a *kataphysic* Trinitarian soteriology not only looks at the Being of God in an uncritical monotheistic manner. God's Being is Triune: *mia ousia treis hypostaseis*. Properly speaking, then, God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to argue for a soteriology grounded in the Being of God is to argue that salvation is a work of the Persons of the Triune God. This is *kataphysic* soteriology: understanding salvation in strict accordance with the Being of God as Triune. In the first place, God is not only Triune in Being, but also Triune in Activity.<sup>121</sup> Because the Agent of salvation is the Triune God, for instance, a doctrine of salvation that is formulated in the light of a Christ isolated from the Father and the Holy Spirit is insufficient. Although there is merit in arguing that Christology is implicitly Trinitarian, such implicitness could not be a substitute for a well-expounded Trinitarian soteriology.<sup>122</sup>

The challenge, then, is how to formulate a Trinitarian soteriology that does justice to both the *One Being* of God and the *Triune Persons* of the Godhead. In the light of Torrance's responses to this challenge, grounded in his Trinitarian theology, his soteriology is superior to traditional textbook soteriologies. Torrance's consideration of the Triune God's Being and Persons and his balance between the Unity-in-Trinity and Trinity-in-Unity in the salvific economy marks a great accomplishment. First, Torrance understands the mediation of reconciliation as the work of the Tri-unity whose Being is Communion-for and Communion-with. Because God's Being is Personal, he interacts with the created other in the personal mode of his Being. This can be called Torrance's Trinitarian *kat'ousian* soteriology. In short, the Act of the Triune God is in strict accordance with his Being as Triune. Soteriologies that are not grounded on the Being of the Agent of salvation are both unscientific and nontheological.

Moving to the second level of God's personal agency in the salvific economy requires the doctrine of *perichoresis*, which highlights both unity-in-distinction and distinction-in-unity in God's Being and Act. In the first place, Torrance understands

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<sup>121</sup> CDG, 197.

<sup>122</sup> Reciprocally, as Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall argue, only when we think trinitarianly that the flaws of all non-trinitarian accounts of God are realized, in *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 2.

salvation as a “perichoretic coactivity of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>123</sup> The Triune Persons mutually interpenetrate each other not only in their hypostatic relations but also in their salvific agencies: “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit always act together in every divine operation whether in creation or redemption, yet in such a way that the distinctive activities of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are always maintained.”<sup>124</sup> Thus, in the second level, there are distinct activities that are uniquely appropriated to each of the Persons. For instance, only the Son is incarnate and only the Son and the Holy Spirit are “sent.” (This will be discussed more fully later in the thesis). This can be called Torrance’s Trinitarian *kath hypostasin* soteriology.

One important aspect that is still left virtually untouched by Torrance scholars is Torrance’s employment of the doctrine of appropriation, which is actually important in the second level of a *kataphysic* Trinitarian soteriology. This means that the distinct work of the Persons of the Trinity in the salvific economy is in strict accordance with their distinct hypostases as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In *The Christian Doctrine of God*, Torrance’s attitude towards the doctrine of appropriation is somewhat negative, because he was combating an “essentialist approach to the doctrine of the Trinity from the One Being of God,”<sup>125</sup> but his Trinitarian theology in general and his Trinitarian soteriology in particular indubitably employs the doctrine as a hermeneutical principle, most especially in that he follows Barth’s procedure.<sup>126</sup> The Triune God, Torrance writes, is “engaged in the work of reconciliation in distinctive ways appropriate to each Person.”<sup>127</sup> The critique that Torrance obscures the plurality of God’s activity and identity by an overemphasis on the unity of God’s operations is therefore unwarranted.<sup>128</sup> Chapters II, III and IV of the thesis explain how Torrance’s Trinitarian soteriology employs this *kataphysic* principle.

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<sup>123</sup> *CDG*, 198.

<sup>124</sup> *CDG*, 198.

<sup>125</sup> *CDG*, 200.

<sup>126</sup> See Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1 (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 373-375, and most evident in Chapter 2, sections 10 to 12. See also Eberhard Jüngel, *God’s Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth* (trans. John Webster; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 49-53; Colin Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: SCM, 2001), 150; and Adam McIntosh, “The Doctrine of Appropriation as an Interpretative Framework for Karl Barth’s Pneumatology of the *Church Dogmatics*,” *Pacifica* 20 (2007), 278-290.

<sup>127</sup> *ST*, 87; *CDG*, 252-253.

<sup>128</sup> Flett, “Persons, Powers and Pluralities,” 16-17.

### **Kataphysic Evangelical Trinitarian Soteriology**

Application of the doctrine of appropriation in soteriological formulation, however, could not be done arbitrarily. For instance, although the Holy Spirit fulfills a unique salvific agency in accordance with his hypostasis as the Holy Spirit, it is chimerical to outline the whole Triune economy of salvation by beginning with the work of the Holy Spirit. The articulation of the doctrine of salvation should follow the economic *taxis* of God's revealing and reconciling activity, or "the movement of saving Love."<sup>129</sup> As such, a *kataphysic* Trinitarian soteriology should also employ the evangelical approach, i.e. beginning with the revealed knowledge of God in the incarnate Son. Nevertheless, the consideration of the evangelical *taxis* of the Triune God in soteriological formulation is in a sense only pedagogical, because the evangelical *taxis* could not be read back into the Trinity *in se*. As will be seen in the subsequent chapters, although Torrance accepts a Trinitarian economic subordination, he repudiates any talk about priority or superiority that is read back into the Trinity *in se*.<sup>130</sup> Ontologically speaking, there is no one prior or subsequent in the Triune Persons. Even the Father could not be Father without the Son, for Fatherhood is a relationship that requires a Son. (This will be given more attention in Chapter III).

Torrance argues that the Triune evangelical *taxis* is reflected in Paul's benediction formula, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Corinthians 13:14). He even argues that this "constitute[s] the Trinitarian structure of all Christian faith and life,"<sup>131</sup> and should be considered as a "statement of the condescension of God to our weaknesses."<sup>132</sup> In the Gospel narratives, the Triune God manifested himself in a profound way as the incarnate Son, who then reveals the Father and the Holy Spirit not only by speaking about them but also by communing with them. This formula is in Torrance's early theology, evident in his employment of this outline in his sermon "The Trinity of Love,"<sup>133</sup> and remained in his later argument in *Christian Doctrine of God*:

God's distinctive self-revelation as Holy Trinity, One Being, Three Persons, creates the overall framework within which all Christian theology is to be formulated... The doctrine of the Trinity enshrines the essentially Christian conception of God: it constitutes the ultimate evangelical expression *the Grace*

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<sup>129</sup> *TRE*, 118.

<sup>130</sup> "Thomas F. Torrance Responds," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance* (ed. Elmer E. Colyer; Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Pub., 2001), 316.

<sup>131</sup> Torrance, "Crisis in the Kirk," 21-22; and *SF*, xxi.

<sup>132</sup> *WCCCA*, 183.

<sup>133</sup> Torrance, "A Sermon on the Trinity," *BibTh* 6 (1956), 40-44; *WCCCA*, 180-192.

*of the Lord Jesus Christ* who though he was rich for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might become rich, of *the Love of God* who did not spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, for it is in that personal sacrifice of the Father to which everything in the Gospel goes back, and of *the Communion of the Holy Spirit* through whom and in whom we are made to participate in the eternal Communion of the Father and the Son and are united with one another in the redeemed life of the people of God.<sup>134</sup>

The whole thesis, thus, follows this evangelical Trinitarian blueprint.<sup>135</sup> Colyer, writing on Torrance's Trinitarian and scientific theology, utilizes the same sketch, rightly asserting how Torrance himself argues for such a structure. But unlike Colyer who opted for a non-progressive outline with a hope that Torrance's "theological holism gradually comes into view" at the end,<sup>136</sup> this thesis follows a progressive sequential argument. This means that rather than presenting Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology through a partitive investigation, the thesis attempts a progressive presentation, by which the preceding chapters are the building blocks for explorations that follow. This coheres better with Torrance's overall evangelical procedure, which can be applied in presenting his Trinitarian soteriology.

## CONCLUSIONS

Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology is (1) scientific, because it is grounded in strict accordance with the nature of the Triune God, and (2) evangelical, because it proceeds in strict accordance with the economic *taxis* of God's own revealing and reconciling activity. Consequently, Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology is also (3) doxological: "In knowing God in accordance with his ultimate divine nature we can know him only through his self-revelation and grace, and thus only in the mode of worship, prayer, and adoration in which we respond personally, humbly and obediently to his divine initiative in making himself known to us as our Creator and Lord."<sup>137</sup> As will also be seen in the last chapter, salvation, when perceived in light of the Being, Persons and Work of the Triune God, results in a dynamic, participatory, and communal soteriology. The integrative-sequential Trinitarian approach to salvation as "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit" paints a superior

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<sup>134</sup> *CDG*, 2.

<sup>135</sup> The decision to take this agenda is also through the influence of T. A. Noble's presentation at the Tyndale Conference entitled "Drawing on Biblical Theology in Writing a Systematics" (presented in Cambridge; 06 July 2009).

<sup>136</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 26.

<sup>137</sup> *TNS*, 92.

eschatological picture. Of course, the complete view of the painting is only available as we begin to paint from the proper starting point, so we turn to a chapter on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

## Chapter II

### THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Congruent with Torrance's cry for objectivity, realist theology, and a *kath hypostasin* soteriology, and in line with a doctrine of salvation that considers the salvific agency of the Persons of the Triune God, this chapter presents the Person and Work of Christ. This chapter has two sections: (1) *the grace* of (2) *the Lord Jesus Christ*. The latter, the Person of Christ will be presented first, because reconciliation can only be properly understood when it is grounded upon the Person of the Reconciler. We are not postulating, however, that the saving work of Christ is only an addendum to the Person of Christ. As Torrance warns, "We must be careful not to state a doctrine of the person of Christ, or of the hypostatic union, and then go on to state the doctrine of the saving work of Christ as atoning reconciliation, as if atoning reconciliation were something that had to be added on to the doctrine of the hypostatic union."<sup>138</sup> The two are interrelated: a presentation of the Person of Christ already involves soteriology. In fact, Torrance Christology is soterio-conditioned. As will be evident in this chapter, Torrance's understanding of *what* Christ accomplishes for our salvation develops out of his equal concern for *who* Christ is, which is integral to his polemic against the subjectivist tendency of contemporary soteriological formulations that are apparently more interested in the benefits of Christ's gift of salvation than recognising the objective reference, *who* Christ is.<sup>139</sup>

### THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Torrance's theological and scientific consistency is unmistakable in his soteriological understanding. To examine "who" Jesus is, prior to discussing his redemptive work, is grounded upon two important rationales: (1) historical-theological and (2) methodological-scientific. First, the identity of the Saviour as God-man is essential to understanding his unique role in the whole drama of salvation. Particularly important are his identity as the Son of the Father in the Spirit (Trinitarian identity) and his identity as fully human (anthropological identity). Second, and in relation to the first, like Einstein's reaction to Newtonian cosmology and Euclidian geometry, which separated physics and theoretical frameworks, Torrance avoids soteriological

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<sup>138</sup> *IPLC*, 183-184.

<sup>139</sup> *BSCL*, 93-95.

formulations purely from theoretical assumptions—that is, a way of thinking grounded upon *a priori* presuppositions. Rationality should be in touch with an equivalent reality, or a theory should be grounded upon an objective and concrete reality for it to be acceptable. Applied to soteriology, a theoretical understanding of redemption should be founded upon the concrete reality of the life and work of the Triune God.

### ***Homoousion to Patri***

The central issue in Christology today (as in the fourth century) is the identity of Jesus Christ, particularly in relation to objective soteriology. Gunton rightly asserts that the favourite heresy of the nineteenth and twentieth century was Arianism, evident in the popular theologies of Schleiermacher, Bultmann and Tillich.<sup>140</sup> Residues of these soteriologies, which focused more on self-experience rather than relying on Christ's vicarious redemption were frequently mentioned and combated in Torrance's theology. Torrance's argument for a proper understanding of the identity of Christ as *homoousion to Patri* is thus extremely relevant for contemporary theology. In a sentence, the significance of *homoousios* is the affirmation that "Jesus is God," which, as will be seen later, has profound implications.

### *Theological Development and Meaning of the Term*

Torrance refers to the critical importance of the *homoousion to Patri* in the development of the creeds in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the church was engrossed with theological challenges. He discerns that the heresies, in various forms and arguments, were all grounded in the same ground: a dualistic frame of thought in which their proponents were trapped. The dualism that characterized Hellenic philosophy proposed a radical separation between the *kosmos noetos* and the *kosmos aisthetos*, so that an unbroken relationship between the incarnate Jesus and God appeared incomprehensible.<sup>141</sup> The result was that

Conflicting attempts were made to interpret the mystery of Jesus Christ, operating not only from contrasting Hebraic and Hellenistic starting points but from the sharp antithesis between God and the empirical world in the prevailing framework of knowledge. Thus there arose the so-called "ebionite" and "docetic" types of Christology which had the effect in different ways of

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<sup>140</sup> Colin E. Gunton, "And in One Lord, Jesus Christ... Begotten, Not Made," in *Nicene Christianity*, 35-48.

<sup>141</sup> *PCT*, 15.

breaking up the wholeness of the New Testament presentation of Jesus Christ as God and man by separating the divine Christ from the man Jesus.<sup>142</sup>

This happens, Torrance adds, whenever *a priori* presuppositions derived from culture, philosophy and/or experience take precedence in interpreting the reality of Jesus Christ. It was Athanasius, Torrance's patristic hero, who detected this irregularity in the fourth century, particularly in his debates with Arianism. Athanasius clearly showed the early church that it was the axiomatic assumption of a radical dichotomy between a realm of events and a realm of ideas that gave rise to Arius' mythological thinking. In response to this, the church fathers that met in Nicea were left with two options: (1) to give in to the prevailing culture and interpret revelation this way, or (2) to submit themselves to the objective reality of Jesus Christ as Immanuel, "God with us." Nicea opted for the latter, affirming that "in Jesus Christ the eternal Logos of God had become incarnate in our physical existence" by employing the definitive phrase *homoousion to Patri*.<sup>143</sup> Referring to the Nicene solution, Torrance names *homoousios* as a representative of scientific thinking, because objective reality is allowed to speak for itself.<sup>144</sup> The term does not, however, encompass the whole mystery of the incarnate God. Rather, as Torrance recognizes, it is an attempt, using human words, to give clarificatory expression to the oneness in being and act between Jesus Christ and God the Father, which meant that "the Father and Jesus do not only have a similar Nature, they possess one and the same identical Nature; they have not only one intelligence, one power and one outpouring of goodness, but the 'same' intelligence, power and goodness."<sup>145</sup> By extension, whatever Christ did should be perceived as the work of the Father himself. This concept was reiterated in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and was given its fullest exposition in Chalcedon in 451, when its profound implications for the doctrine of the Trinity emerged.

Insofar as *homoousios* can be considered a decisive response to the question of Jesus' identity, Torrance recognizes that it also served an exegetical function in the conciliar deliberations.<sup>146</sup> Thus he argues that the employment of the *homoousios* was "an absolutely fundamental event that took place in the mind of the church," an event that is of irreversible significance because it changed the course of the church's

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<sup>142</sup> *TF*, 111.

<sup>143</sup> *STI*, 14; "Theological Realism," 184-186.

<sup>144</sup> *TR*, 33; "Theological Realism," 185, 190-193.

<sup>145</sup> *TDORC I*, 134.

<sup>146</sup> *TDORC I*, 98; *CDG*, 80-81. The *homoousion to Patri* thus constitutes two functions: clarificatory and exegetical (or theological and hermeneutical; *TF*, 129).

theologizing.<sup>147</sup> On the other hand, as is so for every term or concept used in theology, the term *homoousios* is only instrumental, that is, as *dianoiotic* (letting the mind assume conceptual forms under the pressure of the objective reality of God) and *paradeigmatic* (images and representations taken from the visible world to point to divine realities and not to themselves).<sup>148</sup> As such, it is open for reformulation: “Like any other creative ‘definition’ of this kind, owing to its essentially semantic and interpretative function, this formulation must also be continually tested and revised in the light of what it was coined to express in the first place, as well as in the light of its fertility in the subsequent history of thought.”<sup>149</sup> As to whether the contemporary church has already invented a new term with the same exegetical function as *homoousios*, Torrance seems to say “not yet,” evident by his barricaded stance for it.<sup>150</sup>

### *Evangelical Significance of “Fully God”*

In terms of the person of Christ, the *homoousion to Patri* bridges the apparent gap between the Trinity *ad extra* and the Trinity *ad intra*. To affirm that Jesus is of the same substance as the Father implies that the ontological Trinity became immanent and present in the world, thus “God with us” in its fullest literal sense. The staggering significance of this to soteriology is thrown into sharp relief by posing the question: “What would be implied if there were no oneness in being between Jesus Christ and God the Father?” At stake is the saving work of Christ and the credibility of Christ’s atoning reconciliation. As Athanasius once argued,

If Jesus Christ is not himself God, then there is no final authority or validity for anything he said or did for human beings. If he were not divine, he could not act divinely, and if he were not Creator, he would not be able to save and recreate humanity. No creature can ever be saved by a creature.<sup>151</sup>

As a concrete illustration, Torrance uses Jesus’ words in Mark 2:5, “Your sins are forgiven,” to explain that if Jesus were not God himself, then his words are mere human utterances void of saving significance, for only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:7). Thus,

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<sup>147</sup> *CDG*, ix; *TF*, 125-132.

<sup>148</sup> See Torrance’s discussion in *TR*, 49-52.

<sup>149</sup> *CDG*, x.

<sup>150</sup> As such, the entrenchment of most of his theological positions betrays his cry for theological openness, because, as Klinefelter notes, Torrance formulates his theology “in a way as to defy refutation, that is... that they must be simply accepted or rejected, not ‘refuted’.” Klinefelter, “God and Rationality,” 124. This is further evidenced by his statement that the Nicene Creed still “represents the essential and unalterable core of the Church’s convictions,” in “The Substance of the Faith,” *LW* (November 1982), 17.

<sup>151</sup> Athanasius, *Con. Ar.* II.21-31 (*NPNF* 4): 359-365; II.56-72 (*NPNF* 4): 378-388; *Ad Adelphi* 8 (*NPNF* 4): 577-578; in *TF*, 138.

*homoousios* has direct bearing upon the saving acts of Jesus Christ, in healing, forgiving, reconciling and redeeming lost humanity, for it asserts in the strongest possible way that they are all accomplished out of a relation of unbroken oneness and communion between Jesus Christ and God.<sup>152</sup> The *homoousion to Patri*, therefore, is “the supreme evangelical truth,”<sup>153</sup> because it embodies the central fact that in the same way that God is the content of his Self-revelation, God is also the content of his saving grace in Jesus Christ. It is the personal Being of God in Christ who is at work in reconciliation: the Mediator is the Mediated. Torrance rejects all instances of extrinsicist soteriology, which carries with it an impersonal and instrumental view of grace. The Triune God sends himself and not some other agent or force to effect reconciliation. Thus, the *homoousion to Patri* asserts, “not only that there is no division between the being of the Son and the being of the Father, but there is no division between the acts of the Son and the acts of the Father.”<sup>154</sup>

#### *Epistemological Significance of “Fully God”*

Apart from the soteriological significance of Jesus’ consubstantiality with God, there are epistemological implications of the same ontological oneness. In particular, it highlights that God’s Being, Word and Act are one in Christ. The epistemological significance of the *homoousion* cannot be separated from the saving significance of the *homoousion*.<sup>155</sup> To distinguish God’s Word from his Act in this section is not to make an ontological distinction between the two: the decision is more pedagogical, in the hope that we might see Jesus’ unique role in God’s historical-theological Self-communication more clearly.

Parallel to the importance of understanding the act of Jesus as the very act of God, grounded upon their ontological oneness, it is necessary that we consider the speech of Jesus to be the very speech of God. Torrance’s concern for objectivity and the objective ground of knowledge resurfaces here. He writes:

Everything depends upon the unity of being and act and word between Jesus Christ the only begotten Son and God the Father. If the *homoousion to Patri* were not true, the Gospel would lack the very foundation in the self-revelation

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<sup>152</sup> Torrance particular refers to John 5:17; 10:30; and 14:9 to describe the oneness in being and act between the Son and the Father, in “The Evangelical Significance of the *Homoousion*,” *Abba Salama* 5 (1974), 165.

<sup>153</sup> *TF*, 132.

<sup>154</sup> *TF*, 137.

<sup>155</sup> Kang Phee Seng, “The Epistemological Significance of *Homoousion* in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance,” *SJT* 45 (1992), 342.

and self-communication of God in Jesus Christ which it needs in order to be Gospel.<sup>156</sup>

If Jesus were not God himself speaking, then his words were just empty human utterances, and not the reliable words of God. If this is so, then we do not have genuine knowledge of God, but only knowledge of humanity. On the other hand, if Jesus Christ is *homoousios* with God, then in Jesus Christ “We have a *Logos* that is not of man’s devising but One who goes back into the eternal Being of God for he proceeded from the eternal Being of God.”<sup>157</sup> So, Torrance insists that in the person of Jesus Christ we have an *analogical reference*, that is, the movement of our thoughts and concepts across another or higher logical level back to the source which gives rise to them.<sup>158</sup> What God is toward us in his economic revealing and saving activities in the historical Jesus, he really is inherently and eternally in himself. The earthly words of Jesus, therefore, are the eternal words of God. As Seng puts it, “The doctrine of *homoousion* and the incarnation mean that genuine human knowledge of God as God is possible because, in Kierkegaardian phraseology, the absolute Truth is now also an historical Truth.”<sup>159</sup>

However, Jesus is more than the messenger of the Truth of God. In Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son, Truth is personalized.<sup>160</sup> Jesus is the *Truth* (John 14:6). The Word and Truth became Man. The *Logos* therefore is Word and Person: an “embodied Truth.” For Torrance, Jesus is “the self-communicating, self-authenticating Word: the *Autologos, Autozoe, Autoexousia*.”<sup>161</sup> In “The Deposit of Faith,” he writes: “The self-sustaining and self-expressing nature of the Truth is its identity with the living Christ who in his saving work and Person *is* the Truth.”<sup>162</sup> The implication for human knowledge of God is precise: that our knowledge of God is bound to Jesus Christ who alone is the embodiment of Truth, and Truth himself. This is why Torrance argues that what God communicates in Christ is not to be understood as *datum*, but as *dandum*,<sup>163</sup> because the Giver is identical with the Gift.

The application of the *homoousion* to the grace of God is to be understood as the impartation to us not of an impersonal something (an *aliquid*) from God, but of

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<sup>156</sup> *TF*, 135.

<sup>157</sup> *TR*, 36.

<sup>158</sup> *RST*, 70-71. See also Kang, “The Epistemological Significance of *Homoousion*,” 344.

<sup>159</sup> Kang, “Epistemological Significance,” 349.

<sup>160</sup> *SF*, xxiv, xxxii-xxxv.

<sup>161</sup> *TR*, 41.

<sup>162</sup> *SJT* 36 (1983), 5. Torrance adds, “Jesus Christ was the Prophet... but he was prophet in the unique sense of being identical with the word which he proclaimed. He was the Word of God,” in *IPLC*, 57.

<sup>163</sup> *DGAF*, 31-32.

God himself. In Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit God freely gives himself to us in such a living personal way that the gift and the giver are one and the same and cannot be detached from each other.<sup>164</sup>

### ***Homoousion hemin ton auton***

Just as Torrance affirms the Nicene conclusion that emphasized the full divinity of Christ, he also affirms the Chalcedonian balance of the full humanity of Christ. For him, the Chalcedonian statement on the humanity of Christ demonstrates the triumph of *theo-logic* over Hellenic dualistic culture and philosophy. As with the *homoousios* employed in Nicea, referring to Jesus as “fully man” rejects Docetic and Apollinarian dualistic presuppositions. Particularly interesting, however, especially in the Chalcedonian symbol, is the application of the same term *homoousios* to express the full humanity of Christ: “*consubstantial* with us.” Jesus Christ is both *homoousion to Patri* and *homoousion hemin ton auton kata ten anthropoteta*: “consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood.” That *homoousios* is also used to express Christ’s humanity is most probably intentional, so as to emphasize that the full humanity of Christ is as important as his divinity. Rejecting the *homoiousios* alternative, Jesus did not only become like man, but existed as man in a concrete historical manner. “The incarnation,” Torrance stresses, “is to be understood as *God really become man*.”<sup>165</sup> Any proposal of partial incarnation in whatever form (partial divinity or partial humanity) should be rejected.

In the fullness of his Deity he became man in the undiminished reality of human and creaturely being, without of course ceasing to be God the Son. The incarnation was not the bringing into being of a created intermediary between God and man, but the incarnating of God in such a way that in Jesus Christ he is both God and man in the fullest and most proper sense. The incarnation is to be understood, then, as a real becoming on the part of God, in which God comes *as man* and acts *as man*, all for our sake – from beginning to end God the Son acts among us in a human way, “within the measures of our humanity.”<sup>166</sup>

Jesus Christ, as not just God *in man*, but God *as man*, implies a rejection of the idea that the humanity of Christ was merely instrumental in the hands of God. While maintaining this, Torrance also emphasizes the originality and newness of the incarnation: “in the incarnation of the Son something *new* has taken place in God.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> *KBBET*, 192; *TP*, 104.

<sup>165</sup> *TF*, 149.

<sup>166</sup> *TF*, 150.

<sup>167</sup> *DM*, 187.

This, however, does not only refer to the virgin birth, or to the fact that God became human.<sup>168</sup> Rather, the whole life of the incarnate Son is new to God, including being in creaturely space and time, experiencing human emotions and needs, down to the cross and the resurrection.<sup>169</sup> The rationale Torrance provides for this new becoming in the life of the eternal God is tied to his theology of vicarious redemption. Quoting Athanasius, “He was not man previously, but he became man *for our sake*.”<sup>170</sup> And precisely because God himself became man, he himself is the agent of reconciliation. According to Torrance, Athanasius realized the significance of the wholeness of Christ’s humanity, particularly because of his emphasis on vicarious atonement. Furthermore, any Apollinarian Christology is also repudiated, because being wholly human involves having a human consciousness, not just physicality.<sup>171</sup>

### *Soteriological Significance of “Fully Human”*

Torrance asserts that the humanity of Christ should be understood in light of Christ’s vicarious Person and Work. Inasmuch as the deity of Christ secures for our salvation the objective ontological foundation in God, so that the work of Jesus is nothing other than the work of God himself, the humanity of Christ also secures the objective ontological foundation in humanity *for* humanity *by* the human Jesus. Our salvation is not only worked out by God in Christ, but also by humanity in Christ. Jesus Christ, therefore, appropriately receives the title “Mediator.” Our salvation is fulfilled *in* Christ *by* Christ in his synergistic and double redemptive movement expressed as his humanward descent as God to his God-ward ascent as human. In so far as redemption requires both God’s initiative and humanity’s response, both are seen to have been accomplished by the One God-man, Jesus Christ.<sup>172</sup> What is profoundly important, Torrance argues, is to see “the historical Jesus as a single individual man.”<sup>173</sup> Jesus was fully human not only as a physical existent, but as a whole man—with psyche and emotions like any other human. Torrance wants to avoid two errors: “There is a clear danger in speaking of the assumption of ‘a man’, for that savours of adoptionism, but on the other hand, to speak of the assumption of ‘man’ savours of the idea that what

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<sup>168</sup> In his article “The Doctrine of the Virgin Birth,” *SBET* 12 (1994), 20, however, Torrance argues that the virgin birth means that it was not an entirely new act of creation on the part of God, but rather a recreation within our human existence in the creative action of God.

<sup>169</sup> *CDG*, 238.

<sup>170</sup> Athanasius, *In Illud Omnin* 3 [*NPNF* 4]: 88; in *TF*, 88.

<sup>171</sup> *DM*, 191-192.

<sup>172</sup> *MC*, 80.

<sup>173</sup> *IPLC*, 210.

was assumed was only human nature in general, human nature with all its human properties and qualities.”<sup>174</sup> Torrance’s emphasis here is not only ontological, but also soteriological: Jesus assumed full human nature in order to redeem it.

As the Head of creation, in whom all things consist, he is the only one who really can act on behalf of all and save them. When he took our human nature upon himself, and in complete somatic solidarity with us offered himself up to death in atoning sacrifice for man, he acts instead of all and on behalf of all.<sup>175</sup>

Two emphases may be expounded. First, that Jesus was in “complete somatic solidarity with us” implies not only the assumption of the body and its physical needs, but also of the human condition of sin. The Inhomination of the Son represents “the coming of God to save us in the heart of our fallen and depraved humanity, where humanity is at its wickedest in its enmity and violence against the reconciling love of Christ.”<sup>176</sup> Jesus does not assume a neutral humanity different from our own, but assumes our fallen humanity, which he also sanctifies and redeems through his whole life and work. According to Torrance, this is in line with the patristic emphasis that “the unassumed is unhealed,”<sup>177</sup> which he considers “the cardinal soteriological principle of the ecumenical Church.”<sup>178</sup> Because of Christ’s assumption of “our actual fallen Adamic nature,” and his becoming human at the ontological depths, Christ “made our sin and misery, our death and fate his own. He really became one with us as we actually are in our flesh of sin and alienation in mind. Otherwise our actual human nature, physical and mental, would not have been brought within the sanctifying and renewing activity of the Saviour.”<sup>179</sup> More radically, Torrance proposes that owing to this,

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<sup>174</sup> *IPLC*, 210.

<sup>175</sup> *TF*, 155. While Torrance is fascinated by the Athanasian emphasis on the divinity of Christ, he admits that he is more fascinated by the humanity of Jesus: “What overwhelms me is the sheer humanness of Jesus, Jesus as the baby at Bethlehem, Jesus sitting tired and thirsty at the well outside Samaria, Jesus exhausted by the crowds, Jesus recuperating his strength through sleep at the back of a ship on the sea of Galilee, Jesus hungry for figs on the way up to Jerusalem, Jesus weeping at the grave of Lazarus, Jesus thirsting for water on the Cross—for that precisely is God with us and one of us, God as ‘the wailing infant’ in Bethlehem...., God sharing our weakness and exhaustion, God sharing our hunger, thirst, tears, pain and death. Far from overwhelming us, God with us and one of us does the very opposite, for in sharing with us all that we are in our littleness and weakness he does not override our humanity but completes, perfects and establishes it” (*PCT*, 13).

<sup>176</sup> *MC*, 39.

<sup>177</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Letter to Cledonius the Priest*, in *NPNF* 7: 440.

<sup>178</sup> *KBBET*, 232. See Kang’s more elaborate discussion in “The Concept of Vicarious Humanity of Christ,” 260–288.

<sup>179</sup> *KBBET*, 103–104; *ST*, 209; and *TR*, 129. See Gerritt Scott Dawson’s instructive article “Far as the Curse is Found: The Significance of Christ’s Assuming a *Fallen* Human Nature in the Torrance Theology,” in *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Saviour* (ed. Gerritt Scott Dawson; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 55–74.

Christ's life and death, therefore, should be perceived to have dealt with actual and original sin altogether.<sup>180</sup>

Secondly, the humanity of Christ is a necessary foundation for understanding the priestly office of Christ and the God-humanward and human-Godward activity of Christ. Just as Christ is God himself ministering to humanity, so he is man embodying humanity in himself and vicariously effecting human response to God. Thus in the Incarnation the Son of God "ministered not only the things of God to man but ministered the things of man to God."<sup>181</sup> Torrance adds: "God not only fulfils his promise of love in the covenant in giving himself to humanity in complete and utter grace, but he accomplishes for man, and from within man, man's fulfilment of the covenant, man's appropriation of God's gift of himself."<sup>182</sup>

Torrance's view of Christ's assumption of humanity's fallen nature is one of the few points where others critique his theology. First, Torrance's view, particularly in his allusions to the Fathers, lands him into the middle of the debate as to whether or not the early Fathers taught Christ's assumption of fallen human nature. There are those, like Donald McLeod, Matthew Baker, and Matthew Kapic, who argue that Torrance's appeal to Gregory's dictum "the unassumed is unhealed" is unwarranted and demonstrates how he reads what is really not explicitly said by the early fathers in general.<sup>183</sup> The primary issue here is interpretation-emphasis. Ho critiques both McLeod's and Torrance's (and other theologians') "excessive claims" and suggests that "the assumption of both fallen and unfallen human natures are found in patristic writings"<sup>184</sup> depending on where one is looking or how one interprets patristic writings. At first sight, this offers a promising solution, but his compromising *via media* really does not solve the problem of orthodoxy. What it proposes and only accomplishes is a sort of theological relativism vindicated by hermeneutical differences, but this certainly is not sufficient. What is needed in the debate is not just a superficial glossing and

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<sup>180</sup> Torrance, "The Atonement: The Singularity of Christ and the Finality of the Cross – The Atonement and the Moral Order," in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1991), 237-239; *SF*, lxxxvi; *APWC*, 158-160.

<sup>181</sup> *TF*, 4, 157, 161-164, 183.

<sup>182</sup> *IPLC*, 56.

<sup>183</sup> See Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1998), 221-130; *Jesus is Lord: Christology Yesterday and Today* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000), 128-129; Matthew Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance," *Participatio* 2 (2010), 25-27; Kelly M. Kapic, "The Son's Assumption of a Human Nature: A Call to Clarity," *IJST* 3 (2001), 157, 164.

<sup>184</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 77. With MacLeod who rejects the fallen view is Philip E. Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 125-135.

citing of specific patristic statements on the issue, either *pro* or *anti*, but a sensitivity toward the general tenor or argument of the early fathers, especially those found in the ecumenical councils. For instance, MacLeod's judgment that Torrance's interpretation of Gregory Nazianzen's dictum "the unassumed is the unhealed" is "an illegitimate use of a form of words" because Gregory's only concern was to establish Christ's genuine human mind, illustrates an erroneous microscopic analysis that disregards the overall picture.<sup>185</sup> What MacLeod misses is the inseparable concern of Gregory (and the theologians of the Council of Constantinople) for both ontology and soteriology. Christ assumed all human experiences because he saves humanity by doing so. The rational implication of this, even though not stated verbatim, is that what Christ assumed included our fallen human condition, because it is that which he came to heal. By virtue of the intention to heal that which is assumed, then what has been assumed must be in need of healing. Furthermore, if one compares the treatments of both those who are *pro* and *anti* the idea of Christ's assumption of fallen human nature found in the early fathers, one would discern a qualitative difference in the level of patristic scholarship. For instance, if we compare Torrance's treatment of the patristic writings with MacLeod (who is Torrance's most avid critic on this issue), one would find that the latter's treatment is limited to only a few patristic writings, and is also extremely superficially informed.<sup>186</sup> Torrance's handling of patristic documents, on the other hand, is exceptional and comprehensive.<sup>187</sup> In fact, considering this achievement by Torrance, one cannot but cringe at Ivor J. Davidson's ill-judgment that Torrance is among those whose attempt to prove the classical orthodoxy of belief in the fallen flesh is "in almost all cases too simplistic."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 224.

<sup>186</sup> For instance, MacLeod only cites Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril, Augustine and Leo (and in the most minimal manner) in *The Person of Christ*, 224-225.

<sup>187</sup> *TF*, chapter 5, esp. 161-168.

<sup>188</sup> Davidson, "Pondering the Sinlessness of Jesus Christ: Moral Christologies and the Witness of the Scripture," *IJST* 10 (2008), 397. For other writings defending the idea, see M. F. Wiles, "The Unassumed is the Unhealed," *RelS* 4 (1968), 47-56; and Ian A. McFarland, "Fallen or Unfallen? Christ's Human Nature and the Ontology of Human Sinfulness," *IJST* 10 (2008), 399-415; and Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), 35-68. Cass argues that no patristic writer explicitly held the assumption and the consequent sanctification of sinful humanity in Christ's life, so Torrance's accomplishment is actually the development of a unique approach to the doctrine of the incarnation, in Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh*, 212. See Bruce McCormack, "For us and for Our Salvation: Incarnation and Atonement in the Reformed Tradition," *Studies in Reformed Theology and History* 1 (1993), 1-38 for the relationship between *kenosis* and the humanity of Christ in the history of Reformed theology; and on Torrance's view of *kenosis*, see Ho, *A Critical Study*, 242-271. Perhaps the general problem is that it is difficult to maintain how Christ could have assumed fallen human nature and yet not be sinful or commit sin. See Gill, "The Doctrine of Revelation," 55, 255; Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 115.

Secondly, MacLeod, Davidson, and Crisp argue that concomitant to insisting that the flesh of Jesus must be “fallen” if it is to be *real* lies the damaging idea that sinfulness is of the essence of human nature.<sup>189</sup> Davidson adds that this view leads to (1) a denial of the primordial goodness of creation and (2) to miss the fact that authentic humanity is only marred, not constituted by sin.<sup>190</sup> In this line of thought, Torrance is judged as guilty of failing to distinguish what is *universal* from what is *essential*, i.e. while sinfulness is universal, it may not be truly essential (or necessary) to what it means to be human.<sup>191</sup> In here, instead of differences in hermeneutics lie differences in theological agenda and presupposition. In terms of agenda, it seems that there is a double concern for the proponents of unfallen humanity not only to affirm the goodness of creation but also, and especially, the sinlessness of Christ. The problem of the latter, however, which Trevor Hart discerns, is that “the more we seek to bolster and secure the sinlessness [using *non posse peccare*], the more we seem to put at risk those very moral conditions which render it [Christ’s victory over sins] soteriologically significant.”<sup>192</sup> What is at stake, therefore, as Torrance also discerns, is the integrity of Christ’s salvific economy, so that there needs to be a worshipful affirmation of Jesus as “in the likeness of sinful man” (Rom 8:3) and “yet was without sin” (Heb 4:15). How this can be is explained by Torrance: “Far from sinning himself or being contaminated by what he appropriated from us, Christ triumphed over the forces of evil entrenched in our human existence, bringing his own holiness, his own perfect obedience, to bear upon it in such a way as to condemn sin in the flesh and to deliver us from its power.”<sup>193</sup>

In terms of differences in theological presuppositions, those who argue that Jesus did not assume a fallen human nature, whether they are aware of it or not, presuppose that sinfulness is not the primordial essence of human nature by adhering to Augustine’s thoughts on the difference between pre- and post-Fall humanity. Concomitant to this view, however, is a line of thinking that begins with creation, then works from there to redemption, or from Adam to Christ. Torrance, on the other hand, consistent with his Christocentric approach, begins with revelation and redemption in

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<sup>189</sup> Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2007), chapter 4.

<sup>190</sup> Davidson, “Pondering the Sinlessness of Jesus Christ,” 397.

<sup>191</sup> This distinction is made by Thomas V. Morris, in “The Metaphysics of God Incarnate,” in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays* (eds. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.; Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 116.

<sup>192</sup> Hart, “Sinlessness and Moral Responsibility: A Problem in Christology,” *SJT* 48 (1995), 40.

<sup>193</sup> *TF*, 161.

Christ, then from there works his anthropology and doctrine of creation. What constitutes humanity can only be known in light of who Christ is and what he has done, not the other way around. Thus, the affirmation of Christ's assumption of fallen human nature is not only a Christological statement but is also an anthropological statement, i.e. a statement about humanity in general. We know that humanity is fallen because Christ assumed a fallen humanity. The problem with the creation-to-redemption or Adam-to-Christ approach is that it presupposes the distinction between an original perfect human *esse* which is corrupted from without because of the Fall, and which Christ assumed. Thus, there are two different types of humanity existing alongside each other—a pre-Fall Adamic humanity and a post-Fall fallen humanity—and it is argued that it is the first type that Christ assumed. Along with this is the idea that sin is considered like an Aristotelian accident which does not really effect a change in humanity at the ontological level. There is a Platonic *real* perfect human nature different from the *actual* fallen human nature that we now have. But this is certainly not the view of Athanasius, the Cappadocians or Cyril. Even if we follow the Augustinian theological heritage, especially *via* Calvin, the change that happened in humanity is total and therefore has corrupted every fibre of human existence. There are not two types of humanity, but only one, and it is fallen and sinful. According to Torrance, we can affirm this because Christ assumed fallen, not neutral or pre-Fall Adamic, humanity.<sup>194</sup>

### *Epistemological Significance of "Fully Human"*

Christ's becoming human displays that the Word of divine self-revelation is objectively and subjectively fulfilled and completed in Jesus Christ. The import of *homoousion to Patri* is the actuality and objectivity of the Word of God in Christ, and that God himself has spoken. But this objective self-speech also takes place in the man Jesus, in whom "God's truth has become actual for us in space and time."<sup>195</sup> The Son took on human form (*morphe*, Philippians 2:6,7) to reveal the Triune God in reconciling knowledge. Considering humanity's inability to know God because of sin's blinding effect, and the asymmetrical relation between human finite reception and divine infinite knowledge, God had to assume human form and language in order for human reception

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<sup>194</sup> For instance, Torrance argues that even "the goodness of man" could only be discussed in terms of the redemptive work of the humanity of Christ. See "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," *MTh* 4 (1988), 309.

<sup>195</sup> *CDG*, 185.

of revelation to take place.<sup>196</sup> “The incarnate person of Christ reveals the person of God in a humanized form.”<sup>197</sup> In more technical language, Torrance writes:

The information density of God is known to us only through contingent mediations; and considering the world and its increasingly complex life, even considering the entropy and negentropy of learning, does not enable more than fragmented glimpses of the information density of God to occur... And this time-encompassing, lived-from event is Jesus Christ. He is the medium in which the information density of God occurs for mankind, and by which we may understand the domain of God in the inner logic of the world.<sup>198</sup>

Overall, from the side of God, the theological import of this is that Jesus himself is the Word of God to humanity in human form. Just as God’s Being and Act are inseparable, God’s Being and Word in the man Jesus are one and the same. Thus, in his Didsbury Lectures, Torrance argues, “If, as we believe, Jesus Christ the incarnate Son and God the Father are one, then he embodies the very self-communication and self-giving of God to mankind and constitutes in his own Person the God-given pledge of its truth and reality.”<sup>199</sup> Moreover, because Christ assumed our fallen human language as well, “our human word is now renewed in him and sanctified to be the proper instrument of divine revelation, and that truly understanding the human speech of Jesus Christ is indeed the faithful hearing of his eternal Word.”<sup>200</sup>

As such, as both God and man, “Christ is thus both the Word of God to man and the word of man to God, for in and through his incarnate life he has grounded and perfected man’s knowledge of God.”<sup>201</sup> In a double movement, Jesus came in order to embody in himself both our questions to God and God’s answers to us, as well as God’s questions to us and true answers from us to God.<sup>202</sup> Several considerations must be noted. First, Torrance’s insights on the assumption of our fallen human nature overlap here. As *the* true human, Christ embodied and exemplified the manner in which blinded

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<sup>196</sup> See Athanasius, *Incarnation* 11 (NPNF 4): 42; *Con. Ar.* III.37-41 (NPNF 4): 414-416. “The Hermeneutics of St. Athanasius,” *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 53 (1971), reprinted in *DM*, 245, 250; *IPLC*, xxxii-xli; and *CDM*, especially chapters 1 and 10. The incarnation, therefore, is the only valid ground for all knowledge of God. This is why Torrance, following Barth, was very suspicious of natural theology and all religious attempt to “discern” God apart from God’s concrete self-manifestation in Christ. See “The Problem of Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth,” *RelS* 6 (1970), reprinted in *KBET*, 136-159. Torrance brands human religion not only worthless, but also the supreme form of sin (*GR*, 69; also *KBET*, 7).

<sup>197</sup> *IESNCC*, 31; *CDG*, 15, 21, 23, 30, 34, 71, 82, 107, 110, 111, 115.

<sup>198</sup> *IESNCC*, 108.

<sup>199</sup> *MC*, 58; *TR*, 121.

<sup>200</sup> Kang, “Epistemological Significance,” 349; *STR*, 167.

<sup>201</sup> *DM*, 250.

<sup>202</sup> *TR*, 122, 126, 127. See also “The Place of Christology in Biblical and Dogmatic Theology,” in *Essays in Christology for Karl Barth* (ed. T. H. L. Parker; London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 15-17; and “The Word of God and the Response of Man,” *Bijragen* 30 (1969), 172-183.

humanity might see God. Because Christ sanctified human nature by assuming sinful humanity, he also redeemed our fallen spiritual senses (to use Origen's expression)<sup>203</sup> to enable us to know God. Thus, "revelation is not only the uncovering of God but the uncovering of the ear and eye of man for God."<sup>204</sup> Second, in light of human inability and God's priority, Christ is the sole ground of acceptable human response to the Father. As the true man, Christ represented humanity in himself in his conversation with God. Jesus is the "Believer for us, vicariously Believer, whose very humanity is the embodiment of our salvation."<sup>205</sup> The man Jesus is humanity's ear and mouth, hearing and responding to the Self-giving of God. This is why Torrance calls Christ "a divinely prepared response to God's revelation."<sup>206</sup> Finally, Torrance emphasizes that only the Son knows the Father. This implies that our knowledge of God is dependent upon the knowledge and relationship of the Son to the Father. Rather than a direct knowledge of God through Christ, therefore, it is only by our participation in the human knowing of Jesus that we know God.<sup>207</sup>

### Hypostatic Union

In discussing the hypostatic union, Torrance asks: "How can we be faithful in our theological statements to the nature of the eternal being of the Son who became man and who yet remains God, and at the same time be faithful to the nature and person of the historical Jesus Christ?"<sup>208</sup> According to Torrance, heirs of the Alexandria-Antioch Christological debates resurface in modern theology owing to the forgetfulness of both biblical and dogmatic theologians in appropriating the hypostatic union as the *theological* hermeneutic in understanding Jesus Christ. Parallel to the patristic situation, Torrance identifies the root of the problem as the dualistic framework that crept back into the church through Newtonian science and Kantian philosophy. For instance, Torrance identifies two particular movements with the tendency of emphasizing the

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<sup>203</sup> See Karl Rahner's exposition in "The Spiritual Senses According to Origen," in *Theological Investigations* 16 (trans. David Morland; New York: Crossroad, 1983), 81-103. Clement of Alexandria also stressed the priority of faith in the enabling of our spiritual senses, in *Stromata* V.1 (*ANF* 2): 444-447.

<sup>204</sup> *TR*, 130, 131. Torrance borrows Augustine's view of the *sapientia*, in which knowledge is achieved when humanity discerns an invisible transcendent and immutable truth, in "Transcendental Role of Wisdom," 131-132.

<sup>205</sup> *CAC II*, 81.

<sup>206</sup> *TR*, 132-134, 157. Torrance speaks of Jesus as the *prokope*, referring to the Lukan account of Jesus's increase in wisdom and understanding, in *TR*, 38.

<sup>207</sup> This will be elaborated later in Chapter III.

<sup>208</sup> *IPLC*, 182.

humanity of Christ at the expense of his divinity: Bultmann's problematic demythologization project and the *Leben-Jesus Forschung* movement.<sup>209</sup> For Torrance, Christ is both theological and historical, or divine and human united in one Person. Jesus Christ is the personal event of the co-existence of divinity and humanity, or *metousia*.<sup>210</sup>

The *hypostatic union* is both foundational and immensely significant for Christian theology. Following the assertion of the early creeds, Jesus Christ is the one Person in whom a permanent union of God and man took place. Torrance sees the centrality of the hypostatic union from two inseparable perspectives. First, the hypostatic union guards the full reality of Christ. The incarnate Son did not live a split personhood, but lived as one Person, as fully God-man. We can name this to be the *ontological significance*. Secondly, the hypostatic union is at the heart of the saving work of Christ. In fact, "the deity and humanity of Christ have no revealing or saving significance for us apart from their hypostatic union in him."<sup>211</sup> Thus, as Colyer concludes, "the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures within the one person of the incarnate Son is always and everywhere the source for all of Christ's atoning activity on our behalf."<sup>212</sup> We name this the *soteriological-epistemological significance*.

The atonement is the work of the God-man, of God and man in hypostatic union, not simply an act of God in man, but an act of God as man. And so the hypostatic union and atonement belong together. Atonement is possible on the ground of the hypostatic union... If we could divide the two natures of Christ, his divine and his human nature, into a nature of a divine person and a nature of a human person, then the human acts would not be acts of the divine person, and the divine acts would not be in the human person. In that event, the accomplishment of reconciliation would be illusory, for its ultimate achievement, the union of God and man, would not have been carried through... The purpose of atonement is to reconcile humanity back to God so that atonement issues in union between man and God, but it issues in union between man and God because the hypostatic union is that union already being worked out between estranged man and God, between man's will and God's will in the one person of Christ.<sup>213</sup>

For Torrance, therefore, hypostatic union and atoning union imply and interpenetrate each other in Christ's mediation of reconciliation to humankind, which is a unique

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<sup>209</sup> See Torrance, "The Historical Jesus," 511-526.

<sup>210</sup> *IESNCC*, 34; *IPLC*, 190.

<sup>211</sup> *IPLC*, 191.

<sup>212</sup> Colyer, "The Incarnate Saviour: T. F. Torrance on the Atonement," in *An Introduction to Torrance Theology*, 38. See also the article of Douglas F. Kelly in the same book, "The Realist Epistemology of Thomas F. Torrance," 81-83.

<sup>213</sup> *IPLC*, 195-196.

feature of his soteriology, at least in light of his Reformed heritage: the hypostatic union is itself the atoning union.<sup>214</sup>

### THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

*Reconciliation* is Torrance's favoured term for his soteriology.<sup>215</sup> This decision has several ramifications in his soteriological understanding and formulation. First, Torrance's soteriology is deeply relational in orientation. Human salvation is not primarily about entering an eschatological state of happiness in heaven or escaping future judgment (which are both characteristic of escapist soteriology), though these aspects are not altogether missing. Rather, salvation is primarily the event of reconciliation between two alienated parties, or "at-one-ment."<sup>216</sup> Secondly, the relational aspect of justification is recovered. Justification should not be viewed only as acquittal from sin, but also as restoration of lost relationship—reconciliation. Being integrative and holistic, Torrance is critical of soteriologies that are grounded solely upon humanity's negative predicament (i.e. sin), to the point of neglecting the positive ground of our salvation that precedes even sin (i.e. God's missional love). Thirdly, relational salvation is grounded upon the personal Being and Act of the Triune God. As a Community of Love, the Triune Being is essentially relational. Consequently, God's acts in space and time with "the other" (created existents) are personal, in that He Himself comes to re-establish the broken covenant. Torrance asserts:

Jesus Christ the Son of God made flesh for us and our salvation, was crucified to bear and bear away the sin of the world, to break down the barrier between God and man, and to reconcile the world to God. Jesus Christ descended into hell, an awful hell of our sin and guilt and its righteous judgment. He has borne our iniquities and suffered for us in his holy sacrifice, that we might be forgiven and restored to the Father as His dear children. That is the deepest reason for our hope, that *God has overcome our alienation and reconciled us to Himself*.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh*, 159, 279; *MC*, 66. That Torrance considers both the divinity and humanity of Christ as important constituents for our salvation is an evidence of his fundamental Anselmic heritage. See *Cur Deus Homo* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909); and Stephen R. Holmes, *Listening to the Past: The Place of Christian Tradition in Theology* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 2002), esp. chapter 3.

<sup>215</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 93. See *APWC*, chapter 5 for Torrance's discussion of salvation in light of the term "reconciliation."

<sup>216</sup> The term was coined by William Tyndale to translate the Greek *katallage*. See Paul S. Fiddes, "Salvation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance; Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2007), 178.

<sup>217</sup> *WCCCA*, 153 (italics mine).

Attached to this, Christ's reconciling work should be understood as the work of the Triune God himself. If Christ is the Mediator, who are the two parties mediated? Biblical statements such as "Christ is reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:18, 19) have a two-sided implication. On the one hand, the Triune God, in Jesus Christ, is engaged in a reconciling mission. The Son does not work autonomously, but vicariously from the side of the Triune God. On the other hand, the effected reconciliation in Christ is not only with Christ, but with the Triune God. Just as it is the Triune God who is effecting reconciliation, it is also the Triune God who is reconciled. Jesus Christ, then, is the reconciling link between the Triune God and humanity. "In Jesus Christ," Torrance writes, "God Himself has come into our human life and forged a link between God and man which can never be broken."<sup>218</sup>

### **Incarnational Atonement**

*Cur Deus Homo?* Throughout the history of Christian theology, theologians have grappled with the question of how Jesus accomplished salvation for us. As early as the second century, Irenaeus already asked the soteriological question, "Why did Christ descend?" prompting him to write his monumental *Against Heresies*. Athanasius' stress on the deity and humanity of Christ was also soteriologically driven. The furious theological debates from Nicea to Chalcedon were fuelled by soteriological implications. Similarly, Torrance's agenda in asserting the Chalcedonic Jesus Christ is primarily soteriological. Torrance's Christology is his soteriology, and *vice versa*. "On the basis of his articulation of *homoousios*, hypostatic union, and the vicarious humanity of Christ," Habets observes, "it is clear that central to Torrance's soteriology is the articulation of Christ's incarnational redemption."<sup>219</sup>

Why did God descend? It is a temptation for theologians to regard this as an anthropological question, that is, to treat it as a question of the human condition requiring anthropological statements, or statements about humanity. Approached from this perspective, the logical choice would be an initial presentation of hamartiology, the human condition in sin. Torrance's approach deviates from this popular Western route.<sup>220</sup> Following Calvin and Barth, Torrance argues that the human condition should

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<sup>218</sup> WCCCA, 150.

<sup>219</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 50.

<sup>220</sup> Molnar, on the other hand, argues that understanding the connection between incarnation and atonement requires an understanding of Torrance's views of sin and evil (*Theologians of the Trinity*, 159). It seems, however, that although Torrance incorporates the discussion of sin in his soteriological

be understood in light of the doctrine of grace, and within God's gracious creative and redemptive scheme. In the first place, sin is illogical and irrational; it does not have a rationality of its own apart from Christ.<sup>221</sup> The present human predicament cannot stand by itself and be an autonomous ground of any soteriological formulation. Interestingly, amidst Calvin's doctrine of total depravity, he still recognizes the value and dignity of humanity through the lens of grace and of God's creative intention for us. Thus, Calvin and Torrance view true and genuine humanity, not in light of the Fall, but in light of God's will and purpose as revealed in Christ. Christology, theological teleology and eschatology precede anthropology and hamartiology. Torrance consistently asserts that humanity's purpose is to be in relationship with God, which is our destiny and dignity: "The relation of creature to himself [God] [is] its true end."<sup>222</sup> Our future, then, is bound up with God in Christ, who is the mediator of reconciliation.

In light of the gospel of grace, i.e. Jesus Christ himself in his life and death, Torrance argues that humanity, whom Christ came to redeem, is in the state of sin and under its effects. As such, humanity has fallen from its intended existence towards its opposite. "Ours is an existence," Torrance writes, following Calvin, "from nature to de-nature,"<sup>223</sup> a state of "fearful deformity."<sup>224</sup> With this predicament arise three concomitant states. First, humanity became alienated from God. If "being made in the image of God means being brought into a holy and sacred bond of order with God,"<sup>225</sup> and if "human nature set forth in its truth as creature [is] made for a filial relation to the heavenly Father,"<sup>226</sup> the perversion of the *imago Dei* consists in a motion against God—

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formulation, it is not his principal concern. Thus, although he discusses the retrospective aspect of salvation, as will be seen, his primary concern over the prospective aspect seems to overshadow the former. Unfortunately, a fuller discussion of this lies outside the scope of the thesis. Suffice it to say here that the place of hamartiology in Torrance's soteriology is an area that is still unexplored in Torrance studies.

<sup>221</sup> Torrance, "Universalism or Election?" 311, 314.

<sup>222</sup> *KBET*, 123; *TR*, 100-102. Torrance enumerates three gradations of human existence: (1) we have being in God in the same sense as all other created being; (2) we have motion in the same sense as other living creatures; but (3) we have a higher life in God proper to us as human beings, in "The Word of God and the Nature of Man," in *Reformation Old and New: Festschrift for Karl Barth* (ed. F. W. Camfield; London: Lutterworth, 1947), 122.

<sup>223</sup> *CDM*, 91, 97.

<sup>224</sup> *CDM*, 83, 87. Torrance admits that students of Calvin are faced with difficulties with Calvin's view of human corruption after the Fall, because even though Calvin teaches that the *imago Dei* "was wholly defaced and wiped out in us," he also believes that "something remains in fallen man." See *CDM*, 88-90.

<sup>225</sup> *CDM*, 44, 47. Primarily, the *imago Dei* has to do with humanity's relation to God.

<sup>226</sup> *CDM*, 36.

a broken relationship.<sup>227</sup> Thus we understand that Christ is the minister of reconciliation. Second, our God-given capacity for truth and knowledge of God was also perverted. Torrance notes that Calvin's favourite way of describing humanity's corrupted reason is that humanity has been "*alienated in mind* from God."<sup>228</sup> Christ came to redeem our rational faculties as well—epistemological redemption. Finally, sin ushered in death. "Fallen man," Torrance writes, "is dead—not sick, but dead, so that 'there is not a drop of life in him'."<sup>229</sup> In his resurrection and ascension, Christ conquered and triumphed over death. Christ came, lived, and saved us according to the nature of our predicament. Expressed as an equation, since the situation is *S*, Christ dealt with *S* using methods appropriate to the nature of *S*. But Christ also dealt with *S* according to his nature as God-man. This can be called *scientific soteriology*, that is, Christ as God-man enacted God's will according to the nature of the incarnate Son and according to the nature of humanity's needs.

### *Vicarious Inhominaton*

Grounded in the realization that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human in one person, and that both divine and human work flow from this one person, Torrance stresses that incarnation and atonement are interconnected throughout the earthly life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The incarnation is in itself an act of salvation, an inauguration of a new humanity.<sup>230</sup> From the virgin birth to the ascension, the salvific work of the Triune God was carried out in the incarnate Christ. Every aspect of Christ's life is salvific.

Redemption begins with the very advent of Jesus, so that his conception and birth of the Virgin Mary are to be regarded as essential constituents in his saving activity, and his humanity is seen to be not just a means to an end. Atoning reconciliation is to be understood as taking place within the incarnate constitution of the Mediator. His person and his work are one. That is why the New Testament can say that Jesus *is* redemption, he *is* righteousness, he *is* life eternal. He himself in his incarnate person *is* our salvation.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> *CDM*, 113; Joan E. O'Donovan, "Man in the Image of God: The Disagreement between Barth and Brunner Reconsidered," *SJT* 39 (1986), 433-459.

<sup>228</sup> *CDM*, 119.

<sup>229</sup> *CDM*, 88-89.

<sup>230</sup> *ST*, 12-14; *IESNCC*, 161-164. Torrance argues that the incarnation is "the ordering force and distinctive pattern of grace... that presents us the key for deeper theoretic insight into the saving economy of God" (*DM*, 221).

<sup>231</sup> *PCT*, 58.

Following Scottish Reformed theology, Torrance explains that Christ accomplished his incarnational redemption in a two-fold obedience: *active* and *passive*. By active obedience, the whole life of Christ positively fulfilled and “maintained a *perfect filial relation to the Father*,” representing the whole of humanity in his Sonship.<sup>232</sup> As true human, Christ embodied in himself humanity’s true relational nature, thus sanctifying our individualistic selves. With his perfect love and offering to the Father in our name and on our behalf, he enables us now to relate to God as his sons and daughters. Also, by his passive obedience, his *perfect submission to the judgment of the Father* upon our sin by assuming our sinful human nature and embodying in himself sin’s appropriate penalty, he expiated our sins.<sup>233</sup> Corresponding to Christ’s active and passive obedience are the positive and negative aspects of the incarnation. Positively, Christ fulfilled what true humanity is supposed to be in relationship to God. Torrance follows Irenaeus’ appropriation of Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:42-48, or of the Adam-Christ typology, in which Christ is taught to have vicariously and positively accomplished what the first Adam failed to be and do, thus renewing human capacity to relate again to God.<sup>234</sup> In and through Christ, our Adamic alienation met a solution. Negatively, Christ’s whole life was a life of retracing and undoing fallen human nature. He assumed and lived the experiences of fallen humanity in order to rectify and sanctify each part.<sup>235</sup> Through Christ’s act, now, every aspect of human existence can be glorifying to God.

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<sup>232</sup> Torrance, “Justification: Its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life,” *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 44 (1964), reprinted in *TR*, 154; *SF*, lxxxiv-lxxxv.

<sup>233</sup> *TR*, 154. Torrance does not use the controversial term *punishment*, most probably to avoid being associated with the scholastic Calvinist doctrine of penal substitution. This does not mean, though, that he dismisses this atonement model completely. Rather, along with John McLeod Campbell, he interprets it in light of the *homoousios*, or of the reality of the God-man on the cross rather than in a legalist manner. The difference lies, according to Torrance, in the fact that federal Calvinists separated God and the incarnate Son completely on the cross, therefore failing to recognize that it was actually God himself in Christ who took upon himself the appropriate judgment for sin. Whereas federal Calvinists view Christ’s suffering in terms of the Father punishing the Son, Torrance views the cross in terms of what took place in Christ as God-man in one incarnate Person. The Father suffered with Christ. See *ST*, 301-303; and James B. Torrance, “The Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology,” *SJT* 26 (1973), particularly page 304 for his critique of federal theology, which for him inverts the biblical order of the relationship between forgiveness and atonement, or love and satisfaction. For Torrance’s theological differences with Scottish theology, see McLeod, “The Atonement,” in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 39-43; balanced with David Fergusson’s “Torrance as a Scottish Theologian,” *Participatio* 2 (2010), 77-87.

<sup>234</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III.18 (*ANF* 1): 445-448; III.23 (*ANF* 1): 455-459. See also Dennis Minns’ discussion of this typology in *Irenaeus* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 86-99.

<sup>235</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* II.22.4 (*ANF* 1): 391; III.7 (*ANF* 1): 420-421; III.18 (*ANF* 1): 445-448; III.20.2 (*ANF* 1): 450; III.22.2 (*ANF* 1): 454-455; V.14.1-4 (*ANF* 1): 541-544. Athanasius adds: “Though [Christ] used the body as instrument, he shared nothing of its defect, but rather sanctified it by his indwelling,” in *On the Incarnation* (trans. Penelope Lawson; New York: MacMillan, 1981), chapter 43. *APWC*, 129-134.

This aspect in Torrance's soteriology, the emphasis on both the retrospective and prospective aspects of our redemption, is a valuable contribution.

The significance of Torrance's approach is that the atonement is understood as both personal and ontological. First, it is personal because it is God in Christ who is at work in drawing himself near to humanity and humanity near to God. The atonement "is not an act of God done *ab extra* upon man, but an act of God become man, done *ab intra*, in his stead and on his behalf."<sup>236</sup> This is also why Torrance rejects exclusively extrinsicist or instrumental views of atonement, where Christ's redemptive work is considered to be an external transaction between God and humanity. He calls this extrinsicist atonement *the Latin heresy*, ascribing it to the dualistic "Western habit of thinking," which, when applied to theology produces a thinking dominated by external relations.<sup>237</sup> In it, Christ the Mediator is viewed as an Arian *tertium quid*, external both to God and to humanity. Contrary to this, Torrance argues that atoning reconciliation takes place within the personal Being of the Mediator, and not in some third party other than God himself. This also safeguards Christ's sole mediatorship between God and humanity.

Consequently, the personal work of God in Christ has a personalising effect for humanity as well. In his personal and saving relations with us, Christ was engaged in a radical personalizing and humanizing activity. The precise relation between the Person of Christ, his personal work, and his personalizing mission is that

In virtue of the fact that the Person who became incarnate in Jesus Christ is the Creator Word of God by whom all men are made and in whom they consist, and is therefore the Person from whom all creaturely being is derived, the Incarnation must be regarded as creative, personalising activity. As the incarnate Son of God Jesus Christ is Person in his own divine Being, but we are called created persons. He is the personalising Person, and we are the personalised persons... With the Incarnation there took place an acute personalising of all God's interaction with us, so that the incarnational union of the Person of the Son with our human nature must be regarded as the most intensive personalising of it that could have taken place.<sup>238</sup>

Secondly, equivalent to his personal agency, Christ's incarnational redemption is also ontological in both its means and end. Reiterated by the *vicarious* nature of Christ's life

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<sup>236</sup> *TF*, 158.

<sup>237</sup> *KBET*, 228-229. Torrance sees this tendency in both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology, and particularly in the Westminster Confession and Fundamentalism. See "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," *SJT* 39 (1986), 461-482; also reprinted in *KBET*, 213-240. See also "The Atonement," 236; *DM*, 193-195; and *DGAF*, 28.

<sup>238</sup> *MC*, 67-68.

and work, and as God really becoming man, Jesus “embodies the act and fact of our salvation in his own Person,”<sup>239</sup> so that “the incarnation was seen to be essentially redemptive and redemption was seen to be inherently incarnational or ontological.”<sup>240</sup> Christ assumed our human nature in its ontological depths in order to redeem it. The Word became *flesh*, so that within those ontological depths he can forge an ontological bond between God and humanity in and through himself. This is why, following Athanasius, George D. Dragas points to the incarnation as “the vantage point in the divine and human co-existence.”<sup>241</sup> The implication is staggering. That Christ’s redeeming work reaches humanity’s ontological existence and problems means that all our problems, within and without, met their solution in Christ, and that there is no aspect of human existence, past, present and future, that Christ did not deal with.

### *Vicarious Death*

“Why the God-man?” should be followed by another question: “Why the gruesome cross?” It could not be pedagogical, for certainly the cross is “a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23). Could it then be that the vicarious human life of God in Christ was insufficient for our salvation, so that Jesus’ death was necessary? Torrance says “No.” A holistic view of the incarnation includes the death, resurrection, ascension and Christ’s bodily intermediary-intercessory presence with the Father (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). But does an emphasis on holistic incarnational redemption contradict the New Testament insistence on the centrality of the cross, as MacLeod thinks?<sup>242</sup> MacLeod’s critique is an example of a biblicism that Torrance rejects, because it emphasizes certain aspects at the expense of others and therefore fails to see the whole of the Gospel story. Torrance insists that the death of Jesus is part of Christ’s assumption of all human experiences that need to be redeemed. In assuming the experience of death, he also redeemed and overcame it through his resurrection. Thus, the cross occupies a central place in Christ’s redemptive activity. As Torrance writes, “It was his whole life, and above all that life poured out in the supreme sacrifice of

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<sup>239</sup> *TF*, 62, 65, 142, 156. Christ as *Persona personans* and humanity as *persona personata*. See also *TDORC I*, 11.

<sup>240</sup> *TF*, 159; *MC*, 30. See also Habets’ discussion in *Theosis*, 55-59. Habets argues that Torrance’s view of ontological atonement is a sufficient response to critiques that argue that Torrance advocates a physical theory of redemption. On Torrance’s discussion of the physical theory of atonement, see *TF*, 156-157.

<sup>241</sup> *IESNCC*, 40; *SPR*, 20.

<sup>242</sup> MacLeod, *Jesus is Lord*, 131-134.

death on the cross, that made atonement for sin, and constituted the price of redemption for mankind.”<sup>243</sup>

The precise question, however, is “What happened on the cross with the God-man Jesus?”<sup>244</sup> Torrance’s view is guided by his emphasis on the vicarious and incarnational nature of Christ’s work. As an act of reconciling at-one-ment, it is simultaneously an act from God to man and an act from man to God. “This is the most astonishing part of the Christian message,” Torrance adds, “the identification of the man on the cross with God himself.”<sup>245</sup> Biblical metaphors of ransom, sacrifice, propitiation, expiation, and reconciliation are all legitimate expressions of Christ’s atoning work. They should not, however, be perceived as referring to any external transaction between God and humanity carried out by Christ, “but to what took place within the union of divine and human natures in the incarnate Son of God.”<sup>246</sup> As such, Torrance does not flatly reject forensic atonement metaphors. What he objects to is the *Latin heresy*, or the preoccupation of Western theologians with forensic metaphors to the neglect of ontological considerations. As Cass concludes, Torrance combines both the forensic and the ontological aspects of redemption, although his emphasis clearly slides towards the ontological. Torrance’s integrative framework is one of his major contributions to theology that should be taken seriously, especially because his model offers a promising integrative alternative to Aulén’s dialectical approach to the Anselmic and Irenaean metaphors, and Aulén’s false autonomistic attitude.<sup>247</sup>

The prominence of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ led Torrance to combine the themes of substitution and representation in a concept of *total*

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<sup>243</sup> *TF*, 169; *MC*, 79; *IESNCC*, 164-167. James D. G. Dunn also argues that Paul’s understanding of Jesus’ whole vicarious life is the key that opens up to his understanding of the significance of Christ’s death. See “Paul’s Understanding of the Death of Jesus as Sacrifice,” in *Sacrifice and Redemption* (ed. S. W. Sykes; Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1991), 35-56.

<sup>244</sup> From the early church, this question brought about different interpretations of the atonement, commonly referred to as *theories* or *models* of atonement. Stephen Holmes calls them *stories* of atonement in *The Wondrous Cross: Atonement and Penal Substitution in the Bible and History* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007). The New Testament itself embraced different biblical images and metaphors, which we are not going to deal with here. Our only concern is to present Torrance’s own views, but for a historical study of the doctrine of atonement, see Frances Young, *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ* (London: SPCK, 1975); Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988); and I. Howard Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement* (London: Paternoster, 2007).

<sup>245</sup> *PCT*, 27.

<sup>246</sup> *TF*, 168.

<sup>247</sup> See Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh*, 176-203; and John Stott’s balance and affirmation of Peter Forsyth’s “threefold cord” of atonement: satisfactionary, regenerative and triumphant, in *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), 228-230.

*substitution*.<sup>248</sup> On the cross, Jesus as fully human and on behalf of humanity, took upon himself our sins and its corresponding judgment, in order for us to be reconciled to God. At Calvary, Jesus “penetrates the utmost extremity of our self-alienating flight from God where we are trapped in death, and turned everything round so that out of the fearful depths of our darkness and dereliction we may cry with him, ‘Our Father’.”<sup>249</sup>

Quoting John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872), the cross

was essentially an *amen* of the sinner to the righteous judgment of God in being righteously condemned and justly forgiven... It is important to note that the “perfect Amen” in which Christ confessed our sin, and in which he yielded in body and soul to the inflictions of the Father, was yielded out of the ontological depths of his sinless humanity and in his inseparable relations to sinners, thereby acknowledging and receiving in our place and on our behalf the judicial condemnation of God upon us and absorbing it in himself.<sup>250</sup>

Reacting against the scholastic Calvinist view of penal substitution, Torrance adds that Christ’s “joyful atonement” through his death, resurrection and ascension, “is not to be understood in any sense as the act of the man Jesus placating God the Father, but as a propitiatory sacrifice in which God himself through the death of his dear Son draws near to man and draws man near to himself.”<sup>251</sup> “The self-offering of Christ [is] a voluntary sacrifice to his Father for us,” Torrance explains, so that “in our place and in

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<sup>248</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 112. See also Torrance’s discussion in *KBBET*, 234-36; *TF*, 168-178. Torrance writes: “It will not do to think of what Christ has done for us only in terms of representation, for that would imply that Jesus represents, or stands for, *our* response, that he is the leader of humanity in humanity’s act of response to God. On the other hand, if Jesus is a substitute in detachment from us, who simply acts in our stead in an external, formal or forensic way, then his response has no ontological bearing upon us but is an empty transaction over our heads. A merely representative or a merely substitutionary concept of vicarious mediation is bereft of any actual saving significance. But if representation and substitution are combined and allowed to interpenetrate each other within the incarnational union of the Son of God with us in which he has actually taken our sin and guilt upon his own being, then we may have a profounder and truer grasp of the vicarious humanity in the mediatorship of Christ, as one in which he acts in our place, in our stead, on our behalf but out of the ontological depths of our actual human being,” in *MC*, 80-81.

<sup>249</sup> *MC*, 79; *WCCCA*, 166. This is why Torrance argues that the cross has both a light and a shadow. On one hand, the cross displays God’s overflowing love to humanity. On the other hand, it also shows God’s righteous judgment against humanity’s sin. See *IPLC*, 239, 255-256; *AT*, 56, 118, 120; *KBBET*, 7; and “The Gospel Depends on the Cross,” *LW* (November 1988), 20.

<sup>250</sup> John McLeod Campbell, *Notes of Sermons of the Rev. John McLeod Campbell*, vol. 1 (Greenock: R. B. Lusk, 1831), 117, 118; quoted in *ST*, 300. In Scottish theology Campbell belongs to a minority group in the tradition of the Marrow men and Thomas Erskine (1788-1870) who did not subscribe to the federal theology of the Westminster Confession, particularly on the doctrine of limited atonement. See *ST*, 287-305; and Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh*, 80-112. Cass argues that regarding Christ’s assumption of fallen human nature, it was Campbell who had the greatest influence on Torrance among Western theologians. Gill disagrees and argues that it was Barth, in “The Doctrine of Revelation,” 54; and MacLeod lists both and adds Edward Irving, in *Jesus is Lord*, 125.

<sup>251</sup> John Knox, *Scots Confession of 1560* (with Introduction by G. D. Henderson; Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1937), 52; in *ST*, 19; *CDG*, 161. McLeod enumerates “an insistence that the suffering of Christ were penal” as one of the characteristic features of Scottish theology in “The Atonement,” 39.

our stead and for our sake, Christ took our lost cause upon himself in submitting to the judgment of God upon our sin that we might be absolved from our guilt at the tribunal seat of God.”<sup>252</sup> Torrance links Christ’s sacrifice on the cross with Christ’s priestly office, particularly with the Hebrew act of *kpr*, which results in the expiation of sin, so that the barrier of sin and guilt between God and humanity is done away with and propitiation is effected between them. Again, while admitting the forensic elements in this, he stresses the personal-ontological.<sup>253</sup>

### *Vicarious Resurrection and Ascension*

The cross is central in Torrance’s soteriology. Following Mackintosh, Torrance repeatedly stressed that the cross is “the window into the heart of God”, for it reveals God’s self-giving love.<sup>254</sup> In Torrance’s theology, however, “centrality” does not entail supremacy or priority. The cross definitely fulfils a unique and distinct significance that the other redemptive experiences of Christ do not convey, but it is only a part of the whole, not an aspect that can stand on its own apart from the virgin birth, resurrection and ascension. This is why Torrance argues that the resurrection and ascension should also be viewed soteriologically. He enumerates two soteriological significances of the resurrection, related to his holistic view of Christ’s incarnational redemption. First, just as Christ embodied in himself humanity’s predicament in his whole life and ministry, in his resurrection he embodied in himself humanity’s final triumph over everything he had assumed. Sin and death were both dealt with through life. It is no wonder that Torrance sees the resurrection as the ground of Christian hope:

The Christian Church that believes in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead has no right to despair of “this weary world” or to be afraid it will crumble away into nothing. Christ is risen! He is completely victorious over the mighty demonic forces of destruction that threaten our world. In him we can lift up our heads and laugh in the face of disaster and death, for in him we are more than conquerors over all, knowing that God who raised Jesus from the dead, wearing our humanity, will not suffer the world for which he died and rose again to see corruption.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> *ST*, 18.

<sup>253</sup> As the High Priest, Jesus is the One representing the Many at the Holy of Holies. See *APWC*, 125-126; *IESNNC*, 137-141; and *IPLC*, 50-52 on Torrance’s similar discussion of the representation of the particular for the universal. The other Hebrew terms Torrance used to describe the aspect of divine redemption are *pdh* and *g’l*, respectively representing Christ’s dramatic and ontological redemptive acts.

<sup>254</sup> *PCT*, 27; *MC*, 109.

<sup>255</sup> *KBBET*, 23.

Apart from the resurrection, therefore, the death of Jesus on the cross could not take on any sacrificial or vicarious significance. It is precisely because Christ triumphed over that which he assumed that Christ's life and death become meaningful. "The resurrection is the fulfilment of the incarnate mission of the Son of God who has taken up our worldly existence and history into himself."<sup>256</sup> Thus, secondly, Christ's resurrection *pro nobis* must be understood in light of his whole vicarious incarnation. Torrance writes:

The resurrection does not come to its real significance unless it is the resurrection of the incarnate and crucified Son of God, that is, unless there is included in the full material content of the resurrection the concrete historical actuality of Jesus Christ in *the whole sequence of his vicarious human life and passion*, for what we have to do with here in the risen Lord is "the whole of Christ," Christ clothed with his Gospel of saving deeds.<sup>257</sup>

Christ died and rose again as the "firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20) in order that we may share in his life. Human life is grounded solely upon the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection, and it is only in our sharing in his vicarious life that we find true life. Furthermore, because the incarnate Christ is the resurrected Christ, his bodily resurrection is an affirmation of our human physical existence, thus vindicating the possibility of corporeal relation to God. This is affirmed in the ascension of Christ in his resurrected body. Jesus is now in perfect communion with the Father in his hypostatic reality, as fully God and fully human. There are profound implications of this. Firstly, the ascension is not an addendum to Christ's incarnational redemption, but is an integral part of it. Particularly, the relationship between the incarnation and the ascension can be described in terms of Christ's *anabasis* and *katabasis*, his redemptive ascent and descent, which complement each other. "In the incarnation," Torrance writes, "we have the meeting of man and God in man's place, but in the ascension we have the meeting of man and God in God's place."<sup>258</sup> Important here is the fact that the bodily presence of Christ, both in the incarnation and ascension, implies the real meeting and interaction between God and humanity. Secondly, the bodily ascension of

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<sup>256</sup> *SPR*, 171; "The First-born of all creation," *LW* (December 1976), 12-14; "Karl Barth: Appreciation and Tribute in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday," *ExT* 67 (1956), 262-263; and "*Phusikos Kai Theologikos Logos*: St Paul and Athenagoras at Athens," *SJT* 41 (1988), 21-24. See Molnar's discussion of how important it is to understand the resurrection as the resurrection of Jesus himself as the incarnate Word for the doctrines of the Trinity and salvation in "Incarnation, Resurrection and the Doctrine of the Trinity: A Comparison of Thomas F. Torrance and Roger Haight," *IJST* 5 (2003), 147-167.

<sup>257</sup> *SPR*, 171 (*italics mine*); *KBBET*, 207-208.

<sup>258</sup> *SPR*, 129.

Christ vindicates our humanity, rather than demolishing it. It sharply repudiates Gnostic and escapist soteriologies that claim the escape of the soul from the physical body (which will be destroyed) in order to relate to God. Thirdly, the ascension points to the continuing bodily and priestly ministry of Christ in the throne of God: “Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Rom 8:34). Christ is still the Mediator and the High Priest atoning for the sins of the world, and who will one day return to consummate his work.

In his understanding of the ascension, Torrance discerns important soteriological points that theologians often miss. Ho argues that Torrance’s understanding of the ascension is nevertheless vulnerable to some criticisms. Ho accuses Torrance of espousing an “open-ended incarnation,” in which the human nature of Christ becomes a permanent reality, because Christ is interceding as human in the presence of the Father.<sup>259</sup> This criticism exemplifies Ho’s ignorance of both historical theology and theological orthodoxy. In fact, Torrance is only affirming the position of the whole Christian church since the early Fathers on the ascension of the human Christ in the right hand of the Father. The inclusion of the clause “whose kingdom shall have no end” in the creeds, J. N. D. Kelly notes, is precisely to counter all remaining Apollinarianism and Marcellianism in the church, and to stress that the incarnation is not merely instrumental or transient.<sup>260</sup> As such, Ho’s critique of Torrance actually comes from a heretical perspective. It is Torrance’s affirmation of the soteriological import of the priestly office of the ascended human Christ that represents the faith of the Christian church. Ho perceives that Torrance holds a progressive incarnation which “challenges the effectiveness and sufficiency of Christ’s atonement on the Cross” by teaching the need for “a continual maintenance by the incarnate Christ.”<sup>261</sup> This is a sharp criticism, perceivably grounded in the presupposition that the atonement is effectively completed in the Cross. However, the recent conclusions by Richard D. Nelson on the role of High Priest in the *Yom Kippur* favours Torrance’s position. Using Old Testament templates of sacrifice from Leviticus 16 and Exodus 24:3-8, Nelson argues that Christ’s sacrificial act can be divided into three stages, the (1) death of the

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<sup>259</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 188. Ho considers Christ’s humanity as merely a transient phenomenon, which is the ground of his critique (p194), and suggests that Torrance’s open-ended incarnation fails to distinguish between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity (p191). The relationship between the incarnation, the evangelical Trinity and the theological Trinity will be discussed in Chapter V.

<sup>260</sup> See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; London: Continuum, 2006), 266-274, 303, 338-339.

<sup>261</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 190.

victim, (2) passage of the priest into the realm of the holy, and (3) use of blood to effect purification and to create a covenantal relationship. Important in this argument is the fact that the death of the sacrifice is not the end of the atoning process, but is actually just a part of the whole. The real consummation of the atonement is the physical presence of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies sprinkling the blood of the sacrificial animal. The ascent of Christ, the sacrifice and the priest, to the presence of God actually constitutes an important aspect of the whole atoning process.<sup>262</sup>

### *Atoning Exchange*

Christ's vicarious work can be summed up in what Torrance calls the "atoning exchange," "reconciling exchange," "blessed exchange," "sacrificial exchange," "wonderful exchange," or "soteriological exchange."<sup>263</sup> Put simply, through the incarnation, Christ took what was ours so that we may partake of what is his. In his entire atoning life, a reconciling exchange is taking place between the Triune God in Christ and humanity in Christ, "between his obedience and our disobedience, his holiness and our sin, his life and our death, his strength and our weakness, his grace and our poverty, his light and our darkness, his wisdom and our ignorance, his joy and our misery, his peace and our dispeace, his immortality and our mortality."<sup>264</sup> This is precisely the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that [we] through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor 8:9). In his salvific *katabasis*, Christ assumed our Adamic humanity in order to live and redeem it, so that by sharing in our human experiences, as the second Adam, our humanness is sanctified in him. Colyer summarizes: "Christ's union with us in our broken and sinful nature entails the humiliation and self-sacrifice of the incarnate Son, but also the transformation and the exaltation of our humanity that is lifted up in and through Christ to share in the communion that God is in God's Trinitarian life."<sup>265</sup> One consideration is that although it is an "exchange," it is more unilateral, for everything is the work of God in Christ from beginning to end.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> See Nelson, "'He Offered Himself': Sacrifice in Hebrews," *Interpretations* 57 (2003), 251-265; and Kang, "The Concept of Vicarious Humanity of Christ," 292-297.

<sup>263</sup> *PCT*, 32-33; *IPLC*, 63; *APWC*, 151-152. See the comprehensive list by Kang on how Torrance uses the word "vicarious" in "The Concept of the Vicarious Humanity of Christ," 26.

<sup>264</sup> *TF*, 181. This echoes Calvin's understanding of the wonderful exchange, in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. Ford Lewis Battles; ed. John T. McNeill; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) [henceforth, *Institutes*] II.16.5.

<sup>265</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 93.

<sup>266</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 112; *PCT*, 32; *APWC*, 148-150.

There are at least three profound implications of the atoning exchange. First, it radicalizes our understanding of God's boundless love. Christ's sacrifice has an infinite worth: "The benefits of God's free gift of Jesus Christ to mankind are as inexhaustible as his love."<sup>267</sup> By virtue of Christ's ontological assumption of the whole human for the whole of humanity, and the evidence of God's unconditional love displayed in Christ, Torrance rejects the Calvinist doctrine (of the Synod of Dort) of limited atonement. But because of this, with his view of the universal range of salvation and his use of universal terminologies, Torrance is accused of holding universalism, or at least possessing a tendency towards it. Torrance himself explicitly rejects universalism, made plain in his quick response to J. A. T. Robinson's article on universalism<sup>268</sup> and in his own explicit denunciations of the concept.<sup>269</sup> Torrance considers both universalism and limited atonement as twin heresies that impiously subjugate the logic of grace to a logico-causal understanding.<sup>270</sup> Nevertheless, as Gunton and Hunsinger discern, Christology has a natural tendency to universalize.<sup>271</sup> This is true in Torrance, because he argues for the ontological oneness between all humanity and Christ by virtue of the hypostatic union, which is the ground of the atoning union and atoning exchange. "Since in him [Christ] divine and human natures are inseparably united, the secret of every man, whether he believes or not, is bound up with Jesus."<sup>272</sup> Such a statement is indeed quite misleading if isolated from Torrance's overall theology. What Torrance affirms is the universal scope, range and sufficiency of Christ's atoning work, but it is not true that he is not concerned with the efficiency and efficacy of the atonement, as Ho mistakenly thinks.<sup>273</sup> In the end, however, Torrance's ultimate stance regarding the apparent discrepancy between the universal range of Christ's atoning work and the reprobation of some – or between *possibility* and *reality* – in the last days, is that of

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<sup>267</sup> *TF*, 181.

<sup>268</sup> See Robinson, "Universalism—Is it Heretical?" *SJT* 2 (1949), 139-145; and Torrance's response "Universalism or Election?" *SJT* 2 (1949), 310-318.

<sup>269</sup> *APWC*, 185; *IPLC*, xlii.

<sup>270</sup> Torrance, "The Atonement," 246-248; *TR*, 190-191.

<sup>271</sup> Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 66; and Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of his Theology* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1991), 128-135; referenced in Gill, "The Doctrine of Revelation," 40. Robert W. Jenson's understanding of the gospel in light of Christ also reflects universalism. For instance, he writes "The gospel is an *unconditional* promise of Fulfillment. The gospel does not merely launch a quest, upon the success of which salvation must depend... It says rather, "Because Jesus, who has bound himself to you unto death, lives, with death behind him, you will surely be fulfilled." See *The Triune Identity*, 26.

<sup>272</sup> *TF*, 183; *SPR*, 47. "It is the divine-human natures of Christ," Torrance writes, "that determines the nature and range of his redeeming work," in "The Atonement," 244.

<sup>273</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 134.

apophatism. Like sin, all he could affirm is that the damnation of sinners is a “strange mystery of iniquity.”<sup>274</sup>

The second implication of the atoning exchange also reveals to us the redemption of suffering. God took upon himself the agonies of the human condition in order to redeem it. Using a rhetorical device which Morrison calls “a contrastive juxtapositioning,”<sup>275</sup> Torrance writes:

In Jesus Christ himself God has penetrated into our passion, our hurt, our violence, our condition under divine judgment, even into our utter dereliction, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”, but in such a profoundly vicarious way that in the very heart of it all, he brought his eternal *serenity* or *apatheia* to bear redemptively upon our passion.<sup>276</sup>

Furthermore, the redemption of our suffering also entails the redemption of our weaknesses. Even the economic ignorance of Christ is vicarious, so that we may know God only according to the knowledge of the man Jesus. Finally, and most importantly, the atoning exchange in Christ reveals the Trinitarian structure of soteriology. Torrance writes: “Since this soteriological exchange takes place within the incarnate constitution of the Mediator who is both God and man in his one Person, it takes place not without but within the very Life of God himself.”<sup>277</sup> The saving life of Jesus Christ is internal to the saving Person of God the Son, issuing from the saving nature of the Triune God. And in a double movement, the descent of the eternal Son is the Triune God’s movement to *initiate and enable* reconciliation decisively with humanity, which is then followed by the ascent of the human Christ to *continue the enabled* relationship with the Triune God.

### Participation “in Christ”

Salvation “in Christ” flows logically from Torrance’s understanding of Christ’s incarnational redemption. It is here that the influences of Calvin’s participation soteriology and Mackintosh’s doctrine of the *unio mystica* in Torrance are readily discernible.<sup>278</sup> As Robert Redman concludes, both Mackintosh and Torrance heavily

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<sup>274</sup> *AT*, 105. In *APWC*, 156, Torrance argues that reprobation in the last days is accidental to salvation.

<sup>275</sup> Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-revealing God*, 180.

<sup>276</sup> *TF*, 185; *IPLC*, 66.

<sup>277</sup> *CDG*, 250-251; *ST*, 78.

<sup>278</sup> See Torrance, “Hugh Ross Mackintosh: Theologian of the Cross,” *SBET* 5 (1987), 163, 166-168. On the participation soteriology of Calvin, see Julie Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God,” *IJST* 6 (April 2004), 169-184; Trevor Hart, “‘Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind’: Salvation as Participation in our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,” *SJT* 42 (1989), 67-84; Carl

relied on the Pauline and Johannine expression “in Christ” to express the reality of the relationship between us, the redeemed, and Christ, the Redeemer.<sup>279</sup> Clearly, therefore, the relational and more participative aspects are highlighted. Another important consideration is that our being “in Christ” should be understood in light of Torrance’s Trinitarian emphasis. Our being in Christ implies not only relationship with Christ but with the Triune God. Christ is the Mediator between humanity and God and by being “in Christ” we are also “in the Triune God”: “This union between humanity and God in Christ entails our adoption as daughters and sons of God in Christ, or *our participation in the communion of God’s Trinitarian life, light and love.*”<sup>280</sup>

### *Union with Christ*

Habets argues that Torrance scholars generally agree that Torrance’s doctrine of reconciliation can be expressed in terms of a theology of “union with Christ.”<sup>281</sup> While this conclusion is true, it appears that his fascination with the doctrine of *theosis* moved him to presuppose that “union with Christ is... informed by the more determinative doctrine of *theosis*.”<sup>282</sup> The question, however, is whether this properly represents Torrance’s theology, or whether it is not rather an overestimation of *theosis*. Considering Torrance’s integrative approach, it is more appropriate to conclude that Torrance employs *theosis* and union with Christ interchangeably to articulate the reality of our salvation “in Christ,” not in the manner of categorizing one under the other.

Torrance’s understanding of humanity’s union with Christ is grounded in the one person of Jesus Christ, the hypostatic union. Union with Christ, therefore, must primarily be understood as the reconciling initiative of God accomplished ontologically through Christ’s incarnate life. “Hypostatic union and atoning union implied and

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Mosser, “The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification,” *SJT* (2002), 36-57; and Jonathan Slater, “Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator in Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: A Reply to Carl Mosser,” *SJT* 58 (2005), 39-58.

<sup>279</sup> See Redman, “*Participatio Christi*: H. R. Mackintosh’s Theology of the Unio Mystica,” *SJT* 49 (1996), 201-222; and “H. R. Mackintosh’s Contribution to Christology and Soteriology in the Twentieth Century,” *SJT* 41 (1988), 526-528; and on the relationship between Mackintosh and Torrance, see “Mackintosh, Torrance and Reformulation of Reformed Theology in Scotland,” *Participatio* 2 (2010), 64-76.

<sup>280</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 252 (*italics mine*).

<sup>281</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 93. He refers to the following writings that support his argument: C. Baxter Kruger, “The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Theology of T. F. Torrance: Sharing in the Son’s Communion with the Father in the Spirit,” *SJT* 43 (1990), 373; and Lee, *Living in Union with Christ* (2003).

<sup>282</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 93. “*Theosis*,” for Habets, is “foundational to Torrance’s theology and is one way in which he holds together in systematic fashion his diverse theological *oeuvre*,” in *Theosis*, ix, 16.

interpenetrated each other in Christ's mediation of reconciliation to mankind."<sup>283</sup> In the complete union of the human and the divine in Christ, vicariously and redemptively, the incarnate Son assumed our humanity and opened his mutual relation with the Father for human participation. This is why Torrance argues that the hypostatic union is "the ground for all Christ's mediatorial and reconciling activity."<sup>284</sup> But what is at stake in Christ's reconciling work expressed in "union with Christ"? First, because of the hypostatic union, there exists now an unbreakable ontological bond between God and humanity, a bond achieved within the personal constitution of Jesus Christ the Mediator throughout his life. This is what Torrance calls "the third dimension."<sup>285</sup> In *Incarnation*, Torrance speaks of "the once and for all union of God and man," and the "continuous union in the historical life and obedience of Jesus" to balance the already, the on-going and the not yet.<sup>286</sup> Habets expresses it differently but in a way which is complementary to Torrance's agenda: "Union with Christ has a pretemporal basis (in God's electing will), an historical application (in the incarnate life and death of Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit), and an eschatological orientation (in both sanctification and glorification)."<sup>287</sup>

Secondly, union with Christ implies our sharing in the benefits of his atoning exchange.<sup>288</sup> To guard against any form of Pelagianism, Torrance stresses the sole Mediatorial role of Christ in his Being and Act.<sup>289</sup> Christ already did everything for our salvation in his vicarious life and death. Whether this is a strength or weakness in Torrance's theology can be judged differently from various perspectives, but his Christocentric soteriology tends to promote human passive participation, in that the only human role in the redemption drama is to share in what Christ already did for us and in us. This is why Colyer describes this aspect of Torrance's theology as "a controversial area."<sup>290</sup> For instance, concerning faith, Torrance argues that

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<sup>283</sup> *MC*, 66.

<sup>284</sup> *MC*, 64-65.

<sup>285</sup> *KBBET*, 22.

<sup>286</sup> In fact most of the book is focused on the hypostatic union, but see particularly chapters Three to Six.

<sup>287</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 93. Concerning the application of Christ's works in our humanity, Torrance preached that Christ is the link between what has already happened in us and what is yet to be fulfilled. See *WCCCA*, 170.

<sup>288</sup> Dawson, *An Introduction*, 7, 44. In *TR*, 158, Torrance writes: "It is only through union with Christ that we partake of the blessing of Christ, that is through union with him in his holy and obedient life. Through being united with him we share in his judgment and his exaltation."

<sup>289</sup> See also James B. Torrance, "Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland," *SJT* 23 (1970), 76.

<sup>290</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 113.

We must think of Jesus as stepping into the relation between the faithfulness of God and the actual unfaithfulness of human beings... Jesus steps into the actual situation where we are summoned to have faith in God, to believe and to trust in him, and he acts in our place and in our stead from within the depths of our unfaithfulness and provides us freely with a faithfulness in which we may share... if we think of belief, trust or faith as forms of human activity before God, then *we must think of Jesus Christ as believing, trusting and having faith in God the Father on our behalf and in our place.*<sup>291</sup>

In being united with Christ, then, “through his incarnational and atoning union with us our faith is implicated in his faith.”<sup>292</sup> Similarly, our knowledge of God is a sharing in the knowledge of the incarnate Son, our “cognitive union with Christ.”<sup>293</sup> Furthermore, salvation, faith, worship, and knowledge of God were all accomplished in Christ’s hypostatic person for us and on our behalf.<sup>294</sup> This follows logically from Torrance’s stress on the vicarious humanity of Jesus, which includes his vicarious response for humanity to God’s judgment and love.

We are to think of the whole life and activity of Jesus from the cradle to the grave as constituting the vicarious human response to himself which God has freely and unconditionally provided for us... Jesus Christ *is* our human response to God. Thus we appear before God and are accepted by him as those who are inseparably united to Jesus Christ our great High Priest in his eternal self-presentation to the Father.<sup>295</sup>

Torrance’s radical emphasis on the objective vicarious act of Christ raises the suspicion of a neglect of the subjective pole in salvation.<sup>296</sup> Torrance’s choice of terminologies has made him vulnerable to this critique. For instance, he argues: “We are to think of the whole human race, and indeed of the whole creation as in profound sense already redeemed, resurrected, and consecrated for the glory and worship of God.”<sup>297</sup> As noticeable, the critique of universalism against Torrance is the twin sister of the critique of his neglect of *our* human involvement in salvation. Torrance’s

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<sup>291</sup> *MC*, 82-83 (*italics mine*).

<sup>292</sup> *MC*, 84.

<sup>293</sup> *TF*, 58-59; *MC*, 116.

<sup>294</sup> See *MC*, chapter 4. On the vicarious nature of worship in Christ, see *IESNCC*, 128-137. See also Kang’s detailed treatment of the vicarious response of Christ for all humanity in “The Concept of Vicarious Humanity of Christ,” chapter 6.

<sup>295</sup> *MC*, 80.

<sup>296</sup> Barth shares the same target of this critique. See John Thompson, “Christology and Reconciliation in the Theology of Barth,” in *Christ in Our Place: The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World* (eds. Trevor Hart and Daniel Thimell; Exeter: Paternoster, 1989), 221-222; and Paul T. Nimmo, “Karl Barth and the *Concursus Dei* – A Chalcedonianism Too Far?” *IJST* 9 (2007), 58-72.

<sup>297</sup> *TF*, 183; “The Atonement,” 244.

objection to what Cass calls “soteriological existentialism” is unquestionable,<sup>298</sup> but it is still scripturally inaccurate to ignore the important part played by *our* grace-enabled response as human beings. This is important in our being truly transformed into a new creation, because if our conversion means sharing in the conversion brought by Jesus Christ alone, then it would appear that the only truly converted One is Jesus.<sup>299</sup> But the real danger of Torrance’s view of a *totus/totus* vicarious act of Christ is that it logically leads to a coercive divine Love, especially because he holds that “no rejection or unbelief on our part can undo what Christ has done on our behalf or can undo the all-decisive impact of his passion and resurrection on our human existence, so that we are quite unable to cut ourselves off from the resurrection of all men, the just and the unjust, at the last day.”<sup>300</sup> In the words of Cass, “we are converted against our will in the freeing and renewal of our will.”<sup>301</sup> A further implication of Torrance’s Christocentrism, according to Lee, is that salvation is merely discovery of what has already been fulfilled.<sup>302</sup> Eschatologically, this is untenable, because the Bible suggests that in the day of judgement, some people indeed “discover” that they are not saved (see Matthew 7:15-23).

Thirdly, union with Christ implies our sharing in his relationship with the Father, and our participation in the very life and communion of the Triune God. Redman is right in saying that “in Christ” expresses the continued fellowship of the disciples with Christ even after his ascension.<sup>303</sup> Jesus’ admonition to “remain” in him (John 15) stresses the personal element of relationship. But Torrance also emphasizes that relationship with Christ is not the end of Christ’s reconciling work. The true *telos* of Christ’s reconciling activity is for humanity to enter into the communion with the Trinity: “It is not atonement that constitutes the goal and end of that integrated movement of reconciliation but union with God in and through Jesus Christ in whom our human nature is not only saved, healed and renewed but lifted up to participate in the very light, life and love of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>304</sup> This is why alongside Dawson and Colyer we are justified in saying that Torrance’s soteriology is Trinitarian.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh*, 177.

<sup>299</sup> *MC*, 85; *RET*, 89.

<sup>300</sup> Torrance, “Immortality and Light,” *Religious Studies* 17 (1981), 157.

<sup>301</sup> Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh*, 202.

<sup>302</sup> Lee, *Living in Union*, 314.

<sup>303</sup> Redman, “*Participatio Christi*,” 202.

<sup>304</sup> *MC*, 66.

<sup>305</sup> Dawson, “Far as the Curse is Found,” 72; and Colyer, *How to Read*, 93. See also *TF*, 180.

*Justification in Christ*

Torrance's doctrine of justification accomplishes two interrelated aims: (1) positively, to stress the priority of Christ, and (2) negatively, to combat what he calls "a gospel of external relations." First, Torrance is adamant that justification should be expounded in light of the vicarious Person and Work of Christ. Fuelled by the emphasis on the objectivity of salvation, he explains that justification was accomplished by Christ for us—the weight being given to *Christ* rather than *for us*. Torrance is critical of Roman Catholics, evangelicals and liberals who preach an anthropocentric salvation and stress human, personal or existential decision to gain salvation. This is why he views "justifying faith" as inappropriate, for it promotes the human act, rather than the mediatorial and vicarious ministry of Christ. By contrast, Torrance elaborates "justification by faith" from a participative approach, which is grounded in our union with Christ.<sup>306</sup> This implies that *our* faith is actually *Christ's* faith made vicariously for us. It is Christ's faith and vicarious obedience to the Father that is important, not ours. By being in Christ, we then participate and share in his faith. Quoting the seventeenth-century Scottish minister James Fraser of Brae, Torrance stresses "the correlation of our faith with the faith of God and the faith of Christ," because "human faith derives from, rests on, and is undergirded by divine faithfulness."<sup>307</sup> C. F. D. Moule criticizes this, stating that it does not consider the polarities of faith. Moule's view is partly right: Torrance has a tendency towards a one-sided view of the *pistis Christou*. On the other hand, Torrance's programme against an existential understanding of faith, prominent in most Evangelical theology, is also praiseworthy. He is not really opposed to human faith, and considers it "absolutely essential," but he argues that "the faithfulness of Christ" should be "the main ingredient."<sup>308</sup> At stake, Torrance argues, is the all-sufficiency of Christ, "for it is on Christ and his all-sufficiency in his obedient life and death, and God's good-will toward sinners incarnated in him, that believing faith is grounded."<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> *KC*, 102-103.

<sup>307</sup> James Fraser, *A Treatise on Justifying Faith* (Edinburgh: William Gray, 1749), 3; quoted in *ST*, 184.

<sup>308</sup> Torrance, "The Biblical Conception of Faith," *ExT* 68 (1957), 221. This article is a response to Moule's criticism of Torrance's earlier article "One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith," *ExT* 68 (1957), 111-114.

<sup>309</sup> *ST*, 187. The disagreement between Moule and Torrance is reflected later in the debate about whether *pistis Christou* should be interpreted as objective or as subjective genitive, with James D. G. Dunn and Richard B. Hays as the main proponents. See Dunn, "Once More, *Pistis Christou*," in *Pauline*

Torrance speaks of how our justification happens wholly in Christ by expounding the complementary relationship between *objective justification* and *subjective justification*. Objective justification refers to what took place in Christ before the Father as the incarnate Son of God, which Torrance calls Christ's "incarnational fraternity."<sup>310</sup> Through his active and passive obedience, Christ embodied in himself both God's judgment and love in order to redeem us and reconcile us back to God. Subjective justification refers to the act of Christ on our behalf—highlighting his redemptive roles "as our Substitute and Representative who appropriated the divine Act of saving Righteousness for us."<sup>311</sup> What happened to Christ in his life, death and resurrection becomes ours, because Christ did them not for his own sake but for our sake.

Justification has been fulfilled subjectively as well as objectively in Jesus Christ, but that objective and subjective justification is objective to us. It is freely imputed to us by grace objectively and we through the Spirit share in it subjectively as we are united to Christ. His subjective justification becomes ours, and it is subjective in us as well as in him, but only subjective in us because it has been made subjectively real in our human nature, in our own human flesh in Jesus, our Brother, and our Mediator.<sup>312</sup>

Secondly, because justification is accomplished *in Christ by Christ for us*, Torrance argues that left on their own, forensic and juridical views of atonement are insufficient in expressing Christ's personal agency, because they lead to an instrumental view of Christ. Justification, following this line of thought, appears like an external transaction between God and humanity through a third party. Furthermore, Torrance argues that several other errors which he found in federal-contractual Reformed theology spring from this extrinsicist perspective, such as double predestination and limited atonement.<sup>313</sup> Habets is right that Torrance did not really reject the Reformed

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*Theology*, vol. 4: *Looking Back, Pressing On* (eds. Elizabeth Johnson and David M. Hay; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 61-81, and Hays, "Pistis and Pauline Christology: What is at Stake?" 35-60, from the same book. Hays' arguments affirm Torrance's position. See also Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Morna D. Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," *NT Studies* 35 (1989), 321-342. For a consideration of patristic interpretations, see Michael F. Bird and Michael R. Whitenton, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Hippolytus's *De Christo et AntiChristo*: Overlooked Patristic Evidence in the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate," *NT Studies* 55 (2009), 552-562; and Michael R. Whitenton, "After ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: Neglected Evidence from the Apostolic Fathers," *JThS* 61 (2010), 82-109. For the soteriological implications of the positions in the debate, see David L. Stubbs, "The Shape of Soteriology and the *Pistis Christou* Debate," *SJT* 61 (2008), 137-157.

<sup>310</sup> *TR*, 153.

<sup>311</sup> *TR*, 157; *APWC*, 120-124.

<sup>312</sup> *TR*, 160.

<sup>313</sup> *ST*, 137.

doctrine of imputation, but deepened it with the ontological perspective by relocating it within his participation theology.<sup>314</sup> Cass also argues that Torrance's position takes up both Eastern and Western soteriological concerns, in an integrative whole, thus making his position superior to others.<sup>315</sup>

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Torrance's position tends more towards the ontological aspect, particularly because of his emphasis on justification, grounded in a "theology of internal relations," and the vicarious nature of Christ's redemptive agency.<sup>316</sup> Justification happens in Christ and consequently, in us. At the cross and in the resurrection, a positive ontological transformation, there and then, happens in us (and all of humanity) through and in Christ. "Justification is... importing new humanity."<sup>317</sup> Through union with Christ, righteousness is imputed to us—"not just in terms of imputed righteousness but in terms of a participation in the righteousness of Christ which is transferred to us."<sup>318</sup> Thus,

Justification means not simply the non-imputation of our sins through the pardon of Christ, but positive sharing in his human righteousness... it is only through this union of our human nature with his divine nature that Jesus Christ gives us not only the *negative righteousness* of the remission of sins but also a share in the *positive righteousness of his obedient and loving life lived in perfect filial relation on earth to the heavenly Father*.<sup>319</sup>

Justification, Habets properly concludes, is not simply a declaratory act, but an actualisation of what was declared and what happened at the cross.<sup>320</sup> Justification and sanctification happen in us "in Christ." Torrance points to the resurrection as the evidence of this reality. Jesus was not only declared righteous by God but raised him from the dead. The Amen of God to Christ was tangible, true and effective.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 100; Hart, "Humankind in Christ," 67-84; Torrance, "The Atonement," 253-256.

<sup>315</sup> Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh*, 10, 283, and chapter 4 for elaboration.

<sup>316</sup> *KBBET*, 217.

<sup>317</sup> *ST*, 20. Torrance also stresses that the new humanity that we become through union with Christ also means the beginning of increase and growth, in *KC*, 94, 100-104.

<sup>318</sup> Torrance, "The Distinctive Character of the Reformed Tradition," 6; quoted in Habets, *Theosis*, 100.

<sup>319</sup> *IPLC*, 81-82. "We are now made through justification by grace to share in the righteousness of God in Christ," Torrance writes in "The Atonement," 254.

<sup>320</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 118.

<sup>321</sup> *SPR*, 63. Torrance adds that this is not just an eschatological hope, but is also "a continuing act of Christ, in whom we are continuously being cleansed, forgiven, renewed, and made righteous." Justification is accomplished by Christ in the past, is realised in us in the present, and will find its culmination in the future. See *SPR*, 64-65.

## CONCLUSIONS

Torrance's understanding of salvation in Christ is grounded in the reality of the incarnation of the Son, who, as fully human, is also *homoousios* with the Father. As the Son, his descent to created space and time is a salvific movement accomplished by the Triune God in drawing Himself near us in revelation and reconciliation. Likewise, his ascent as fully human to the throne of God in his ascension is a salvific movement accomplished from the side of humanity, on behalf of humanity. God's initiative in electing us to salvation is characterised by a double movement: God in Christ's human-ward movement and human in Christ's God-ward movement.<sup>322</sup> Christ vicariously redeemed us not only from the side of humanity, but from the side of God. Salvation is accomplished by Christ not solely in what he did, but primarily in who he is as fully God and fully human. The Being, Person and Work of Christ are one. His salvific work is his salvific Person. This is another way of saying that Christ's distinct salvific agency is also grounded in his hypostasis as the Son, which can be called *kath hypostasin economy*.

Torrance's soteriology, contrary to criticisms of Christomonism, is actually far from it. It is indubitable that Torrance is thoroughly Christocentric. However, his Christocentrism is just an introduction to his Trinitarian theology. His starting point is definitely Christological, but he also stresses that our salvation is accomplished by the Triune God in Christ, not by Christ alone. Furthermore, the end of the gift of reconciliation in Christ is not reconciliation with one Person, but with the Triune God. Just as the Being and Work of the Triune God is the origin of reconciliation, the *telos* and end of human salvation is also reconciliation and relationship with the Triune God, accomplished in Christ. Thus, Torrance writes that the incarnation is "at once the act of God's humiliation and the act of man's exaltation, for he who is such amazing grace descended to make our lost cause his own, ascended in accomplishment of his task, elevating man into union and communion with the life of God."<sup>323</sup> Just as the Triune God is in the world in Christ, so is humanity in Christ lifted up to the Triune Life and Love. This chapter focused on the reconciling work of the Triune God in Christ, but Torrance's Trinitarian theology also discusses the distinct agency of the Father and the Spirit. In fact, even in the life and work of Christ the Son, Torrance admits the co-

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<sup>322</sup> *IESNNC*, 136, 141-145; *TF*, 149; *CDG*, 161.

<sup>323</sup> *IPLC*, 57; *CDG*, 128.

working of the Father and the Spirit.<sup>324</sup> The next chapter, thus, deals with the Person and Work of the Father in the economy of reconciliation.

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<sup>324</sup> This is especially emphasized by Torrance in his discussion of “*perichoresis* and the co-activity of the Holy Trinity,” in *CDG*, 194-202.

### Chapter III

## THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER

Following the discussion of the Person and Work of the Son in the economy of salvation, we proceed to the Person and Work of the Father in Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology. Here, it is already presupposed that the Father is involved in his hypostasis as the Father in the salvific economy. This in itself stands as a distinct emphasis in Torrance's soteriology, because not so many soteriological formulations even mention the Father's active involvement in the economy. Against binitarian "two hands" *missio Dei* formulations, as such, this constitutes another important contribution by Torrance to theology, grounded in his two-tiered *kataphysic soteriology*. The first part of this chapter deals with the Person of the Father, emphasizing Torrance's Christo-conditioned approach to knowledge of the Father, in which his biblical and realist theology is brought into sharp contrast with all abstractive and speculative approaches to the doctrine of the Father. The second section deals with the distinct Work of the Father in the economy of salvation. This separation is only pedagogically helpful, because in reality, the Person and Work of the Father are indivisible, as will be made manifest in the unavoidable overlaps in presentation.

### THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER

#### **"No One Comes to the Father Except through Me"**

While it is true that the Son takes priority in the order of knowing, Torrance asserts that in the order of being, the Father comes first, precisely in virtue of his being the Father to the Son.<sup>325</sup> This does not mean, however, that the priority of the Person of the Father should be understood in terms of temporal priority or ontological superiority. Rather, for Torrance the priority of the Father should be understood in terms of relation: "The relation of the Son and the Father is irreversible, for 'the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son'."<sup>326</sup> That such a priority is inverted in Christian epistemology is a mystery of the Gospel, expressed gnominically by Jesus' claim that "no one comes to the

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<sup>325</sup> CDG, 137. Thus, as Edith Humphrey notes, starting with the Son is of heuristic significance, in "The Gift of the Father," in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship* (eds. Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 101.

<sup>326</sup> CDG, 137; quoting Augustine, *De Trinitate* 4.20.27 (NPNF 3): 83.

Father except through me” (John 14:6). Christian theology (concerned particularly with the Trinitarian economy of salvation and the knowledge of God made available for humanity through it), to remain faithful to Jesus’ model, should begin precisely where the God-incarnate wants it to begin: “through me [Jesus].” This Christocentric approach to the Father is enveloped within Torrance’s Christocentric approach to the Trinity in general.<sup>327</sup> God can be known only *through* his acts, *by* his acts, and *in* his acts. But it is precisely because God is a Personal Being that his dealings with humanity are also personal. Humanity through Christ is in personal encounter with the Triune God, which is why the Nicene *homoousios* plays a vital role: “It is only in him who is both *homoousios* with the Father and *homoousios* with us, that we may really know God as he is in himself and in accordance with his nature.”<sup>328</sup> Torrance highlights that human knowledge of the Father in Christ is *participative*: it is only possible through our *participation* in Christ in revelation, worship and reconciliation.

#### *Participation in Revelation*

In Torrance’s Christian epistemology, the conviction that only God knows himself fully, and that only by God is God known is fundamental.<sup>329</sup> In essential reality, therefore, only the Father, Son and Holy Spirit know one another, and only through God’s gracious and free decision does God make himself known to created existents. Two aspects are important to consider in our human knowledge of God: (1) God has enabled humanity to know God in Christ, and (2) God in Christ has prescribed the way to know him. Torrance speaks of the second as “the covenanted way of vicarious response to God” through and in Christ.<sup>330</sup> Outside of Christ, or “behind the back of Christ,”<sup>331</sup> there is no genuine knowledge of God. Torrance’s rejection of both the traditional arguments for natural theology and speculative abstractions concerning God from philosophical presuppositions is rooted here.

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<sup>327</sup> Kevin Giles identifies four possible starting points for thinking about the Trinity practised within semantics: starting with the Father, starting with the divine Three, starting with the idea of a divine substance, or starting with the notion of the Trinity. While these are philosophically plausible, Giles, like Torrance, chooses not to ask the question of possibility. For both of them, this should be rephrased as the question of historicity: “Where *did* thinking about the Trinity begin?” Unquestionably, it began with the doxological apprehension that Jesus is Lord, leading to the creedal affirmation that Jesus is *homoousios* with the Father. See *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 77; and Humphrey, “The Gift of the Father,” 85.

<sup>328</sup> *TF*, 203; *IESNCC*, xx.

<sup>329</sup> Kang, “Epistemological Significance,” 351-353.

<sup>330</sup> *MC*, 78.

<sup>331</sup> *WCCCA*, 86; *CTSC*, 130.

Underlying this argument for the covenanted way of response in Christ is Torrance's strong emphasis on the personal nature of revelation. First, the revelation of God is essentially the revelation of Persons, and only secondarily the revelation of facts. This can be perceived dialectically: just as the revealed is a Person, so the Revealer revealing is also a Person.<sup>332</sup> Thus, the Person of the Father is revealed in the Person of the Son, for in the revelation of the Son, the Father is also revealed.

What God the Father has revealed of himself in Jesus Christ his Son, he is in himself; and what he is in himself as God the Father he reveals in Jesus Christ the Son. The Father and the Son are One, one in Being and one in Agency. Thus in Jesus Christ the Mediation of divine Revelation and the Person of the Mediator perfectly coincide. In Jesus Christ God has given us a Revelation which is identical with himself. Jesus Christ *is* the Revelation of God.<sup>333</sup>

The Father is revealed, therefore, not primarily through semantics or other human symbols, but through the Person of Jesus Christ. Secondly, the personal nature of revelation is evidenced in the way it is received by humanity. According to Habets, "Knowledge is fundamentally relational, not merely cognitive; it is a *personal* knowing that comes only by *personal* participation."<sup>334</sup> This represents Torrance's assertion that knowledge of Persons is only possible in reciprocal relations, and that no one knows the Father except the Son, and that a perfect and complete knowledge of the Other is only shared by them.<sup>335</sup> Thus, he infers, "We are given access to the closed circle of divine knowing between the Father and the Son only through cognitive union with Christ, that is, only through an interrelation of knowing and being between us and the incarnate Son."<sup>336</sup> Humanity has no independent knowledge of the Father apart from sharing in the Son's knowledge of the Father.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> The influence of Barth here is undeniable. See *Church Dogmatics* I/1: 295-299.

<sup>333</sup> *MC*, 23. Thus, Torrance also argues that the real text of the New Testament is the humanity of Christ – the real text of God's address to us, in *MC*, 78.

<sup>334</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 96; Colyer, *How to Read*, 109, 128, 139, 357.

<sup>335</sup> *MC*, 25; *TF*, 56, 58, 212; *CDG*, 77-78; *RET*, 111; *DJC*, 44; *TRE*, 223; *DM*, 187; and *KBBET*, 214.

<sup>336</sup> *TF*, 59. Torrance further writes: "The relation between the Father and the Son, and the Son and the Father is a *closed relation*, but entry into it is given through the incarnation of the Son, for in the perfect human life of Jesus the love and truth of God are addressed to man in the concrete form of a historical relationship of man to fellow man, of this man to others." See *IPLC*, 128 (*italics mine*); and Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 60.

<sup>337</sup> *TF*, 55, 56, 60, 82; *GR*, 174; *MC*, 116. See also Kruger, "Doctrine of the Knowledge of God," 368; Colyer, *How to Read*, 134-135; Kang, "Epistemological Significance," 349-350.

*Participation in Worship*

Along with his brother James, Torrance contends for a Christocentric and Trinitarian view of worship that is guided by the life and work of the incarnate Son.<sup>338</sup> Central to their arguments is the sole mediation of Jesus as the God-man in his humanward and Godward agency, and the concomitant emphasis on the sole priesthood of Christ *pro nobis* both in the past and in the present. In Jesus' earthly human life and perfect obedience to the Father unto death, he is humanity's only and perfect representative, responding to the Father's words and lifting humanity's prayers in his prayers.<sup>339</sup> Likewise, the ascended Christ is still vicariously interceding in his resurrected human body as our high priest in the presence of the Father. As such, as is true in revelation and reconciliation, so in worship Jesus is embodying in himself the covenanted way of human approach to the Father in worship.<sup>340</sup> This is the doxological implication of Christ's incarnation and ascension.

That Christ is the way to the Father in worship also emphasizes the role of the human mind of Christ.<sup>341</sup> Scorning the Apollinarian tendency of contemporary worship, Torrance reiterates that in Christian worship, the essential role of the human mind of Christ in the mediation of our worship to the Father is non-negotiable. "Once we lose sight of the vicarious role of the mind of Christ in its oneness with the mind of the Father, the whole meaning of worship changes and with it the basic structure and truth of liturgy."<sup>342</sup> Because Jesus is the only one who knows the Father and who offers perfect worship to the Father, worship is "the gift of participating through the Spirit in the Son's communion with the Father—of participating, in union with Christ, in what *he* has done for us once and for all in his life and death on the Cross, and in what *he* is continuing to do for us in the presence of the Father."<sup>343</sup> This, according to Torrance, is what makes the Christian view of worship distinct, in that the emphasis is given in what

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<sup>338</sup> This is characteristic of the Torrance theological tradition. See James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 20-24, where he refers to this approach, in contrast to the unitarian view of worship, as the Nicene model. See also "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ," in *IESNCC*, 135-137; and Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Descriptions and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 360. The crucial point is the vicarious whole humanity of Christ (*TRE*, 213).

<sup>339</sup> Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 64; *TRE*, 209; *IPLC*, 120. Even praying the Lord's Prayer means that we pray with the prayer of Jesus, in *TRE*, 211. See also Slater, "Salvation as Participation," 58.

<sup>340</sup> *MC*, 87.

<sup>341</sup> *TRE*, 139.

<sup>342</sup> *TRE*, 140.

<sup>343</sup> *IESNCC*, 128.

the God-man did and does rather than what other humans do; and absolute priority is given to the sole priesthood of Christ and our sharing in his priesthood.<sup>344</sup>

### *Participation in Reconciliation*

For Torrance the gospel of salvation depends on the inner relations between the life and activity of Jesus Christ and the Father.<sup>345</sup> As Jesus is the way to the Father in knowledge and worship, so too he is the only way to reconciliation with God. Reconciliation is the necessary presupposition of our knowledge and worship of the Father. This should not be understood in an existentialist I-am-reconciled-therefore-I-know approach but in light of Christ's work *pro nobis*. Torrance's emphasis that reconciliation precedes humanity's knowledge of God is a further contribution to theology, and is an antidote to the common perspective in existentialist evangelical theology that *Wissen* (knowledge of facts) precedes *Kennen* (personal knowledge). Torrance inverts the *ordo cognoscendi*, arguing that we are reconciled in Christ first, through his vicarious life and obedience, before we can be brought up into the presence of God. This consistently ties with his assertion that God cannot be known at a distance or in detachment.<sup>346</sup> To be in relation and to know are inseparable. Reconciliation in Christ through his atoning life and death, and union with him in his death and resurrection, enable us to share in the inner relations of God's own circle of knowing. Again, Torrance's emphasis on the objective accomplishment of Christ two thousand years ago is unmistakable here:

By his blood Christ has reconciled us to God and thereby opened the way for all who believe in his name to enter with him into the holy presence of God and share in the gift of the Holy Spirit which he received from the Father. Thus through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Communion of the Holy Spirit we sinful human beings may have access to the love of the Father, and know him not from afar but intimately as he is in himself.<sup>347</sup>

Christ's twofold movement of atoning propitiation in the incarnation and atonement is the Father's appointed way of drawing himself near to us and us near to him. It is only through Christ's sole mediatorial role, his assumption and sanctification of our humanity, and our consequent participation in his sanctified vicarious humanity, that we are given access to the life and love of the Triune God.

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<sup>344</sup> *TDORC I*, 5, 8; *TRE*, 140.

<sup>345</sup> *TF*, 326; *MC*, 118.

<sup>346</sup> See Torrance, *ST*, 6. In *WCCCA*, 135, 138, Torrance also argues that we cannot come before God unclean, or come before God as spectators.

<sup>347</sup> *MC*, 108-109.

## The Father of the Son

Torrance argues that God may be known only through his own act of Self-revelation, and not through any speculative formulation grounded upon abstract principles and presuppositions derived from extrabiblical sources. Thus he opposes the approach employed in most theology textbooks that begin by enumerating the attributes of God prior to a presentation of God's historical acts.<sup>348</sup> More importantly, respecting the nature of God as Triune requires that relationship or Communion is employed as the primary category in the identification of any of the Persons. Correspondingly, "the Father is not properly Father apart from the Son and the Spirit, and the Son is not properly Son apart from the Father and Spirit, and the Spirit is not properly Spirit apart from the Father and the Son."<sup>349</sup> This is even more significant, considering that in the doctrine of the Trinity we are concerned with Persons-in-relations, whose very nature is what Nazianzen called *pros ti*, understood as meaning "Being for."<sup>350</sup>

The church fathers, according to Torrance, already discerned the necessity of approaching the Father in terms of Christ's essential relationship with Him, as manifested in the Gospels. Therefore, it is only in light of what the incarnate Son revealed throughout his historical existence that we can know the Father, Jesus' Father. And because Jesus is the incarnate Son of the Father, then the relationship between them in the economy of salvation is *revelation* itself. "God was Father because he was his Father and he was his Son."<sup>351</sup> And, because Jesus called the Father "Abba", and not something else, Torrance follows Athanasius' argument that "It would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father, than to name God from his works and call him Unoriginate."<sup>352</sup> Athanasius' statement cannot be isolated from his reaction against the Arians, who erroneously approached the being of the Son in terms of creation rather than his relationship to the Father. Torrance argues that personal relations have priority over relations of functions in theology, because knowing the

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<sup>348</sup> For instance, see Torrance's repudiation of attributing Omnipotence to God apart from what God actually is and actually has done, in *TF*, 82; and *CDG*, 14, 19, 21, 204-205. It is postsupposition, rather than presupposition. Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, 26, 36; see also McGrath, *Intellectual Biography*, 148.

<sup>349</sup> *TP*, 141.

<sup>350</sup> *CDG*, 163. See also Colyer, *How to Read*, 312-313.

<sup>351</sup> *IESNCC*, 22. "There is only the God and Father who has revealed Himself to us in our Lord Jesus Christ and with whom Jesus is completely one," Torrance writes in "Jesus is God and Man in One Person," *LW* (March 1986), 17.

<sup>352</sup> *TF*, 49; quoting Athanasius, *Contra Arianus* I.34 (*NPNF* 4): 326; *De Decretis* 31 (*NPNF* 4): 171-172.

Father in terms of the Creator-creation relation does not provide direct and personal revelation, but only external and negative affirmations. Thinking and speaking about God from the perspective of creation, or from the Unoriginate/originate relation, means “we can only think and speak of him in vague, general and negative terms, at the infinite distance of the creature from the Creator where we cannot know God as he is in himself or in accordance with his divine nature, but only in his absolute separation from us, as the eternal, unconditioned and indescribable.”<sup>353</sup> More positively, knowing the Father in terms of the Father-Son relation is knowing him as He is in his Being—thus, knowing him *kata physin*.

If we are to have any true and precise scientific knowledge of God, we must allow his own nature, as he becomes revealed to us, to determine how we are to know him, how we are to think of him, and what we are to say to him. That is what happens when we approach God the Father through Jesus Christ his Son, for the Son is of one and the same nature and being as the Father... He is God of God, the one way of access to God the Father.<sup>354</sup>

Thus, in both the order of being and acting, and our knowledge of the Father, there is the absolute priority of the Fatherhood of God over his designation as Creator. “The concept of God as Creator is wholly governed by the coinherent relation between the Father and the Son and the inseparable activity in which they are engaged.”<sup>355</sup>

### **“Father” as God’s Name**

Knowing the Father based on the Son’s relationship with him in the Gospels prevents us from imposing and importing into the Father our own earthly and human categories of fatherhood. Torrance rejects gender issues about God, for gender only belongs to created existents and should not be read back into the Nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He objects to the anthropocentric technique in feminist theology of refusing the Fatherhood of God because it is equated with the human experience of earthly fathers.<sup>356</sup> Torrance writes: “Human fatherhood may not be used as a standard by which

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<sup>353</sup> *TF*, 50.

<sup>354</sup> *TF*, 52.

<sup>355</sup> *TF*, 77. This, Colyer notes, refers to the “Christological qualification of God as Almighty,” in *How to Read*, 153, 157. See also Torrance’s rejection that God is eternally Creator and the idea that creation eternally existed in the mind of God, in *GGT*, 66; Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 81. See also Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity: Perfect Community* (trans. Phillip Berryman; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 70.

<sup>356</sup> See also Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 99-110. See also Jane Williams, “The Fatherhood of God,” in *The Forgotten Trinity 3: A Selection of Papers presented to the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today* (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 91-101, on the difficulties in understanding the Fatherhood of God.

to judge divine Fatherhood, for it is only in the light of the Fatherhood of God that all other fatherhood is to be understood.”<sup>357</sup> Torrance’s understanding of the Father as loving is grounded upon the Father’s eternal being, his relation with the Son, and his work in creation and redemption. First, the Father is Love because the Being of the Triune God is a Communion of Love. Secondly, that the Father is Love is portrayed in his eternal relation to the Son: “the Father/Son, Son/Father relation belongs to the innermost Being of God as God – in fact the flow of Love from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father reveals that God *is* the ever-living and ever-loving God precisely as this dynamic Communion of loving and being loved within himself.”<sup>358</sup> Finally, the Father is love as manifested in his creative and sustaining act and redemptive purposes. “By revealing himself in the Lord Jesus Christ as *his* dear Son, God reveals that Fatherhood belongs to his eternal Being, and in giving his Son to be the Saviour of the world, he reveals that he loves us to the uttermost with an eternal fatherly Love.”<sup>359</sup>

However, although the designation “Father” is derived primarily from the relation of the Son to the Father, “to name God Father is to signify his very Being.”<sup>360</sup> Torrance writes:

When the Father is considered relatively, that is *ad alios* in relation to the Son and the Holy Spirit, he is thought of as Father of the Son, but when the Father is thought of absolutely, that is *in se*, as God himself (*Autotheos*), the name ‘Father’ is often applied to God (*Theos*) or the Godhead (*Theotes*). The name ‘Father’, then, may refer to the one Being of God or *ousia* of God, but it may refer to the Person or *hypostasis* of the Father.<sup>361</sup>

That Jesus called the Father *Abba*, means that he is calling God his own proper Name. The New Testament, therefore, through Christ, provides a “radical change in the understanding of God, for ‘Father’ is now revealed to be more than an epithet – it is the personal Name of God in which the form and content of his self-revelation as Father through Jesus Christ his Son are inseparable.”<sup>362</sup> Torrance finds this in the prayer of Jesus in John 17: “Father... I have finished the work which you gave me to do... I have

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<sup>357</sup> *TP*, 130.

<sup>358</sup> *CDG*, 59.

<sup>359</sup> *CDG*, 55.

<sup>360</sup> *CDG*, 118; quoting Athanasius, *De synodis*, 35 (*NPNF* 4): 469.

<sup>361</sup> *CDG*, 140.

<sup>362</sup> *CDG*, 56.

manifested your Name unto men,”<sup>363</sup> and in the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name” (Matt 6:9).

### ***Monarchia and the Trinity***

In the early church, “Father” referred to two different but interrelated aspects: the Being of the Godhead (*ousia*) and the Person of the Father (*hypostasis*). However, according to Torrance, the Cappadocian fathers, particularly Basil, combined them together, arguing that the Being of the Godhead is in the Person of the Father. The result is that the Person of the Father became regarded as the source of the Being of God, particularly by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. This means that the divine *ousia* is equated with the Uncaused Person of the Father, who then becomes the Cause or *Arche* of the Deity and of the personal Nature of the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>364</sup> For Torrance, this move represents a partial return to the Origenist position that the Godhead is complete in the Father alone, but mediated in the Son and the Holy Spirit through their origination from the Father, against which Athanasius had insisted on the perfect equality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in each of whom the Godhead is complete.<sup>365</sup> He also notes Gregory Nazianzen’s uneasiness about the attribution of the *Monarchia* only to the Person of the Father, and the concomitant combinations of the terms *arche* and *aitia* in speaking of the origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit, for this appeared to imply and import notions of superiority and inferiority in the Trinity.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> CDG, 139; and Colyer, *How to Read*, 143.

<sup>364</sup> CDG, 181.

<sup>365</sup> See TDORC I, 87; CDG, 181. See also Ralph Del Colle’s comparison of Torrance and Zizioulas on this issue in “‘Person’ and ‘Being’ in John Zizioulas’ Trinitarian Theology: Conversations with Thomas Torrance and Thomas Aquinas,” *SJT* 54 (2001), 70-86.

<sup>366</sup> R. P. C. Hanson shares Torrance’s interpretation of the Cappadocians, particularly on the *Arche*, saying that in Basil, the Father’s *hypostasis* is the sole origin (*arche*), source (*pege*), and root (*riza*) of the other two hypostases. See *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 693-396. Hanson, however, vehemently argues that Basil and Gregory of Nyssa explicitly rejected subordinationism in the *Arche* of the Father. (See also J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* [5<sup>th</sup> ed.; London: Continuum, 2006], 265.) Najeeb G. Awad also thinks that the approaches of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa to the Godhead are different: Basil’s approach is “patro-centrally semi-heirarchial” and Gregory’s is “reciprocally koinonial,” in “Between Subordination and Koinonia: Toward a New Reading of the Cappadocian Theology,” *MTh* 23 (2007), 181-204.

The main reason for divergence of interpretations, even in the early church concerning *ousia* and *hypostasis* is that they were used quite interchangeably, just as their meanings were ambiguously interchangeable. See Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 243-250; R. P. C. Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 244-248. For a modern theologian who followed Basil’s *Monarchia* of the Father, because of his emphasis on person over nature, see John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 17-18, 40-44, 88; and *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics* (ed. Douglas H. Knight; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008), xii, 60. See also TDORC I, 87-88. Along with Volf (*After Our Likeness*, 79), Humphrey views the

And although Nazianzen “nevertheless spoke of the Father as the *arche* and the *aitia* in order to secure the unity of the Godhead,” Torrance adds, “actually he *thought* of them as referring to *relations* or *scheseis* subsisting in God which are beyond all time, beyond all origin, and beyond all cause.”<sup>367</sup>

Torrance rejects the ascription of *Monarchia* to the Father alone.<sup>368</sup> Guided by his understanding of *perichoresis* and *onto-relations*, he stresses that the Son and the Holy Spirit must be included with the Father in the one originless Source or *Arche* of the Holy Trinity.<sup>369</sup> Also, Athanasius’ legacy and emphasis on *homoousios* enabled Torrance to formulate his view of the Monarchy of the Father and the Trinity:

“Athanasius had such a strong view of the complete identity, equality and unity of the three divine Persons within the Godhead, that he declined to advance a view of the Monarchy in which the oneness of God was defined with reference to the Father alone or to the Person of the Father.”<sup>370</sup> Like Athanasius, Torrance affirms the Father as the *Arche* of the Son in that he eternally begot the Son. Nevertheless,

While the Son is associated with the *Arche* of the Father in this way, he cannot be thought of as an *Arche* subsisting in himself, for by his very Nature he is inseparable from the Father of whom he is the Son. By the same token, however, the Father cannot be thought of as an *Arche* apart from the Son, for it is precisely as Father that he is Father of the Son.<sup>371</sup>

Thus, that the Father is *Arche* of the Son should be understood not in terms of temporal origination or ontological superiority but in terms of an equal eternal relation, “for the Sonship of the Son is as ultimate as the Fatherhood of the Father.”<sup>372</sup> In eternity, there

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consequence of the Monarchy of the Father differently: “The Father’s hierarchy, holy leadership and monarchy,” she wrote, “does not drive out, but is the condition for mutual honor, responsive love and fruitfulness beyond measure,” in “The Gift of the Father,” 101. On the contrary, Arthur Williams argues that “monarchy” indubitably entails subordination, in “The Trinity and Time,” *SJT* 39 (1986), 65. Boff enumerates the dangers of understanding Father as monarch in politics and religion in *Holy Trinity*, 7-9.

<sup>367</sup> *TF*, 239. Noble, on the other hand, argues that Nazianzen used *arche* and *aitios* and not *aitia* to refer to the Father as the principle of origination in the Godhead, because the third term implies subordinationism and is only used by Nazianzen to refer particularly to the “external causation of the world.” See “Paradox in Gregory of Nazianzen’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Studia Patristica*, vol. 27 (ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone; Leuven: Peeters Press, 1993), 96-97.

<sup>368</sup> *TF*, 223-224, 328-331.

<sup>369</sup> *CDG*, 181. See Torrance’s discussion of *perichoresis* in relation to the *Monarchia* in *TP*, 120-121, 125-126, 139-142; and Jenson’s rejection of the Father as the sole *Arche* of the Trinity in *The Triune Identity*, 141-143, 175.

<sup>370</sup> *CDG*, 183. Thus, “in proclaiming the *Monarchia* we do not err,” Torrance adds, “but confess the Trinity, Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, one Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is one true God, Trinity in Unity; one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” *TF*, 223; *TP*, 137-139.

<sup>371</sup> *CDG*, 183; *TF*, 312.

<sup>372</sup> Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity according to St. Athanasius,” *AngThR* 71 (1989), reprinted in *TP*, 18. Torrance, quoting Calvin, adds: “The *principium* does not apply to the *Being* of the divine Persons which they have wholly in common, but only to the order of relations which they have

was the Godhead, not the Father alone. This is founded on the fact that the Father is not properly known as Father apart from the Son and the Spirit, that the Son is not properly known apart from the Father and the Spirit, and that the Spirit is not properly known apart from the Father and the Son.

### **THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER**

Now that the Triune identity of the Father is established, we can proceed to discuss his agency in the mediation of reconciliation. That the Father plays a distinct role in the salvific economy is a given in Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology: "There are relative distinctions in his three-fold activity appropriate to the Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, which bear upon creation."<sup>373</sup> As a caveat, although this section will deal particularly with the salvific work of the Father, this is only pedagogically distinguished, for in evangelical reality not only are the Being and Act of the Triune God inseparable, but in their perichoretic Love and Life, the work of the Father is inseparable from the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The only theological basis for the possibility of distinguishing the distinctive role of the Father from the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit is that even though the Triune God works as One, the Persons of the Trinity are "engaged in the work of reconciliation in distinctive ways appropriate to each Person."<sup>374</sup> So in relation to what this thesis referred to as Torrance's *kath hypostasin* Trinitarian soteriology, this chapter is concerned with the Father's *kath hypostasin economy*.

#### **The Loving Father**

The evangelical experience of the Triune God as the way that God willed to make himself known serves as the foundation of all statements of God's character as love.

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with one another within the unity of the Godhead. 'For although we affirm that there is a *principium divinitatis* in the Father in respect of order and position (*ratione ordinis et gradus*), yet we declare it a detestable invention that Being belongs to the Father alone, as though he were the deifier of the Son.' Thus the *principium* of the Father does not import an ontological priority, or some *prius aut posterius* in God, but has to do only with a 'form of order' (*ratio ordinis*) or 'arrangement' (*dispositio*) of inner Trinitarian relations governed by the Father/Son relationship, which in the nature of the case is irreversible." See *TP*, 65-66, 118-119; Calvin, *Institutes* I.13.24.

<sup>373</sup> *CDG*, 212; "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity," *CalThJ* 25 (1990), reprinted in *TP*, 55; *ST*, 87.

<sup>374</sup> *ST*, 87; *CDG*, 252-253; H. R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 526. To maintain the distinction-in-unity is a better alternative than Jenson's rejection of the idea that each Person fulfils a distinct economy. Jenson is anxious about what he discerns as the danger of appropriation: "mathematically equal abstract divinity of the triune persons," in *The Triune Identity*, 126-127.

This is why Torrance's view of the Father's character as love is also Christo-conditioned. In particular, he argues that it is through the Cross that we learn "the innermost nature of God the Father as holy compassionate love,"<sup>375</sup> which the resurrection also confirms:

The resurrection tells us that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not the kind of God who remained alone and aloof in his eternity, who did not lift even a finger to save Jesus when he was hounded to death on the gibbet and put to an open shame. He is not the kind of God who abandoned his Son in his despairing cry on the Cross... On the contrary, He is the kind of God who remained unswervingly true and faithful to Jesus and all he revealed through him.<sup>376</sup>

It is no wonder, therefore, that Torrance understands the nature and work of the Father as characterised by Love.<sup>377</sup> His use of 2 Corinthians 13:14 is also central. In fact, it is only after an affirmation of this Pauline statement that Torrance expounds how and why Love is properly attributed to the Father.

#### *Love as God's Character: God as Communion*

Eastern theologian Emilianos Timiadis writes: "God has love for us because he is love himself. We witness a Trinitarian relationship based on the mutual love of each Person, where the difference is only apparent, necessary to communion. Each time we speak of the Trinity, we must think of nothing else but Love... God is Love."<sup>378</sup> This is important to Torrance, because of his insistence that human salvation is ontologically grounded in God's Being. This means that if God were not Love in his innermost Being, his loving Act in Christ and the Holy Spirit would be groundless and incomprehensible.<sup>379</sup> This is also related to understanding the Trinity as Communion: "The one triune Being of God is to be thought of, then, as essentially and intrinsically a mutual movement of loving self-communication between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, an intensely personal Communion, an ever-living ever-loving Being."<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> *CDG*, 109.

<sup>376</sup> Torrance, "The Whole Universe Revolves Around Jesus Christ," *LW* (April 1977), 13.

<sup>377</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 146-149. This is explicitly found in Torrance's treatment of the work of the Father in creation: "It is to the ultimate Love of God the Father that the 'reason' for the creation is to be traced... there is no reason why the creation came to be, why there is something and not nothing, apart from the eternal movement of Love in the inner Life of God, which in love freely overflows from God who does not will to exist for himself alone but for others also. It is then, as grounded in that ultimate Love which God the Father is, that the rational order of the creation is to be understood," in *CDG*, 212.

<sup>378</sup> *TDORC I*, 125.

<sup>379</sup> *CDG*, 5.

<sup>380</sup> *CDG*, 133.

But God is love not only *in se* but also *ad extra*. Torrance points to the personal naming of God as the I AM or Yahweh as an illustration.

The significant point to be emphasized here is that the self-naming of God as *Yahweh* is bound up with the covenant of steadfast love and truth he made with Israel. The divine pronouncement “I am who I am/I will be who I will be,” is not isolated from the establishing of a holy fellowship between *Yahweh* and Israel which he backs up with his own Being: “I am the Lord”, and reinforces with his promise “I will be with you”. The Being of *Yahweh* is his Being-in-union with his people.<sup>381</sup>

Thus, the Being of God as Love flows to his Acts in history. It is precisely because God is both Personal and a Communion of Love that he establishes communion and initiates personal relationships with others. Hence, because the Being of God as Love is essentially personal, dynamic and relational—he is also personally, dynamically, and relationally involved in reconciling the world to the himself.

#### *Love and Creation: God as Open Communion*

Torrance’s rationale for discussing creation under his presentation of God the Father is that the notion that God is Creator is only intelligible through the primary principle that God is eternally Father to the Son: “God was always Father, not always Creator, but now he is Creator as well as Father.”<sup>382</sup> Furthermore, his understanding of creation, and his emphasis on the creative work of the Father rests on the Father-Son relation: “Creation arises, then, out of the Father’s eternal love of the Son, and is activated through the free ungrudging movement of that Fatherly love in sheer grace which continues to flow freely and unceasingly toward what God has brought into being in complete differentiation from himself.”<sup>383</sup> In relation to humanity and redemption, however, Torrance warns that “While God is Creator in virtue of his being eternally Father, with us the reverse is the case, for God has become our Father, not by nature but by grace, after he had become our Creator.”<sup>384</sup>

Concomitant to this is the fact that God is not a solitary, detached Being who is aloof and distant from the other. God is an eternal communion of love and personal being in himself, but this is to be understood not in terms of the Being of God grounded in an abstract necessitarian-philosophical view of “being,” but as *the Being of God for*

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<sup>381</sup> *CDG*, 122; Colyer, *How to Read*, 144.

<sup>382</sup> *TF*, 88.

<sup>383</sup> *CDG*, 209. See Torrance’s discussion on the problems that arise out of the failure to distinguish between the generation of the Son and the creation of the world, in *TRE*, 220-224.

<sup>384</sup> *TF*, 90.

others whom he seeks and with whom he creates fellowship. God's transcendence and immanence, his Being-in-himself and Being-with-us, or *ousia* and *parousia* are inseparable.<sup>385</sup> In light of this, creation in general and humanity in particular, in Habets' and Rahner's terms, possess a "transcendental determination," i.e. we are made to commune with the Triune God.<sup>386</sup> "The whole *raison d'être* of the universe lies in the fact that God does not will to exist alone, that he will not be without us, but has freely and purposely created the universe and bound it to himself as the sphere where he may ungrudgingly pour out his love, and where we may enjoy communion with him."<sup>387</sup> Torrance calls this humanity's "supernatural destiny,"<sup>388</sup> and attributes the nature and purpose of creation to the Triune Love, but especially to "the activity of divine Love which is peculiarly appropriate to the Father."<sup>389</sup>

### *Love and Creation: Relation and Redemption*

Torrance quotes Calvin: "It is not enough for us to conceive God to be the Maker of the world, and to father all power upon Him, but we must know him to be our Father because He draws us to Him with so gentle and loving a care as if we were His children."<sup>390</sup> Humanity, created by God the Father as Love, is essentially covenanted to filial relationship with the heavenly Father: "We come to God not only as Him that created me, but also as Him that hath uttered a fatherly love toward me."<sup>391</sup> On the other hand, the goodness and dignity of creation, or anthropology in particular, should also be

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<sup>385</sup> CDG, 123-124. Closely related to this discussion is the relationship between the holiness and love of God. Webster's article "Holiness and Love of God," *SJT* 57 (2004), 249-268, is of critical importance. In it, Webster argues for their inseparability: "God's holiness is the majestic incomparability, difference and purity which he is in himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which is manifest and operative in the economy of his works in the love with which he elects, reconciles and perfects human partners for fellowship with himself" (see pp. 256, 258, 261). In "Goodness and Dignity of Man," 314, Torrance similarly states that God's holiness "is far from being merely condemnatory for it is supremely self-imparting and redemptive." See also Timothy Bradshaw, "Barth on the Trinity: A Family Resemblance," *SJT* 39 (1986), 147; Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 56.

<sup>386</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 37; and Rahner, *Spirit in the World* (trans. William V. Dych; New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), liii. Rahner views humanity essentially as a transcendental being, and calls humanity *Geist*, which refers to "a power which reaches out beyond the world, and knows the metaphysical." See also "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in *Theological Investigations* [henceforth, *TI*], vol. 4, *More Recent Writings* (trans. Kevin Smith; New York: Crossroad, 1982), 42; "Anonymous Christians," in *TI* 6: 392; and "The Theology of Power," in *TI* 4: 399.

<sup>387</sup> *TF*, 94-95. Thus Torrance refers to the dignity of humanity as made for covenant partnership and conversation with God, in "Goodness and Dignity of Man," 314. Alan Torrance also notes that participation in the New Creation, when true personhood is achieved, is the *telos* of creation, in *Persons in Communion*, 365.

<sup>388</sup> *TR*, 100-101.

<sup>389</sup> *CDG*, 212.

<sup>390</sup> Calvin, *Sermon on Job 36:1*; quoted in *CDM*, 76.

<sup>391</sup> Calvin, *Sermon on Job 35:8*; quoted in *CDM*, 77. See also *CDM*, 36; "Answer to God," *BibQ* 2 (1951), 3, 4.

triangulated with the doctrines of sin and redemption, placed in the context of the Father's love. Sin effects the corruption of the *imago Dei* in humanity. Because sin is rebellion against God, it is therefore the dehumanization of humanity.<sup>392</sup>

If in Calvin's thought the *imago Dei* has thus to do first of all with God's gracious beholding of man as His child, which is the objective basis of the *imago*, and then with man's response to that decision of God's grace in coming to Him as a Father and yielding to Him the gratitude and honour which are due in such a filial relation, which is the subjective basis of the *imago*, it is implied throughout that God created man just for this relationship with God... Calvin thinks of sin as destroying or utterly defacing the image of God in man. In this way man has become a 'double beast'.<sup>393</sup>

Important here is the fact that creation and redemption are interrelated, especially when viewed relationally. Torrance argues that it is only on the basis of viewing redemption as reconciliation with God that the inner logic and *telos* of creation is brought to light, because creation is proleptically conditioned by redemption.<sup>394</sup> Colyer explains:

What Torrance intends, I believe, is that God's ultimate *telos* for creation from the beginning is revealed and actualized in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, a *telos* in which all creation comes to share in the eternal communion of love that God is. This is the ultimate goal of both redemption and creation. It is actually realised in redemption after the Fall, and it is a *telos* that proleptically conditions the creation.<sup>395</sup>

Interesting here, therefore, is the relationship between the work of the Father and the work of the Son in restoring creation. Torrance argues that although creation possesses temporal priority in terms of existence in space and time, "the actual creation of the universe in the outward movement of the Father's love was proleptically conditioned by the incarnation of that love... in order to redeem creation and to reconcile all things, things visible and invisible alike, to himself."<sup>396</sup> The original creation, the restoration of God's creation, and the incarnation of the eternal Son and Word of God in Jesus Christ are interrelated. "The restoration of creation to communion and fellowship with Him in

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<sup>392</sup> *APWC*, 75.

<sup>393</sup> *CDM*, 77-78.

<sup>394</sup> This is because through the work of Jesus Christ, we may discern more fully that the origin and *telos* of creation is embedded in his eternal being. See *TF*, 102; *CDG*, 204; and Lee, *Living in Union*, 180. Torrance is indebted to both Athanasius and Mackintosh concerning this theme. See Athanasius, *Contra Arius* II.21.65-72 (*NPNF* 4): 383-388; II.21.27 (*NPNF* 4): 399; III.26.33 (*NPNF* 4): 411-412; III.27.38 (*NPNF* 4): 414-415; IV.33 (*NPNF* 4): 446; and Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 70. See also *SF*, ciii; *CAC I*, 49; and Habets, *Theosis*, 25-28, 142, 148.

<sup>395</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 164, fn. 34; also quoted in Habets, *Theosis*, 26.

<sup>396</sup> *CDG*, 210.

which the peace of God reigns over all, the joy and gladness in God the Father fills the whole of creation”<sup>397</sup> are at the heart of the Triune act of creation.

### The Electing Father

Theologians must realize that the redemption of humanity and the restoration of communion with God are not divine afterthoughts necessitated by and only consequential upon the Fall. This adds significance to Torrance’s argument that redemption proleptically conditions creation. Communion with God derives its origin not from temporal necessity but from the eternal will and purposes of God, which Torrance refers to as the import of *predestination*.<sup>398</sup> That such intended communion was disrupted in the Fall does not entail the defeat of God’s eternal purposes; rather, through the Father’s sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit to reconcile humanity back to God, the eternal openness of the Love of God is displayed as eternally the same, pre- and post-Fall. The origin of creation is also the *telos* of redemption.

#### *Prothesis, Mysterion and Koinonia*

A doctrine of appropriation, and the *kath hypostasin* distinction of works in the economy of salvation is revealed most explicitly in Torrance’s threefold categorisation of the Triune work as *prothesis*, *mysterion*, and *koinonia*. Under the banner of “union with Christ,” both Lee and Habets affirm this triadic Trinitarian action as follows: “The cause of ‘union with Christ’ is *prothesis*, the election of God [the Father]. Its substance is *mysterion*, the hypostatic union in Jesus Christ, and its fulfilment is *koinonia*, the communion of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>399</sup> This triadic Trinitarian work reinforces Torrance’s emphasis on the unbroken relation of Being and Act among the Persons of the Trinity. Moreover, in speaking of the Triune work in terms of *prothesis*, *mysterion* and *koinonia*, the weight falls on continuity and oneness in the economy of salvation. The emphasis here naturally falls on the work of the Father, understood by Torrance as *prothesis*, or election.

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<sup>397</sup> Torrance, “The Atoning Obedience of Christ,” *MorThSemBul* (1959), 66; quoted in Habets, *Theosis*, 24.

<sup>398</sup> *CDG*, 210.

<sup>399</sup> Lee, *Living in Union*, 201; Habets, *Theosis*, 105. Another triadic distinction almost similar to this is from Basil, and summarized by Habets, whereby the Spirit is “the perfecting cause,” the Father as “the originating cause,” and the Son as “the moulding cause,” in Habets, *Theosis*, 146; and Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 16.38 (NPNF 8): 23.

To understand better how the three terms are interrelated, it is best to proceed from where Torrance starts: in Christ. Habets fails to represent Torrance's theological attitude when he began with *prothesis*, election of the Father, rather than with *mysterion*, hypostatic union in Christ.<sup>400</sup> Torrance's theological consistency concerning the epistemological and evangelical priority of Christ even in this triadic movement is displayed in *Incarnation*, and is also purposeful in that it seeks to avoid grounding the doctrine of election behind the back of Christ or in some divine abstract eternal decree. The eternal will of the Father, therefore, can only be properly understood in light of the mystery of Christ. Torrance calls it *mysterion*, or mystery, because it refers primarily to the hypostatic union, the union of God and humanity in the one Person of Christ,<sup>401</sup> and his emphasis on the salvific and vicarious humanity of Christ reverberates: the hypostatic union is reconciling union in "the form of a dynamic atoning union... worked out within the structures of our human existence" throughout his life, death, resurrection and ascension.<sup>402</sup> This is related to the Father's eternal will for communion.

Mystery is the secret that lies behind God's creation. In the heart of that creation, God created man, made in the union of male and female as one flesh, to reflect the image of God within their relation of union with God. But that union between man and God was sundered, and the union within mankind making mankind one flesh was sundered: the secret was lost to man, the mystery remained wholly recondite. But the eternal purpose of God remained, and so at last in Jesus Christ after long and patient preparation in God's purpose with Israel, the mystery of God's will became incarnate. It embodied itself in the midst of our humanity, begetting in Jesus Christ the one in whom all mankind is gathered back into communion with God.<sup>403</sup>

Thus, the *mysterion* enacted in the incarnation of Christ, and vividly displayed in the Cross, reveals the eternal heart and will (or *prothesis*) of the Father.<sup>404</sup> *Prothesis* has a twofold inseparable meaning: (1) the purpose of God, or election of the Father; and (2) the "setting forth" of God for the redemption of humanity in Christ.<sup>405</sup> Torrance points to Ephesians 1:11 and Romans 8:28-30 to explain that the eternal election of the Father includes both predestination and future glory (Christologically understood),

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<sup>400</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 105-107. See Torrance's own approach in *CACII*, 82-92; and *IPLC*, 164-174.

<sup>401</sup> Torrance, "The Mystery of the Kingdom," *Verbum Caro* 10 (1956), reprinted in *IPLC*, 164-165.

<sup>402</sup> *MC*, 65.

<sup>403</sup> *IPLC*, 165; *MC*, 30. For Torrance's view of Israel as an instrument of revelation, not only in preparing the way for the incarnate Son but until today, see "Salvation is of the Jews," *EvQ* 22 (1950), 164-173.

<sup>404</sup> Torrance, "Singularity of Christ," 234.

<sup>405</sup> *IPLC*, 169, 177-180.

emphasizing “the purpose of God in Christ reaching out from and into the eternal and infinite mystery of God.”<sup>406</sup> In grounding salvation in the election of the Father in Christ, Torrance follows the Reformation doctrine of *sola gratia*, which epitomises “a strictly theonomous thinking, from a centre in God and not in ourselves.”<sup>407</sup> This is because the doctrine of election essentially refers to “the eternal decision which is nothing less than the Love that God himself is, in action; it is the unconditional self-giving of God in the undeflecting constancy of his Grace.”<sup>408</sup>

### *Election and Predestination*

It is, therefore, only on the grounds of the eternal Love of the Father and the incarnation of the Son that election and predestination should be understood. Torrance is critical of federal Calvinism for importing philosophical, logical and mechanistic apparatuses to explain the doctrine of election theologically, which is precisely the opposite of the meaning of election, for essentially, “the doctrine of election... rejects any projection of human ways of thought, speech or behaviour, or any creaturely representation, into God.”<sup>409</sup> Election is primarily grounded in God’s free sovereign decision in creation and redemption, and is thus “to be equated with the sheer mystery of God’s Love which knows no reason beyond its own ultimateness as the Love that God eternally is.”<sup>410</sup> As such, it is not an abstract decree; rather, “Christ in His own Person is the eternal decree of God.”<sup>411</sup> Torrance rejects causal and deterministic understanding of election espoused by Scholastic Calvinists<sup>412</sup> such as Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661), who, since he followed Beza and the Synod of Dort instead of Calvin and Knox, was caught up with a strictly causative understanding of the relation between God’s eternal decrees and the efficacy of Christ’s atoning work, forcing him to admit limited atonement.<sup>413</sup> This could have been avoided, Torrance says, if election had been understood primarily in Christ, as in the incarnational and corporate view of

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<sup>406</sup> *IPLC*, 169.

<sup>407</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 105; *CTSC*, 127, 132-133.

<sup>408</sup> *CTSC*, 127.

<sup>409</sup> *CTSC*, 127.

<sup>410</sup> *CTSC*, 127.

<sup>411</sup> Torrance, “Predestination in Christ,” *EvQ* 13 (1941), 110.

<sup>412</sup> See Torrance’s discussion and rejection of determinism in “Predestination in Christ,” 113-116.

<sup>413</sup> *ST*, 105. “The concept of limited atonement,” Torrance writes, “limits the very being of God as Love,” in “The Atonement,” 236.

election held by John Forbes of Corse (1593-1648): “the *compredestination* of Christ and the elect in Christ.”<sup>414</sup>

Compredestination means not only that God has elected and adopted us in Christ before the foundation of the world, but that he has elected Christ himself in whom he is well pleased, and elected us in Christ, predestinating us in love as those who are redeemed through the precious Blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and spot. He has elected us not on the ground of any holiness or belief on our part, but in order that we may believe. Christ himself is the primary object of election and as such the ground of our election.<sup>415</sup>

That election should be understood in Christ, however, should not overshadow the primacy of the Father’s love in the whole process of redemption. Robert Boyd (1578-1627), another Scottish theologian, stressed that the *omnium primo* in election is the act of the Father in willing and delivering up his own Son.<sup>416</sup> This is the eternal priority of the Father’s free and gracious decision not only to create but to elect humanity into communion with the Triune God. Torrance quotes Campbell: “the love of God as the cause, and the atonement as the effect. ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son’.”<sup>417</sup> Torrance’s understanding of the personal, ontological and relational work of the whole Triune God for humanity’s salvation is also relevant here:

The “pre” of predestination cannot be regarded as the *prius* to anything here in space and time; it is not the result of an inference from effect to first cause, or from relative to absolute, or to any world-principle. The “pre” in predestination takes election not out of time but grounds it in an act of the Eternal which we can only describe as “per se” or “a se”. In other words, it is grounded in the life of the Godhead, that is, in the personal relations of the Trinity. Just because we know God to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we know the Will of God to be supremely Personal—and it is to that Will that predestination tells us our salvation is to be referred.<sup>418</sup>

### The Sending Father

That the Son became incarnate in accordance with the eternal will of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is operative in the world for our salvation, logically entails the essentially and eternally dynamic Being of God.<sup>419</sup> Torrance elaborates: “Movement belongs to his eternal Being. If God is who he is in his activity toward us through the

<sup>414</sup> ST, 88; quoting Forbes, *Instructiones*, VIII.30.1-4.

<sup>415</sup> ST, 88.

<sup>416</sup> ST, 69-70.

<sup>417</sup> ST, 298.

<sup>418</sup> Torrance, “Predestination in Christ,” 116.

<sup>419</sup> TDORC I, 22.

Son and in the Spirit, then it belongs to the essential Nature of his eternal Being to move and energise and act.”<sup>420</sup> This emphasis is indisputably applicable to both the evangelical and ontological Trinity, God *ad intra* and *ad extra*, and can be discerned specifically in the double movement of God’s saving love “from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, and to the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>421</sup> James Torrance refers to this *katabatic*, God-humanward and *anabatic*, human-Godward activity as “a double movement of grace,”<sup>422</sup> which is equivalent to Torrance’s view of God’s “redeeming movement in Love,”<sup>423</sup> and the definition of atonement as “the movement of divine reconciling and justifying love.”<sup>424</sup> And because the Triune God is a Being-in-movement, this immediately implies that God is in essence a God who is Self-sending.

### *Procession of the Son and the Holy Spirit*

In light of the fact that the Persons of the Triune God work in strict accordance with their personal nature as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it is plausible to say that the sending agency belongs distinctly and primarily to the Father. This is displayed, for instance, in Irenaeus’ understanding of the two hands of the Father, referring to the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>425</sup> The procession of both the Son and the Holy Spirit, therefore, should not only be understood as coming from the divine nature, but also from the will and love of the electing Father.<sup>426</sup> Torrance argues, however, that this should be understood only in light of the economic relations, and not imposed on the Trinity *in se*, so as to avoid any notion of subordination or hierarchy within the Godhead. Referring to the procession of the Son, he writes: “We believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour with the very same faith with which we believe in God the Father Almighty,

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<sup>420</sup> CDG, 149. God’s being is “being-in-movement” and “being-in-action.” *TDORC I*, 33-40, 49; *TF*, 130-131; *IESNCC*, 33; and on the dynamic character of God and his Self-revelation, see *KBBET*, 95-99; and also Bradshaw, “Barth on the Trinity,” 160.

<sup>421</sup> *TRE*, 118, 251. In *TF*, 5, Torrance identifies this as the “general formula which the Nicene and post-Nicene fathers employed to speak of the Triune God and his one activity.”

<sup>422</sup> Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 32.

<sup>423</sup> *CDG*, 8.

<sup>424</sup> *ST*, 304; “Israel and the Incarnation,” *Judaica* 13 (1957), 3.

<sup>425</sup> In *TRE*, 101, Torrance also refers to this as “the twofold way in which the one incomprehensible God communicates himself to us,” elaborated further in *TF*, 20: “There is from the Father one grace which is fulfilled through the Son in the Holy Spirit... The Father does all things through the Word and in the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>426</sup> The procedure here is not to follow Athanasius’ differentiation between nature and will, and the exaltation of the former above the latter, but to regard the two as inseparably acting together. This, I believe, is more consistent with Torrance’s borrowed understanding from Reformation theology and from Barth concerning the oneness between God’s Being and Act. See also Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 711-712, 731.

and we believe that what he is toward us, with us and for us *in his incarnate mission from the Father* he is antecedently and eternally in himself, the eternal Son of the eternal Father.”<sup>427</sup> That the mission of the Son is willed by the sending Father does not entail priority or superiority of the Person of the Father, or accepting the absolute *Monarchia* of the Father alone.

The same applies to the procession of the Holy Spirit, or the controversial *filioque*.<sup>428</sup> Here too, the Father (together with the Son), again assumes the sending role: “The Spirit is ever *in the hands of the Father who sends* and of the Son who gives him as his very own, and from whom the Spirit on his part receives.”<sup>429</sup> However, Torrance maintains that this Athanasian statement should be interpreted “in such a way that the enhypostatic realities and distinctive properties of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit always remain the same in the equality and consubstantiality of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>430</sup> Thus the creedal affirmation of Constantinople in AD 381 proves an insightful safeguard against heresies: “We believe in one Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.”<sup>431</sup>

### *Shaliach of God*

That God the Father sends is particularly evident in John 3:16-17, where John refers to the incarnate Son as the *apostolos* of God. The same Johannine emphasis is in 10:36, where Jesus calls himself the one whom the Father sent into the world (*apesteilen eis ton kosmon*). In light of these Scripture passages, Torrance argues that the whole mission of Christ can be called “the apostolic mission of Christ from the Father.”<sup>432</sup> Using Hebrews 3:1-6, Torrance then equates the apostleship of Christ with the Hebrew concept of the *Shaliach* of God.<sup>433</sup> Based on the Hebrew tradition and reflected in both the Old and New Testaments, Torrance concludes that at the basic level, “*Shaliach*

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<sup>427</sup> *CDG*, 142 (italics mine).

<sup>428</sup> This will be dealt with more extensively in chapter IV.

<sup>429</sup> *TF*, 331, 244 (italics mine).

<sup>430</sup> *TF*, 245.

<sup>431</sup> *TF*, 245. This should be balanced, according to Gunton, with the understanding that the Son is begotten by the Father and the Spirit, in *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 72-73.

<sup>432</sup> *CAC I*, 24.

<sup>433</sup> *RP*, 11. See also Andrew Purves, “The Christology of Thomas F. Torrance,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 64; C. A. Wanamaker, “Christ as Divine Agent in Paul,” *SJT* 39 (1986), 517-528; and C. K. Barrett, “Shaliah and Apostle,” in *New Testament Studies in Honour of David Daube* (ed. E. Bammel, C. K. Barrett, and W. D. Davies; Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 89-102.

referred to the man who speaks for God and acts for God in *semeia*.<sup>434</sup> For instance, in the Old Testament, prophets and leaders like Moses, Elijah, Elisha and Ezekiel were referred to as *sheluchim*; in the New Testament, the apostles who bore witness to the life and resurrection of Jesus were also called *apostle-shaliachs*.<sup>435</sup> Torrance says, however, that there is a difference when the term *Shaliach* is applied to God and to human representatives. For instance, “The whole New Testament doctrine of *shaliach* is one in which the person of the *shaliach* retreats into the background, so that the living person of the risen Christ comes to the fore.”<sup>436</sup> When applied to God and the Triune Persons, however, there is an inseparability of Being and Act between the Father who sends and the Son and the Holy Spirit who are sent into the world as agents of reconciliation. Ultimately, then, it is the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit who are the *Sheluchim* of the Father. Torrance relates this to the apostleship and priesthood of Christ, and his twofold function in the mediation of revelation, reconciliation and worship. In *Atonement*, Torrance refers to Christ as the “unique *shaliach* of God in word and deed,” to which he adds:

It is supremely in that sense that Christ is *shaliach*: he is the word of God and the deed of God, who not only brings from God his word of pardon, but effectively enacts it. In Jesus Christ the word and deed of God are identical, identical in his person. He *is* the word of God which he represents, so that his word is not just word about God, but actually *is* God’s word, God in his word. His actions not only point to God, but he *is* himself God in action, so that his acts are God’s own acts. *Christ was sent from the Father* not only to forgive sin, but to heal, not only to speak of God’s pardon but to enact that pardon in our flesh and blood.<sup>437</sup>

Concerning the Holy Spirit as *Shaliach*, Torrance grounds his arguments primarily in the Gospel of John.<sup>438</sup> In 14:26, Jesus says that the Spirit is sent by the Father, but in 16:7, Jesus says that he himself sends the Spirit. When Jesus says that the Spirit is sent both by the Father and the Son (John 15:26), the Spirit’s role as witness is also highlighted. From these verses Torrance concludes that inasmuch as Jesus Christ is the *Shaliach* of the Father, the Holy Spirit is the *Shaliach* of the Son, in that “He [the Spirit] does not draw attention to Himself or speak of His own Person, but speaks only

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<sup>434</sup> *CAC I*, 39; *IPLC*, 23.

<sup>435</sup> *APWC*, 317-319.

<sup>436</sup> *CAC I*, 38.

<sup>437</sup> *APWC*, 318 (italics of last six words mine).

<sup>438</sup> *CAC I*, 40-41.

of Christ.”<sup>439</sup> Nevertheless, both the Son and the Spirit, as the two hands of the Father, are the *Sheluchim* of the Father in the economy of salvation.

It is unfortunate that Torrance offers no explanatory statements on Irenaeus’ view of the “two hands of the Father,” which would have helped him elaborate the sending agency of the Father. Perhaps his concern and polemic against subordinationism imported to the intra-divine Trinity prevented him from emphasizing this Irenaean phraseology. In fact, it is this neglect that led Gunton to think that Torrance holds “a homogeneous view of the persons of the economy,” or that the three Persons of the Triune God share *equal* divinity even in the economy.<sup>440</sup> Gunton perceives Torrance’s position as a double-edged sword: it is profitable in light of the Arian controversy, but it also offers a complication in light of the issue of economic subordination. Although Torrance himself affirms economic subordination,<sup>441</sup> his polemic against ontological subordinationism prevented him from elaborating important aspects that may be interpreted to mean or imply the latter (in this case, “the two hands of the Father”). On one hand, Torrance’s silence illustrates his determination for theological consistency; but on the other hand, it portrays his purposive evasion of selected topics that could open a critique to his position.

### **The Receiving Father**

For Torrance, there is a reciprocity in the saving movement made by the Father from beginning to end in the one economy of salvation in accordance with his Person and nature as Father. As was shown above, he ascribes to the Father the electing and sending offices—“*from the Father* through the Son in the Spirit”—with special emphasis on the eternal will and love of the Father, which is then reciprocated by a Godward movement: “in the Spirit through the Son *to the Father*.” From this double movement of grace, one can immediately recognise that for Torrance, in the economy of salvation, the Father is both the sending and receiving Person: *from* the Father and *to* the Father.<sup>442</sup>

Torrance’s understanding of “*to the Father*” as a salvific event is best discerned in the language of adoption. Here, “Fatherhood is defined in terms of redeeming grace

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<sup>439</sup> *CAC I*, 40.

<sup>440</sup> Gunton, “Being and Person,” 121.

<sup>441</sup> Torrance, “Thomas Thomas Responds,” 316.

<sup>442</sup> See also Peter Toon, *Our Triune God: A Biblical Portrayal of the Trinity* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 213-229.

toward us and free adoption of us as his children.”<sup>443</sup> As such, the church, as the community of the reconciled, is “the universal family of God the Father sharing brotherhood with Jesus Christ and therefore sharing with him sonship to the Father.”<sup>444</sup> This is grounded and accomplished in Christ. Thus, Torrance argues, “new birth refers ultimately to His [Jesus’] own birth,” in which humanity shares.<sup>445</sup> “It is in Christ and through Christ only that we are born again.”<sup>446</sup> Interpreting John 3:16 and quoting John 1:12 in this light, he argues that “to those who receive him, Jesus Christ gives the power and the right to become children of God.”<sup>447</sup> Again, humanity’s filial relation with the Father is mediated through Christ, in consistency with his whole soteriological framework that access to the Father happens only through Christ in the Spirit.<sup>448</sup>

We must distinguish, however, two kinds of sonship: one by nature and one by grace.<sup>449</sup> The former refers to the relation of the Son to the Father; the latter to humanity’s adoption into the family of God: “Our being children *of* God falls outside the Being of God, for we are created beings, utterly distinct from the Being of God. But Jesus Christ is Son *of* God in a unique sense, for he is Son of God within God, so that what he is and does as Son of the Father falls within the eternal Being of the Godhead.”<sup>450</sup> This distinction is important, because it maintains the creaturehood of humanity and safeguards the intrusion of the dangerous traditional Western misinterpretation of *theosis* into soteriology. So, “the Son became man without ceasing to be divine in order to make creatures participate in the divine communion without ceasing to be creatures.”<sup>451</sup> Nevertheless, Torrance asserts, because of the incarnation, we are called sons of God by sharing in the Sonship of Christ. Thus, as *Frater*, “the Son of the Father has made himself our Brother, for through his incarnational union with us, he has established our union with him. By making himself our Brother, he has made us

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<sup>443</sup> *ST*, 7.

<sup>444</sup> *APWC*, 360.

<sup>445</sup> *WCCCA*, 72.

<sup>446</sup> *WCCCA*, 72. Even little children, when baptized, “are no longer strangers but members of the household of God,” in “The Bible’s Guidance on Baptism,” *LW* (September 1982), 17.

<sup>447</sup> *WCCCA*, 72.

<sup>448</sup> Torrance, in *TRE*, 181-182, writes: “While it is through Christ that we have access to God the Father, that takes place *in one Spirit*. All things are wrought by the Father through the Son and in the Spirit, and proceed from the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Correspondingly, all service from man towards God is rightly mediated through the Son and in the unity of the Spirit.”

<sup>449</sup> *IESNCC*, 32-33. Dragas describes “sonship by grace” further using three terms: grace (χάρις), position (θέσις), and virtue (ἀρετή): meaning, respectively: sonship from the side of God, sonship from both the side of God and man, and sonship from the side of man. These three are all fulfilled in Christ’s vicarious humanity.

<sup>450</sup> *MC*, 54; *DGAF*, 74.

<sup>451</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 36.

brothers of his and therefore sons of the Father.”<sup>452</sup> This is what Torrance calls “‘incarnational fraternity.’”<sup>453</sup> Humphrey follows Torrance’s Christocentric assertions: “Because of the person and work of Christ Jesus, we become children, or more properly, ‘sons’ of the Father.”<sup>454</sup>

According to one central strand of biblical soteriology, the Christian life is fundamentally a sharing in the Son’s relationship with the Father in the power of the Spirit through the economic earthing of that same relationship in the particular flesh of Jesus of Nazareth. We do not share in the person of the Son, but precisely in the relationship which he has with the Father and the Spirit in the triune life of *koinonia*. This is the trinitarian shape of the kerygma and of the Christian experience of God.<sup>455</sup>

The quotation above from Trevor Hart expresses two important reminders: (1) that our adoption is a sharing by grace in the Sonship of Christ and (2) that our sharing in Christ ultimately means sharing in the Triune *koinonia*. Inasmuch as humanity’s adoption into the family of God is effected by “the third dimension,”<sup>456</sup> referring to the union of God and man in the one Person Christ, Torrance also maintains a Trinitarian view of adoption. We become sons and daughters of the Father through Christ in the Spirit. “The work of spiritual rebirth is performed in unison by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”<sup>457</sup> James Torrance expresses Trinitarian adoption more beautifully:

Firstly, I have been a child of God from all eternity in the heart of the Father. Secondly, I became a child of God when Christ the Son lived, died and rose again for me long ago. Thirdly, I became a child of God when the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of adoption—sealed in my faith and experience what had been planned from all eternity in the heart of the Father and what was completed once and for all in Jesus Christ.<sup>458</sup>

That adoption should also be construed from a Trinitarian perspective is completely consistent with Torrance’s conception of the nature of human salvation as sharing in the life and love of the Triune God.<sup>459</sup> Filial relation, reconciliation, and union with God are inseparable: “Through his Sonship, that is, through his obedient Life in filial relation

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<sup>452</sup> *TR*, 153. See also, Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1991), 31-41.

<sup>453</sup> *TR*, 153.

<sup>454</sup> Humphrey, “The Gift of the Father,” 92. Gerald L. Bray proposes the view that Sonship to God is unique to Christianity, in “Out of the Box: The Christian Experience of God in Trinity,” in *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice* (ed. Timothy George; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 46-54.

<sup>455</sup> Trevor A. Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth: Essays Toward a Reading of His Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 108.

<sup>456</sup> *KBBET*, 22.

<sup>457</sup> *TDORC I*, 140.

<sup>458</sup> Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 76.

<sup>459</sup> *TDORC I*, 139; *MC*, 66; Habets, *Theosis*, 101.

toward the Father, and through his brotherhood with us in our estrangement, Christ is the active Agent who reveals God to us and reconciles us to God... [bringing] us back to union with God.”<sup>460</sup> In other words, adoption into the Father’s household is a conceptual equivalent of participation in the Life and Love of the Triune God. This is what Torrance calls “our adoption into the communion of the divine life,”<sup>461</sup> the fulfilment of God’s eternal plan to invite creation to himself as sons and daughters.<sup>462</sup> In light of this, and recalling that union with Christ also implies communion with the Triune God, a Trinitarian pattern is already apparent in Torrance’s soteriology: the salvific agency of the Three Persons and relationship with each of them imply more than a relationship with individual hypostasis, because each relationship means a lifting up into the Triune Communion to which each of the hypostases belong. This will be made evident again in the salvific agency of the Holy Spirit, and will be explained in Chapter V as humanity’s *mediated* participation in the Triune Life.

## CONCLUSIONS

As demonstrated, the distinct nature and work of the Father in the salvific economy could be best described in terms of his love as Almighty Creator, his electing and sending agency, and finally his receiving role, whereby the Father accepts through Christ in the Spirit humanity as children of God. Of course, all of these should be tied into to four of Torrance’s important emphases. First, the Person and Work of the Father are one and inseparable. It is precisely because God is the Father who loves the Son and the Holy Spirit that he is able to love and invite “the creaturely other” into communion with himself. Torrance quotes John Knox: “We call him Father not so much because he has created us, but by reason of his free adoption by which he has chosen us in Jesus Christ.”<sup>463</sup> Secondly, the eternal will of the Father and the sending of the Son and the Spirit are one: his Will and Act are one. In relation to the latter, thirdly, the electing, sending and receiving roles of the Father are inseparable. In other words, the origin and goal of Trinitarian salvation are one. “Bringing humanity back from estrangement to

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<sup>460</sup> *TR*, 153.

<sup>461</sup> *APWC*, 167. Torrance’s tone finds striking similarity with Moltmann’s in *History and the Triune God*, 38: “In communion with the only-begotten Son of God, human beings become children of God, born again from the eternal Spirit of God, and in this way taken up into the eternal life of the Triune God.”

<sup>462</sup> *TDORC I*, 34.

<sup>463</sup> *The Works of John Knox* (col. and ed., David Laing; Edinburgh: The Bannatine Club, 1846-1864), vol. 6: 317; in *ST*, 7.

communion with the Father,” Torrance argues, is the mission of Christ.<sup>464</sup> Fourthly, Trinitarian salvation involves a “glorious exchange,”<sup>465</sup> willed by the Father through the Son in the Spirit, enabling humanity to participate in the love of the Father, the Sonship of the Son and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>464</sup> *IPLC*, 114.

<sup>465</sup> Hart, “Humankind in Christ,” 82, 84.

## Chapter IV

### THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is a noticeable imbalance in Torrance's treatment of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in his writings, demonstrated clearly by a non-existent separate treatment of the Holy Spirit amidst the large corpus of Torrance's works (and in comparison to his numerous treatises on Jesus Christ). As Deddo argues, however, Torrance's reflections on the Spirit and his relation to both Trinity *ad intra* and *ad extra* are scattered throughout his writings.<sup>466</sup> As such, far from lacking a mature theology of the Holy Spirit, Torrance actually has a well-developed pneumatology that is integrated and integral to his whole theological cogitation. Kruger justifiably adds pneumatic thinking (and eschatological thinking) on Robert Palma's list of six cardinal facets of Torrance's theology (Trinitarian, Christocentric, unitary, rational, and natural theology).<sup>467</sup> Overall, Torrance's pneumatological approach is both Christocentric and Trinitarian, and is thus consistent with his entire theological programme. "There is no separate activity of the Holy Spirit in revelation or salvation in addition to or independent of the activity of Christ, for what he does is to empower and actualize the words and works of Christ in our midst as the words and works of the Father."<sup>468</sup> Torrance's pneumatology thus "comes to fruition in an onto-relational and Trinitarian formulation."<sup>469</sup> This is why a presentation of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit in Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology may advance only after treatment of the Persons and Works of the Son and the Father.

### THE COMMUNION OF *THE HOLY SPIRIT*

Torrance admits that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the weakest of all the doctrines of the Church, owing to the difficulty of the subject.<sup>470</sup> He hints that weak pneumatology in Christian theology goes back as early as the first century, citing the Apostles' Creed

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<sup>466</sup> Deddo, "The Holy Spirit," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 103-104.

<sup>467</sup> Kruger, "The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God," 366-389; Palma, "Thomas F. Torrance's Reformed Theology," *RR* 38 (1984), 13-23. Kang argues that Torrance's theology is also evangelical, humanist, catholic, Reformed, ecumenical, and doxological in "The Concept of Vicarious Humanity," 449-466.

<sup>468</sup> *CDG*, 196.

<sup>469</sup> Deddo, "The Holy Spirit," 82.

<sup>470</sup> *SF*, xcv. Interestingly, Kevin Hector argues that the neglect of the Holy Spirit in Western theology should find a solution by going back to Schleiermacher, in "The Mediation of Christ's Normative Spirit: A Constructive Reading of Schleiermacher's Pneumatology," *MTh* 24 (2008), 1-22.

which offered a laconic treatment of the Holy Spirit, moving quickly on to the church.<sup>471</sup> Hing Kau Yeung critiques Torrance for ironically falling into the same pit, arguing that his distinct treatments of the Holy Spirit are overly brief. While this is true to a certain extent, Yeung's consequent judgment that Torrance's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is "more or less only significant to the knowledge of God" is unacceptably harsh.<sup>472</sup> Rather, Deddo's analysis, presented above, does more justice to Torrance's theological scheme. Also, in Torrance's defence, presentation of the nature and Person of the Holy Spirit requires a deliberate degree of apophatism in accordance with the nature of the Spirit as Spirit.

Torrance recognizes that as in Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of the Holy Spirit was initially only implicit in the worship of the early Church.<sup>473</sup> Similarly, it was only after clear knowledge of the Father and the Son had been achieved that the necessity for explicit statements on the Holy Spirit became increasingly imperative. The task was undertaken by prominent theologians such as Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory of Nazianzus. Following Athanasius, Torrance's understanding of the Holy Spirit consistently proceeds from the doctrine of the Son, particularly in the *homoousios* as applied both to the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>474</sup> The difference of application of the *homoousios* to the Son and the Holy Spirit, is only that "it is only [Christ] who is both *homoousios* with the Father and *homoousios* with us," while the Spirit is only *homoousios* with the Father, but not with humanity.<sup>475</sup> Clearly, Torrance's approach to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is integrated in his understanding of the triadic relation between the Triune God and the world, which highlights his consistent contention that knowledge of the Spirit is in line with the knowledge of the Son.

### God is Spirit

A discussion of the Person of the Spirit faces serious ambiguities in relation to God's being. This is owing to the fact that while the doctrine of the Trinity delineates the

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<sup>471</sup> *SF*, xcv.

<sup>472</sup> Yeung, "Being and Knowing: An Examination of T. F. Torrance's Christological Science," (Ph.D. thesis; University of London, 1993), 223.

<sup>473</sup> Following Mackintosh, Torrance can say, therefore, that the origin of the idea of the Spirit in its Trinitarian meaning is not in philosophic thought, but in history and life. See *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 519.

<sup>474</sup> *TF*, 201-204; *TRE*, 233.

<sup>475</sup> *TF*, 203; *GR*, 167.

*hypostasis* of the Holy Spirit from the *ousia* of God, it is clear in various passages of Scripture that God's being and nature is in itself Spirit. Torrance identifies this distinction between thinking of the Spirit *absolutely* and thinking of him *relatively*.<sup>476</sup> Concerning the former, Torrance succinctly admits: “*Spirit* is the specific nature of God's eternal being (*ousia*), whether as Father, Son or Holy Spirit.”<sup>477</sup> Three important ontological-epistemological implications follow. First, calling God *Spirit* has a dialectic or comparative merit, because it underlines the fact that God's nature is infinite, transcendent, invisible, immaterial and immutable, in contrast with the contingent, transient and limited nature of creaturely beings.<sup>478</sup> Secondly, that God is Spirit is important in a realist and imageless epistemology: “God is Spirit, and therefore he is to be known and thought of by us in a reverent and spiritual way without the crude use of creaturely or material images.”<sup>479</sup> Thirdly, and in relation to the latter, the spiritual nature of God should re-shape our thinking of God even when we use human language. Thus, Torrance writes: “terms like οὐσία, ὑποστάσις, or φύσις when applied to God must be understood in a wholly spiritual, personal yet genderless way.”<sup>480</sup>

Thinking of the Spirit in the absolute sense, however, does not rule out the distinction between the Persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Western tradition, following Augustine, turned the ambiguous use of the term “Spirit” into a positive advantage by conceiving of the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son. Torrance takes this position when he speaks of the Holy Spirit as “a kind of consubstantial Communion (*communio quaedam consubstantialis*) between the Father and the Son,”<sup>481</sup> and by speaking of the Holy Spirit as “*the Bond of Nature* in the Holy Trinity.”<sup>482</sup> Torrance elaborates: “The fact that the Holy Spirit is both the hypostasis of the whole Being of God, and, considered absolutely in himself as God, is identical with that Being, for God *is* Spirit, means that he *is* the consubstantial bond of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> CDG, 147; TF, 205.

<sup>477</sup> TF, 194.

<sup>478</sup> TF, 205.

<sup>479</sup> TF, 207, 194.

<sup>480</sup> TP, 124.

<sup>481</sup> CDG, 167; quoting Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15.27.50 (NPNF 3): 227.

<sup>482</sup> CDG, 167 (italics mine); referencing Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 45 (NPNF 8): 28.

<sup>483</sup> TP, 67-68. See also Deddo, “The Holy Spirit,” 86.

### God the Holy Spirit

Torrance, consistent with his realist and historical approach, owes his pneumatology to creedal and patristic theology. His engagement and critique of liberal theology's subjective understanding of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit, along with the failure to distinguish one from the other, probably marks his only engagement with "recent" pneumatological issues. Although Torrance shows optimism concerning the renewal of interest in pneumatology as part of the renewed interest in the Trinity and in ecumenism,<sup>484</sup> his silence concerning Pentecostal theology evidences his lack of involvement with fresh understandings of the Holy Spirit's Person and Work developed by other contemporary traditions.<sup>485</sup>

The early fathers regarded the concept of *homoousios* as inspired by the Holy Spirit in determining and expressing the consubstantial relation of Jesus Christ to the Father, and of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son.<sup>486</sup> Torrance asserts that it was Athanasius who "had little hesitation in applying the term *homoousios* to the Spirit as well as to the Son."<sup>487</sup> In this way, the Person of the Holy Spirit is established on the same ontological and soteriological grounds as the Person of the Son. Yet again, Torrance's concern in the application of the *homoousios* to the Holy Spirit, like Athanasius', is soteriological, and not exclusively ontological *per se*. Torrance's pneumatology, like his Christology and Pateriology, therefore, is soterio-conditioned. Moreover, Torrance's affirmation of this is deliberate, and is entirely consistent with his realist theology.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is derived, therefore, not merely from biblical statements, nor from doxological formulae alone, but from the supreme truth that God reveals himself through himself, and therefore that *God himself* is the content of his revelation through the Son and in the Spirit. That is to say, far from being an extraneous intrusion, the doctrine of the Spirit was developed naturally and properly out of the inner structure of knowledge of the one God grounded in his *self*-revelation and *self*-communication as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>488</sup>

By employing *homoousios*, Torrance's argument that knowledge of the Spirit, like knowledge of the Father, is controlled and grounded by knowledge of the Son is further solidified. His hierarchical epistemology is also strengthened, in which the movement

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<sup>484</sup> *TRE*, 289-293.

<sup>485</sup> Deddo, "The Holy Spirit," 107-108.

<sup>486</sup> *IESNCC*, xx; *TR*, 213-215.

<sup>487</sup> *TF*, 202; *DM*, 195.

<sup>488</sup> *TF*, 202.

from knowledge of the Son to knowledge of the Spirit “tells us how our thought moves from the first to the second theological levels... in determining how we are to think of the dynamic and spiritual nature of the ontological relation that obtains between the economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity.”<sup>489</sup> Colyer justly concludes that Torrance follows “a biblical, evangelical/doxological and Trinitarian approach” to his pneumatology.<sup>490</sup>

Torrance’s confidence in identifying the Person of the Holy Spirit, however, should be balanced with his reluctance in offering a definitive statement concerning the distinct Person of the Spirit. He reserves an element of mystery in his pneumatology, and quotes Cyril of Jerusalem’s words that “to define accurately the *hypostasis* of the Holy Spirit is impossible.”<sup>491</sup> Torrance adds:

The Holy Spirit is not cognoscible in himself. In the doctrine of the Spirit we are concerned with the ultimate Being of God before whom the very cherubim veil their faces, for there God the Spirit hides himself not only by the very mode of his Being as Spirit, but by his exaltedness, his greatness and majesty, that is, by his infinite holiness. Because he is infinitely greater than we can conceive, we can think and speak of him in his revelation to us only with awe and awareness of the weakness of our minds to apprehend him.<sup>492</sup>

This apprehensiveness is intertwined with the self-effacing nature of the Holy Spirit.<sup>493</sup> By the very mode of the being of the Spirit, he hides himself from us behind the Father in the Son and behind the Son in the Father, so that we do not know him face to face in his own hypostasis. Thus, ultimately, “the difficulty of the doctrine of the Spirit derives from this hiding of himself on the part of the Spirit behind the Face of the Father in the Son and the Heart of the Son in the Father.”<sup>494</sup> Therefore, Torrance concludes, the identity of the Holy Spirit remains a mystery that needs to be honoured.

### **The Holy Spirit and the Trinity**

Our approach to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit must be from his inner *enhypostatic* relation to the triune being of God. Torrance’s use of *enhypostasia* concerning the Spirit highlights the fact that the Person of the Spirit is inseparable from the One Being of

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<sup>489</sup> CDG, 97.

<sup>490</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 212-216. Torrance critiques and rejects both Romanism and Protestantism which have often confounded the identity of the Spirit with either the spirit of the Church or the human spirit, and used such misunderstandings to ground knowledge of the Holy Spirit. See “Spiritus Creator,” *Verbum Caro* 23 (1969), reprinted in *TR*, 227-228.

<sup>491</sup> *TR*, 210, 226; quoting Cyril, *Cat.* 16.11 (*NPNF* 7): 117-118.

<sup>492</sup> *TR*, 213.

<sup>493</sup> This will be elaborated later.

<sup>494</sup> *TR*, 226-227.

God. As such, the divine personal nature of the Spirit and the personal objective subsistence of the Holy Spirit in God is an identity in being with the undivided Trinity.<sup>495</sup> Consistent with Torrance's Trinitarian emphasis on the doctrine of God, the Holy Spirit, like the Father and the Son, cannot assume an autonomous position, for knowledge of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the knowledge of the Son and the Father, and therefore knowledge of the Triune God. Similarly, in our explicit knowledge of the Holy Spirit, we encounter the Trinity as a whole simultaneously, albeit in an implicit and inarticulate manner.<sup>496</sup>

### *Homoousios and Consubstantiality*

Following Athanasius, Torrance is adamant that similar to knowledge of the Father, knowledge of the Spirit should not proceed from the divine Person's relationship with created reality.

Athanasius would have nothing to do with an understanding of the Spirit beginning from manifestations or operations of the Spirit in creaturely existence, in man or in the world. Instead..., he took his controlling point of reference from what he called "the propriety" of the Spirit to God on the divine side of the line dividing between the Creator and the creature, and therefore from the inner relation of the Son to the one being of the Godhead.<sup>497</sup>

As such, Torrance's pneumatology develops out of the Spirit's essential relation to the one God and his undivided consubstantiality with the Father and the Son. This explains why Torrance follows Athanasius and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan application of *homoousios* to the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is wholly God and is also inseparable from the Father and the Son both in eternity and in the economy of salvation, it is proper that the early fathers applied *homoousios* not only to the Son's relation to the Father but also to the Holy Spirit's relation to the Father and Son.<sup>498</sup>

The important consequence of the *homoousios* of the Holy Spirit is the necessary equal ascriptions of divine attributes to the Holy Spirit. Thus, like the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit, "these three are one, *eternal* God, the same in

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<sup>495</sup> *TF*, 218.

<sup>496</sup> *CDG*, 29: "The doctrines of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are thus each implicitly Trinitarian."

<sup>497</sup> *TF*, 201; *TRE*, 231; *DM*, 195.

<sup>498</sup> *DM*, 196; Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 195. Crump argues however that in John's Gospel, even though the Spirit is described as a distinct person, his status as a divine person is not explicitly clear, in "Re-examinining the Johannine Trinity: Perichoresis or Deification," *SJT* 59 (2006), 408.

substance, *equal* in power and glory.”<sup>499</sup> As Gunton writes, one of the greatest pneumatological errors in Christian theology is the depersonalization of the Spirit in equating him with the concept of “grace” as substance,<sup>500</sup> or thinking of the Spirit impersonally, as in Pannenberg’s “force field.”<sup>501</sup> This is not so far from Torrance’s rejection of the tendency in the second and third centuries to think of the Holy Spirit as “an immanent *Pneuma* emanating from God” that “led to the notion of [his] creatureliness.”<sup>502</sup> Torrance quotes Epiphanius: “When you pronounce the *homoousion*, you assert that the Son is God of God, and that the Spirit is God of the same Godhead.”<sup>503</sup> As such, with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is equally honoured, adored, worshipped and glorified. But Torrance also offers a caveat concerning the use of *homoousios* in the doctrine of the Trinity. He holds that the term not only stresses Oneness in Being in the Trinity, but also implies a distinction of Persons in God. This is because “one Person cannot be consubstantial with himself, and... each of the three Persons has real, substantial, true and perfect subsistence in the one being of God, and indeed that the whole being of the Spirit is the same as the whole being of the Son and the whole being of the Father.”<sup>504</sup> In short, tautonomy should not be inferred from the Nicene *homoousios*. Even though the Holy Spirit is ever with the Father and the Son, coinhering with them in the one being of God, it is an “enhypostatic coinherence” in such a way that in the one being of God, the Holy Spirit is always Spirit, as the Father is always Father and the Son is always Son, and each possessing distinct marks and properties that are incommunicable or transferable to the other two Persons.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> *SF*, xcvi; *TF*, 222. “He who grants that the Holy Spirit is God,” Torrance writes, following Gregory of Nyssa, “has granted all the rest,” in *TR*, 226.

<sup>500</sup> Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 79. Torrance discerns that this error emerges from what Epiphanius abhorred as “partitive thinking of God either as he is in himself or as he is toward us,” evident when the Giver and the Gift are separated, or more particularly, when “grace” is conceived to be that which is other than God’s own Self-gift. See “The Roman Doctrine of Grace from the Point of View of Reformed Theology,” *EastChQ* 16 (1964), reprinted in *TR*, 169-191; *TF*, 222; *DGAF*, 139.

<sup>501</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; ed. Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998) 1: 381-384. See Jürgen Moltmann’s fourfold metaphors for the experiences of the Spirit in *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM, 1992), 269-285. While his classification is appealing, it gives an uneasy suggestion that the non-personal metaphors are on the same level as the personal metaphors.

<sup>502</sup> *TR*, 212; Yeung, “Being and Knowing,” 224.

<sup>503</sup> *TF*, 221, 233; quoting Epiphanius, *Anc.* 6.

<sup>504</sup> *TF*, 220-221.

<sup>505</sup> *TP*, 49, 116.

*Filioque Controversy*

To the present, Torrance's theology offers the greatest available solution for the misunderstandings and misgivings attached to the *filioque* controversy. In fact, reiteration of an Athanasian stress on *homoousios* and its consequent ramifications on both the East's and West's arguments on the procession of the Holy Spirit is one of Torrance's greatest contributions to both pneumatology and ecumenical theology.<sup>506</sup> Torrance's contribution to the subject is not, however, in providing an answer to the question of *how* the Spirit proceeds from God, for this is tantamount to "an ungodly attempt to intrude into the holy mystery of God's Being."<sup>507</sup> Torrance even contends that like the idea of Son's "begottenness," we do not really know what the "procession" of the Holy Spirit really means.<sup>508</sup> It is rather his argument that the procession of the Spirit should be understood in light of the theology of Nicea, particularly on the consubstantial and perichoretic relation among the Triune Persons that is important.<sup>509</sup>

Theologically, it is evident that the *filioque* debates revolve not specifically about the deity or Person of the Holy Spirit *per se*, but on the Being and Person of the Father in the Trinity, understood differently by the fathers.<sup>510</sup> Torrance follows Athanasius in affirming the double procession of the Holy Spirit, in contrast to single procession held by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa through their ascription of *Monarchia* and *Arche* only to the Person of the Father. Owing to *homoousios*, which argues for the consubstantial relation between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Torrance's solution is logical and precise: "Since the Holy Spirit like the Son is of the Being of God, and belongs to the Son, since he is in the Being of the Father and in the Being of the Son, he could not but proceed from or out of the Being of God inseparably from and through the Son."<sup>511</sup> Athanasius' application of *homoousios* to the Holy Spirit, added by Torrance's stress on the concept of *perichoresis* and triune *Monarchia*, has the effect, not only of asserting that the Spirit is also of one Being with the Father, but also that the procession of the Spirit is from the *Being* of the Father, in which the Son shares, and not from the

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<sup>506</sup> See Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 217; Matthew Baker, "The Eternal 'Spirit of the Son': Barth, Florovsky and Torrance on the *Filioque*," *IJST* 12 (2010), 398-403.

<sup>507</sup> *CDG*, 188.

<sup>508</sup> *CDG*, 192; Colyer, *How to Read*, 240-241.

<sup>509</sup> See *TR*, 229-230; *TDORC I*, 11.

<sup>510</sup> *TDORC I*, 16; and see Torrance's elaborate discussion in *TF*, 231-247. We are not dealing with the historical and political issues revolving the clause here. For this, see Alasdair Heron, "The *Filioque* Clause," in *One God in Trinity* (ed. Peter Toon and James Spiceland; London: Samuel Bagster, 1980), 63-75; and Thomas Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity," in *Nicene Christianity*, 154-165.

<sup>511</sup> *CDG*, 188; following Athanasius, *De decretis* 12 (*NPNF* 4): 157-158.

*Person (hypostasis)* of the Father. This means that in both Trinity *ad intra* and *ad extra*, any proper understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit must be of procession from the whole spiritual Being of the Triune God, which the Holy Spirit has entirely in common with the Father and the Son. This equally applies to the mission of the Holy Spirit.

Discussions concerning the *filioque* serve the purpose of challenging theologians to rethink the internal and eternal relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son. In particular, what is needed is the overcoming of what Moltmann calls “monarchical pneumatology.”<sup>512</sup> Ho argues, however, that because Torrance (unlike Zizioulas) grounds the procession of the Spirit in the Being of the Godhead and not in the Person of the Father, he destroys the personal-relational aspect of the Spirit’s procession. As such, even though Ho admits that articulating procession not from God the Father but from God who is Father is a “creative move,”<sup>513</sup> he concludes that Torrance’s solution “does not really solve the issue of *filioque*.”<sup>514</sup> Ho’s critique also represents Zizioulas’ concern that the Holy Spirit, as a Person, should proceed from a Person (the Father) and not from an abstract Being. But as to why Ho thinks that Torrance disagrees with this basic contention is a mystery. Ho’s misjudgement lies in his fundamental error of regarding Being (*ousia*) as essentially impersonal, which he then crudely imposes on Torrance, when in fact Torrance holds a Personal view of Being more similar to Zizioulas than Ho recognizes.<sup>515</sup>

#### *Conclusions: The Holy Spirit in the Trinity*

In a sense, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit completes the doctrine of the Trinity. Only after developing an explicit awareness of the consubstantial relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, did the Church explicitly understand the Triune Being of God. But the Spirit, *enhyposstatic* with the Father and the Son, does not just fill an empty seat in the Triune Communion. The Holy Spirit, for Torrance, is the bond of Love and Communion in the life of the Triune God, or “the consubstantial Communion of the Father and the Son in the Trinity.”<sup>516</sup> Consequently, concerning the Spirit’s salvific agency in the divine economy, because he “comes to us from the inner communion of

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<sup>512</sup> Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, 58.

<sup>513</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 276.

<sup>514</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 156.

<sup>515</sup> This will be elaborated further in Chapter V.

<sup>516</sup> *GR*, 180.

the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” he is also “the bond of truth and faith who creates unity among us and brings us into communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”<sup>517</sup> The Person of the Holy Spirit, thus, reinforces Torrance’s assertion of an *onto-relational* God, *ad intra* and *ad extra*. This also solidifies what this thesis calls Torrance’s *kath hypostasin* soteriology, which in this chapter, focuses on the distinct agency of the Spirit in the salvific economy in strict accordance to his hypostasis as the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, that the Holy Spirit is relation- and communion-constituting also implies that the Holy Spirit is in himself personal. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal emanation, force or energy of God but is “at once intensely personal reality.”<sup>518</sup> Moreover, the Spirit clarifies the nature of God as both holy and spiritual: “The very designation of God’s spiritual nature as *holy* and the third person as *Holy* Spirit emphasizes the otherness, the utterly transcendent glory and majesty of God.”<sup>519</sup>

### **THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The saving work of the Spirit is inseparable from his saving Person. As Torrance writes, “To be ‘in the Spirit’ is to be ‘in Christ’, and to be in Christ is to be in God, for the operations of the Holy Spirit in us, like the work of Christ for us, is empty of evangelical substance or saving validity unless it is grounded in God and flows from God.”<sup>520</sup> Torrance’s soteriology is uncompromisingly Trinitarian, so that even his view of the salvific agency of the Spirit is grounded in his affirmation of the perichoretic co-activity of the Triune Persons. This is only proper, because “a proper understanding of the gifts and diverse operations of the Spirit” is possible only “from the perspective of their source and ground in the divine Trinity, from the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit.”<sup>521</sup> The activities of the Holy Spirit, therefore, are the activities of the Triune God working in our midst the salvation wrought by the grace of the Son and the love of the Father, but in particular, the Holy Spirit is the “holy presence of God in and through whose communion we may know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God

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<sup>517</sup> *TF*, 250. See also C. Baxter Kruger, “Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God: The Nature and Means of our Knowledge of God in the Theology of T. F. Torrance,” (Ph.D. thesis; University of Aberdeen, 1989), 203-204.

<sup>518</sup> *TF*, 192, 218, 226.

<sup>519</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 217.

<sup>520</sup> *CDG*, 61. Thus, to know the Spirit and to be acted by Him is to be concerned with the very Being of God, in *TR*, 214.

<sup>521</sup> *TRE*, 232; *DM*, 195.

the Father.”<sup>522</sup> Pentecost, or the universal outpouring of the Spirit to the Church for the world, thus, belongs to the salvific economy. In fact, Torrance argues that the last times “are fully inaugurated by the descent of the Spirit, for it is through the Creator Spirit that the saving work of Christ is actualized in the Church as redemption.”<sup>523</sup> Moreover, the *eschatological* Spirit is also the *teleological* Spirit, for it is the agency of the Holy Spirit, in relation to the work of Christ, to bring to completion the mediation of reconciliation.<sup>524</sup>

### The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ

Because of Torrance’s emphasis on *homoousios*, he argues that the doctrine of the Son requires the doctrine of the Spirit, and *vice versa*.<sup>525</sup> In the economy of salvation, the Work of the Holy Spirit is never independent from the work of the Son, just as his Person is never independent from the Persons of the Son and the Father. This means that Pentecost should be understood as Christ himself ministering to the Church.

Torrance summarizes: the Holy Spirit “comes to us *in the Name* of the Son and is sent by him. Hence he is known as ‘the Spirit of Christ’ (Rom 8:9), ‘the Spirit of Jesus Christ’ (Phil 1:19), ‘the Spirit of the Son’ (Gal 4:6), ‘the Spirit of the Lord’ (2 Cor 3:17), ‘the Spirit of Jesus’ (Acts 16:7),”<sup>526</sup> and the Other Paraclete whom Christ sends in his place (John 14:16).<sup>527</sup> In short, the Holy Spirit is “Christ’s *Other Self*.”<sup>528</sup>

Nevertheless, there is an apparent imbalance in Torrance’s attention to the Triune relationships in the economy of salvation. As previously demonstrated, Torrance develops the economic relation between the incarnate Son and the Father. This section will present the economic relation between the Holy Spirit and the Son. What is

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<sup>522</sup> Torrance, “The Christ who Loves Us,” in *A Passion for Christ: The Vision that Ignites Ministry* (eds. Gerritt Scott Dawson and Jock Stein; Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1999), 19. In *TF*, 4, Torrance also writes: “It is only through the communion of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, that we may share in the saving, regenerating and sanctifying work in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus share in his eternal offering of himself, and of us as redeemed and consecrated in him, to God the Father.”

<sup>523</sup> *RP*, 23. The Spirit’s descent means the era of revelation and reconciliation. See “The Apocalypse Now,” *LW* (October 1988), 19-20.

<sup>524</sup> Flett, “Persons, Powers and Pluralities,” 51-55.

<sup>525</sup> *TR*, 213. More radically, Torrance argues that the doctrine of the Spirit has Christology for its content, in *RP*, 25. Nevertheless, this should be balanced by Torrance’s other arguments that Christocentricism should not be at the expense of pneumatology, as Lee, Deddo and Habets argue in *Living in Union*, 315-316, “The Holy Spirit,” 84, and *Theosis*, 145. In contrast, see the critique of Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 111.

<sup>526</sup> *TR*, 227.

<sup>527</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 61; *CDG*, 65. Thus, Torrance also calls the Spirit the *shaliach* of Christ, or as Christ’s official representative, in *APWC*, lvi, 320-323; *CAC I*, 40-42.

<sup>528</sup> Lee, *Living in Union*, 143; Kruger, “Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God,” 201.

missing, then, apart from discussions on the *filioque* and *shaliach*, is Torrance's attention to the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father. Therefore, from a *systematic* theologian's point of view, Torrance's failure to devote the same amount of detailed presentation of the Father-Spirit relation found in his presentation of the Father-Son and Son-Spirit relations is unfortunate. In a sense, however, and in Torrance's defence, to identify the specific economic relation between the Holy Spirit and Father would certainly prove difficult, particularly since the Bible itself does not clearly discuss the Father-Spirit relation. So from a *biblical-evangelical* theologian's perspective, Torrance's silence on the matter is an appropriate doxological response to the Scriptures' silence.

### *Mutual Mediation of the Son and Holy Spirit*

To encapsulate, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit mutually mediate one another. Christ's revealing and reconciling work should be interpenetrated by the doctrine of the Spirit, for the Spirit is wholly present (albeit behind the curtains) in the life and ministry of the incarnate Son.<sup>529</sup> Reciprocally, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is not a coming of an isolated Spirit, but rather the Spirit "charged with all the earthly encounter of the historical Jesus," and that "the new mode of activity on the part of the Spirit is [actually] conditioned by the evangelical events that lie behind it."<sup>530</sup> This salvific relationship between the Spirit and the Son goes back even before the incarnation, because the Spirit is co-active with the Son in all acts of redemption and sanctification as well as in all acts of creation.<sup>531</sup> This double mediation is summarized by Torrance: "The co-activity and co-essentiality of the Spirit with the Son meant that the doctrine of the Spirit must be allowed to interpenetrate the doctrine of Christ and his revealing and reconciling work, for it is the Spirit who mediates the Son as it is the Son who mediates the Spirit."<sup>532</sup> Therefore, even in our knowledge of the Son and the Spirit, the two Persons are at work.

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<sup>529</sup> In particular, Torrance highlights the virgin birth, baptism, temptation, prayer and offering of Jesus as specific moments where the active presence of the Holy Spirit is evident. See *TR*, 222, 246; and *IPLC*, 135-136; and Boris Bobrinskoy, "The Indwelling of the Spirit in Christ: Pneumatic Christology in the Cappadocian Fathers," *StVThQ* 28 (1984), 48-65. Lee writes in *Living in Union*, 316: "The Spirit is the hero behind the curtain of Torrance's theological stage."

<sup>530</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 31.

<sup>531</sup> *DM*, 195.

<sup>532</sup> *KBBET*, 209-210; *TR*, 213. Our knowledge of the Spirit, Torrance argues, is through the Son as well, in *TF*, 306. See James D. G. Dunn's elaboration on the relationship between the Spirit and the incarnate Son in *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), esp. chapter 3. That Torrance upholds the mutual mediation between Jesus Christ and the Spirit is one of the instances that Mun-Chul Shin takes to

In what way, however, is the present presence and work of the Holy Spirit in and to the world Christ-mediated? First, the Spirit became universally available for all only after Christ's Spirit-filled earthly human life. Christ vicariously received the Holy Spirit in his incarnate life in order to achieve for us a life of perfect communion with the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Torrance writes:

Since he is himself both the God who gives and the Man who receives in one Person, he is in a position to transfer in a profound and intimate way what belongs to us in our human nature to himself and to transfer what is his to our human nature in him. That applies above all to the gift of the Holy Spirit whom he received fully and completely in his human nature for us. Hence in the union of divine and human natures in the Son the eternal Spirit of the living God has composed himself, as it were, to dwell with human nature, and human nature has been adapted and become accustomed to receive and bear the same Holy Spirit.<sup>533</sup>

Secondly, the Spirit is mediated by and through Christ's finished redemptive activity. This is coherent with Torrance's thought that unredeemed humanity cannot approach God face to face. In other words, the Spirit could not be mediated to the rest of humanity while humanity is yet in sin, or if Christ's atoning work was not complete.<sup>534</sup> Expressed negatively,

Until he had sanctified himself and perfected in our human nature his one offering for all men, until he had made once and for all the sacrifice to take away sin, until he had vanquished the powers of darkness and overcome the sharpness of death, until he had ascended to present himself in propitiation before the Father, the Kingdom of Heaven could not be opened to believers and the blessings of the divine Spirit could not be poured out upon human flesh or be received by sinful mortal men.<sup>535</sup>

This is why Torrance insists that Pentecost and Calvary intersect together.<sup>536</sup> Because the world is already reconciled in Christ, and the enmity between God and humanity is already overcome in the history of Christ himself, the Holy Spirit could now be poured out without consuming humanity in judgment in the process.

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illustrate Torrance's fundamental dialogical theology in "A Dialogical Trinitarian Pneumatology: A Critical Appraisal of Contemporary Pneumatological Discourse in Light of Torrance's Theology," (PhD thesis; University of Aberdeen, 1997), esp. chapters 6 and 12.

<sup>533</sup> *TR*, 246; *IPLC*, 125.

<sup>534</sup> *TR*, 236.

<sup>535</sup> *TR*, 247, 252; *APWC*, 178. Thus, David H. McIlroy says that from a relational Trinitarian perspective, Jesus dies in order that the Holy Spirit might be released upon the people of God, in "Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement," *EvQ* 80 (2008), 30.

<sup>536</sup> *CDG*, 64; "The Atonement," 243. Even in our knowledge of Christ, Torrance argues that the Spirit could only reveal Christ after the resurrection and ascension, in *APWC*, 324-329.

*The Self-Effacing Spirit and Jesus Christ*

Gunton argues that the self-effacing nature of the Holy Spirit encapsulates the central asymmetry of the Triune relation in the economy of salvation.<sup>537</sup> Torrance admits that there is indeed an economic subordination in the Trinity, and the self-effacing Spirit evidences this, but his difference with Gunton is his approach to the subject matter. Gunton proceeds from the economic superiority of the Father, which he takes from Basil and Zizioulas,<sup>538</sup> while Torrance primarily takes his cue from his *kataphysic* theology, i.e. that the Spirit's self-effacing activity is in strict accordance with the Spirit's nature as imageless and transparent.<sup>539</sup> Torrance's approach is also more biblically founded, for he takes his arguments from the Gospels, particularly from Christ's statements concerning the Spirit. As such, Molnar regards this as one of the most important aspects of Torrance's pneumatology, in contrast to theologians who spend more effort concerning the identity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>540</sup>

For Torrance, the self-effacing nature of the Holy Spirit is evangelically purposive. In the first place, the Spirit's function is not to bear witness to himself, but to Christ. As "the Spirit of Testimony and the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit does not utter himself but utters the Word. He does not incarnate himself but incarnates the Son. He does not show his own Face, but shows us the Father in the Face of the Son."<sup>541</sup> This is why Smail refers to the Spirit as a "Person without a face."<sup>542</sup> Calling the Spirit "the invisible Spirit of truth," Torrance adds that he is sent from the Father in the name of the Son, and does not speak of himself but speaks only of the Father and the Son.<sup>543</sup> This is the distinct activity of the Spirit in both the mediation of revelation and reconciliation.

That is the self-effacing nature of the Spirit who hides himself behind the Father in the Son and behind the Son in the Father, but also the enlightening transference of the Spirit who by throwing His eternal Light upon the Father through the Son and upon the Son in the Father, brings the Being and Reality of God out of His hiddenness to bear upon man, and brings man out of his darkness to have communion with God, in Jesus Christ.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 199; and *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 80.

<sup>538</sup> Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 197.

<sup>539</sup> *TR*, 253.

<sup>540</sup> Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 201-203.

<sup>541</sup> *TR*, 252; *APWC*, lvi; "The Christ who Loves Us," 18.

<sup>542</sup> Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 30.

<sup>543</sup> *TF*, 211.

<sup>544</sup> *GR*, 167-168.

Consistent with his Christocentric theology, Torrance argues that the agency of the Spirit is to focus our attention on the Person and Truth of Jesus Christ. Just as Christ revealed the Spirit to his disciples, the Spirit reveals Christ and points the Church to him. “The office of the Holy Spirit in the Church is not to call attention to himself apart from Christ but to focus all attention on Christ, to glorify him, to bear witness to his deity, to testify to his mind and will, and in him and through him to lead us to the Father.”<sup>545</sup> As Fiddes notes, “the anonymity of the Holy Spirit is thus an eschatological self-effacement in God, and a self-effacement in human life which enables our participation in God.”<sup>546</sup> Torrance’s emphasis here is on the personal character of the self-effacement of the Spirit and his witness to Christ. “The Holy Spirit is indeed personally present among us, but in his transparent and translucent mode of being, who as *homoousios* with the Father and the Son throws his eternal light upon the Father in the Spirit and the Son in the Father.”<sup>547</sup> Through the presence of the Spirit’s mode of being, he confronts humanity with the sheer presence of God, so that we are in immediate touch with God Himself. Thus, “it is not just that the Spirit throws His Light upon a distant Christ but actually connects us with Christ Himself.”<sup>548</sup>

### *Subjective Actualization of Christ’s Objective Work*

Torrance uses the terms “objective union in Christ” and “subjective union in the Spirit” to signify the difference-in-unity in the one movement of salvation between the finished work of Christ, which he accomplished in his whole life, death, resurrection and ascension, and the continuing work of Christ in the world through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit in redemption has two sides: “from the side of Christ in the application of His finished work, and from the side of man in receiving the fruits of that work.”<sup>549</sup> Like Calvin, Torrance’s view concerning how the benefits of Christ are applied to humanity is instructed by pneumatology.<sup>550</sup> Humanity’s sharing in the saving work and benefits of Christ is through union and participation in him, which

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<sup>545</sup> *TR*, 253.

<sup>546</sup> Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 2000), 262.

<sup>547</sup> *TF*, 212.

<sup>548</sup> Kruger, “Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God,” 209.

<sup>549</sup> *SF*, ciii.

<sup>550</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* III.1.1; in Kruger, “Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God,” 194. See Gunton’s enumeration of three deficiencies of speaking of the Spirit as applying the benefits of Christ, in *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 196. Nevertheless, Torrance still employed the terminologies and concept.

“takes place through the Communion of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>551</sup> As Torrance asserts, “the work of the Spirit in God’s people [is] actualizing subjectively in them what has been accomplished for them once and for all objectively in the Incarnation.”<sup>552</sup> Interestingly, it is these clarificatory statements that Ho disregards when he considers Torrance’s view of the *finished objective work* of Christ on the cross and the *continuing subjective activity* of the Holy Spirit in believers as contradicting each other. Ho believes that Torrance’s view of the ascended Christ’s continuing priestly work and the Spirit’s subjectivation of Christ’s work in us is equivalent to belief in an on-going redemptive process that renders the cross insufficient.<sup>553</sup> While Torrance would support Ho’s emphasis on the objective aspect of salvation in Christ, it is obvious that Ho’s non-Trinitarian thinking misses the soteriological import of Torrance’s pneumatological soteriology. That Torrance actually involves the Holy Spirit in the appropriation of Christ’s saving benefits marks his difference from thinkers like Ho who possess no robust Trinitarian perspective on salvation.

As stated, the subjective work of the Spirit is also located within Torrance’s Trinitarianism. First, Torrance borrows Basil’s view of the Father as “the originating cause,” the Son as “the moulding cause,” and the Spirit as “the perfecting cause” in the economy of salvation,<sup>554</sup> with emphasis on the act of the Spirit in bringing “to completion the creative purpose of God for human persons in the Son.”<sup>555</sup> Torrance also borrows Barth’s emphasis on the unity of God’s Act and Being, and argues that “when we speak of the ‘subjective’ operation of the Holy Spirit in us, or of our being ‘in the Spirit’, that is to be understood in an objective, ontological sense, as a being *in God*.”<sup>556</sup> Describing the activity of the Spirit as *enousios energeia*, Torrance affirms not only “that God’s activity towards us is grounded in his own being, but that God’s being is present to us as Spirit in a dynamic and creative way.”<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> *SF*, xciv.

<sup>552</sup> *SF*, cvi.

<sup>553</sup> Ho, *A Critical Study*, 129.

<sup>554</sup> Torrance, “Soul and Person in Theological Perspective,” in *Religion, Reason and the Self: Essays in Honour of Hywel D. Lewis* (eds. Stewart R. Sutherland and T. A. Roberts; Cardiff: U. of Wales Press, 1989), 111. See also Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 86; and MacKinnon, “The Relation of the Doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity,” in *Christ, Creation and Culture: Studies in Honour of T. F. Torrance* (ed. Richard W. A. McKinney; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 96.

<sup>555</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 146.

<sup>556</sup> *KBBET*, 209; *DM*, 196; *CDG*, 148: “This means that when the New Testament speaks of us as being ‘in the Spirit’ or of the Spirit being ‘in us’..., this is to be understood not in a subjective sense but in a profoundly *objectively* sense.”

<sup>557</sup> Torrance, “Theological Realism,” 186.

*Union with Christ through the Holy Spirit*

For Torrance, the communion of the Holy Spirit is the vital link between Jesus Christ and humanity. “The Reformed doctrine of the Communion of the Spirit,” is “a doctrine of Communion in Christ through the Spirit, or, to put it otherwise, of *union with Christ through the Communion of the Spirit*.”<sup>558</sup> Thus, the objective union which we have with Christ through his incarnational assumption of our humanity into himself is subjectively actualized in us through his indwelling Spirit. The communion of the Holy Spirit, though a new relationship with humanity in accordance to the Person and nature of the Spirit, has an original Christological content. The communion of the Spirit does not create a union that is not already a reality in Christ.<sup>559</sup>

As Habets notes, Torrance follows Calvin: “the Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.”<sup>560</sup> This incorporation into Christ can be regarded in two interrelated ways, yet as both works of the Holy Spirit. Humanity is incorporated into Christ as the subjective actualization in us through the Spirit of the objective revelation and reconciliation fulfilled in the incarnation and atonement. On the other hand, “this incorporation into Christ through the Spirit is to be regarded as our participation in the new covenant in Christ.”<sup>561</sup> This is both individually and corporately. The entire Christian life is a participation in union with Christ in the Holy Spirit, which takes place within the corporate fellowship of love in the church. This is intertwined with Torrance’s view of the church “rooted and grounded in Christ by being incorporated into him through his Word and Spirit. It is called into fellowship with him and united to him by his baptism of the Spirit, so that its members are made to share in Christ’s obedient life and are assimilated to his new humanity.”<sup>562</sup> Thus, Torrance can also say that by virtue of the personalizing Person of the Spirit, the humanizing work of the man Jesus, and our being united with Christ through the Spirit, humanity finally becomes the humanity God intends us to be, that is, to be in relation with both God and others.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> *SF*, cvi.

<sup>559</sup> Kruger, “Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God,” 196.

<sup>560</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 144; quoting Calvin, *Institutes*, III.1.1.

<sup>561</sup> *APWC*, 368. See how Torrance discusses the Church as the new covenant people of God in *TRE*, 61-62.

<sup>562</sup> *APWC*, 368; *TF*, 250-251. The Church, thus, is both *Ecclesia de Trinitate* and *Ecclesia de hominibus* (*TDORCI*, 154).

<sup>563</sup> Deddo, “The Christian Life and Our Participation in Christ’s Continuing Ministry,” in *An Introduction to Torrance Theology*, 143. Deddo also enumerates four ideas in which union with Christ is

## The Holy Spirit and the World

The specific importance of the office of the Holy Spirit in Torrance's soteriology is this:

"Apart from the Communion of the Holy Spirit, we could not enjoy the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God the Father."<sup>564</sup> As such, although this chapter focuses on the particular salvific works of the Spirit in the world, this does not mean that the distinct works of the Spirit could be isolated from either the Son's or the Father's Being and Act. Rather, what is argued here is that the Spirit fulfils aspects in our salvation that are unique and in accordance with his nature as the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Triune God, or, that like the Father and the Son, therefore, the Spirit has a *kath hypostasin* agency in the salvific economy.

### *The Spiritus Creator*

Torrance develops his understanding of the Spirit's agency in creation in light of the creedal confession that the Holy Spirit is the "Lord and Giver of Life." He argues that this possesses a fundamental Trinitarian background, for it is related to the creative works of the Father and the Son. Torrance elaborates:

The Holy Spirit shares in the *Sovereign Power* of the Father and the Son, but his distinctive sovereign activity is that of quickening or giving life to the creature. That is to say, while there is only one creative activity of God, from the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit, the special work of the Holy Spirit is to be discerned in that he brings the life-giving power of God to bear upon the creature in such a way that through his immediate presence to the creature and in spite of its creaturely difference from God he sustains it in its being and brings its relation to the Creator to its true end in him.<sup>565</sup>

The primary work of the Holy Spirit, then, is to uphold creaturely existence and prevent it from lapsing into nothingness from which it was created. This stresses the contingency of creation and assures the Lordly presence of God himself in creation. God does not "deistically abandon" creation, Torrance argues, but indwells it for its continuing existence.<sup>566</sup> Torrance's pneumatology, however, is not pantheist or

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not: (1) *moral* union, (2) *psychological* union, (3) *volitional* union, and (4) *telic* union (p. 139); see also Lee, *Living in Union*, 97.

<sup>564</sup> CDG, 18.

<sup>565</sup> CDG, 217-218; TR, 215. In CDG, 216, Torrance writes: "The Holy Spirit is also Creator in union with the Father and the Son, no less than they..., but Creator in his distinctive nature and activity as *Spirit*."

<sup>566</sup> CDG, 218. Torrance adds that the transcendent action of the Spirit in time and space is a proof of God's continuing involvement in creation, in TDORC, 43.

panentheist, explicitly or implicitly.<sup>567</sup> The personal agency and presence of the Holy Spirit in creation is precisely Torrance's safeguard against such errors, because he understands the Spirit to be the power of God in action over against that which is not God. The Holy Spirit in Torrance's thought balances the theological pendulum regarding God's transcendence and immanence.<sup>568</sup>

Using the 1581 *Craig's Catechism*, Torrance demonstrates that the Spirit's work "in the order of nature" is to "keep all things in their natural state" though he adds that all alterations in creation are also the work of the Spirit, who works "diversely in nature."<sup>569</sup> This highlights the fact that the Spirit, though God himself immanent in the world, does not destroy the creaturely different (or the wholly other), but upholds creaturely being while maintaining the distinction of being from Being. In short, the Spirit in his freedom and sovereignty maintains the order of nature or the order of created reality, keeping it as it should be, as creation. Torrance holds an important dialectical view of the work of the Spirit here, because the Spirit *maintains* and *transforms* creaturely existence at the same time: "Far from crushing our creaturely nature or damaging our personal existence, the indwelling presence of God through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit has the effect of healing and restoring and deepening human personal being."<sup>570</sup> This is related to the creative work of the Spirit in *renewing* and *sanctifying* creation, or of consummating the intended relation between the creature and the Godhead.<sup>571</sup> The Holy Spirit, "in upholding living, rational creatures from below and within them and in bringing them to their true end or *telos* in God, makes them participate in the very life and holiness of God himself."<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> John W. Cooper rightly does not name Torrance in his list of panentheists in *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers from Plato to the Present* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007). See Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* (1992) for a panentheistic understanding of the Spirit's relation to the world.

<sup>568</sup> "The name Holy Spirit," Torrance writes, "gave expression to the recognition that the immanence of the Spirit was the immanence of the Spirit in his irreducible transcendence," in *TF*, 192. In contrast, Gunton, following Zizioulas, argues that talk of the Spirit is more concerned about God's transcendence, not immanence, in "The Spirit in the Trinity," in *The Forgotten Trinity*, vol. 3, 123.

<sup>569</sup> *SF*, c.

<sup>570</sup> *TF*, 230. Thus, Torrance adds, the Holy Spirit also works in personalizing persons.

<sup>571</sup> *TR*, 216; "The Uniqueness of Divine Revelation and the Authority of the Scriptures," *SBET* 13 (1995), 99.

<sup>572</sup> *TF*, 229.

*The Spiritus Redemptor*

Torrance presents the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption in relation to Christ's *triplex munus*.<sup>573</sup> In relation to Christ's prophetic office, the Holy Spirit "continues to utter Christ the Word and utters the Word with all the quickening, life-giving power of God."<sup>574</sup> In regard to Christ's priestly office, the Spirit subjectively actualizes in us Christ's objective work for us. Following Hippolytus, Torrance refers to the Holy Spirit as "the high-priestly Spirit."<sup>575</sup> And finally, in regard to Christ's kingly office, "the Spirit works as the power and operation of God, effectively applying Christ's victory over the powers of darkness to us, and so delivering us from bondage into the freedom of the sons of God."<sup>576</sup> In all these, the emphasis is on the fact that the fulfilment and realization of the work of the Son is effected by the coming and indwelling of the Spirit. The coming and presence of the Spirit, thus belongs to the Triune mediation of reconciliation, for the presence of the Spirit is the actualization of the new and redeemed life, which sons and daughters of the Father have in Christ.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost God's redemptive and his creative acts merged together. It was a movement of recreation through atoning sanctification, for through the *Holy* Spirit the full creative impact of the divine Word broke in upon the apostolic Church constituting it a new creation in Christ, fulfilling in it the sanctifying and regenerating of our human nature that has already taken place in Christ, and so bringing it into a new stage of being in which it was renewed in the image of God.<sup>577</sup>

Torrance's emphasis at this point is the dynamic recreating, incorporating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our continuous and progressive Christian experience: "We grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ as we surrender to the creative impact of the Holy Spirit upon us."<sup>578</sup> Elsewhere Torrance refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of Holiness, the Spirit of Redemption and the Spirit of Glory."<sup>579</sup> This is because it is through the Spirit "that we come to participate in God and experience his vivifying power toward us, for he is himself the Author and Source of

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<sup>573</sup> *APWC*, 178. The distinction between the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit should also be identified: "through the blood of Christ we are redeemed from the guilt of sin, but through the Spirit of Christ we are redeemed into the life of God." Torrance understands the ministry in the Church as a continuation of this three-fold anointing and Christo-ministry, in "Consecration and Ordination," *SJT* 11 (1958), reprinted in *CAC II*, 30-57.

<sup>574</sup> *SF*, ciii.

<sup>575</sup> Quoting Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, 3.5; in *TF*, 249.

<sup>576</sup> *SF*, civ.

<sup>577</sup> *TR*, 254.

<sup>578</sup> *TR*, 256.

<sup>579</sup> *TR*, 248.

our justification and sanctification, of truth, of grace and every good thing.”<sup>580</sup> Crump properly refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of regeneration,”<sup>581</sup> because new birth is of spiritual origin, and is the Holy Spirit’s work.<sup>582</sup>

Interestingly, Torrance also believes that being reborn in the Spirit involves a radical transformation.<sup>583</sup> This is why he thinks that spiritual birth is painful, because “man must be unmade and remade, be broken and recreated, be slain and made alive again.”<sup>584</sup> Using the analogies of old man and new man, Torrance argues that in being born of the Spirit, a new nature is given to humanity to displace the old. Thus, his ethics, far from missing in his theology, is found under the Pauline umbrella “new life in the Spirit.”<sup>585</sup> In fact, Torrance is uncompromising in his agreement with his father: “To dwell with God, man must be godlike and to be godlike requires a fundamental change of heart and mind. That is: he needs a new righteous disposition which will hate the evil and love the good. This is what it means to be born again and receive new spiritual life by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>586</sup> Whether this is a well-developed aspect of Torrance’s theology, however, is another question. It seems that Torrance’s definitive view of the Holy Spirit’s specific active role in daily Christian life is only on the role of the Spirit in affirming the Lordship of Christ.<sup>587</sup> In a sense, this objective grounding of the self in Christ in the power of the Spirit is what contemporary Christian theology and spirituality needs, in response to the subjectivist distortion characteristic of the modern confusion of anthropology and pneumatology.<sup>588</sup> But still, Torrance did not fully elucidate the Pauline expression “life in the Spirit” in his theology, which is truly regretful. One also wonders whether his anxiety over a moralistic version of Christianity became an unhealthy prejudice that purposely prevented him from articulating this aspect of the Spirit’s agency in the world.<sup>589</sup> Unlike Calvin, Torrance’s

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<sup>580</sup> *TP*, 53.

<sup>581</sup> Crump, “Re-examining the Johannine Trinity,” 405.

<sup>582</sup> In *TP*, 53, Thomas Torrance (T.F.’s father) argues that the Spirit is “the Author of regeneration and of immortality, not by some borrowed power but by his very own.” See *Expository Studies in St. John’s Miracles* (Carter Lane: James Clarke and Co., nd), 40; *WCCCA*, 69. In the first place, Jesus is the example of being born from above, Torrance adds on p. 72.

<sup>583</sup> Kruger, “The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,” 387.

<sup>584</sup> *WCCCA*, 71. God does not override humanity, Torrance writes in *TR*, 237, but recreates him.

<sup>585</sup> *APWC*, 177.

<sup>586</sup> Torrance, *Expository Studies in St. John’s Miracles*, 41.

<sup>587</sup> *TR*, 238; *SF*, cv.

<sup>588</sup> *TR*, 238.

<sup>589</sup> Ray S. Anderson says that Torrance “seldom ventures onto the turf where practical theologians ply their trade,” in “Torrance as a Practical Theologian,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 176. Torrance’s calls to proper Christian life are found mostly in *Life and Work*. See “A

theology lacks an emphasis on the vivifying agency of the Spirit in the lives of maturing believers.

Connected to this are two other relevant critiques related to Torrance's Christology. First, as discussed in Chapter II, Torrance's view of human response vicariously accomplished by Christ *pro nobis* in a *totus/totus* manner, and thus an emphasis on the *in Christ* of salvation, could be pointed to as a source of his neglect of the *in the Spirit* of salvation. In short, because Torrance views the vicarious human response of Christ for humanity as objective and final, the work of the Spirit in liberating and enabling humanity to respond is undermined. The gift of "responsiveness" by and in the Spirit is neglected.<sup>590</sup> The second critique is related to Torrance's insufficient treatment of the kingly office of Christ, which Kruger discerns.<sup>591</sup> As demonstrated in Chapter II, Christ's priestly sacrifice in redemption and prophetic Word in revelation and their implications for humanity are thoroughly discussed by Torrance. The kingly office of Christ in his incarnate economy and its implications for Christian life, however, are neglected. The immediate consequence is that the important implications of Christ's vicarious victory over sin and death for Christians *now* are not elaborated. One wonders whether Torrance's anxiety over the active part of humanity for salvation thus became a hermeneutical key for him to avoid discussing (1) the kingly office of Christ and its implications, and (2) the vivifying agency of the Spirit in the lives of believers, which are interconnected. Moreover, one wonders if he avoided these themes because he thought of them as incoherent with his emphasis on the objective work of Christ.

### *The Spirit of Truth*

Basic to Torrance's epistemology, and cohering with his scientific theology is the realization that because God is Spirit, he can only be known in a spiritual way. As such, Torrance places emphasis on the epistemological significance of the Holy Spirit. First, Torrance distinguishes "epistemology of the Spirit" from the "epistemological relevance of the Holy Spirit,"<sup>592</sup> and considers the latter the proper aspect: "In epistemology we are concerned with the *formal* aspects of knowledge, the forms of the

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Serious Call for a Return to Devout and Holy Life," *LW* (July 1979), 14-15; and "The Crisis of Morality," *LW* (November 1990), 15-16.

<sup>590</sup> Thomas Smail, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (Lima, OH: Renewal Academic Press, 2002), 170-175.

<sup>591</sup> Kruger, "Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God," 324-334.

<sup>592</sup> *GR*, 166.

*how* and the forms of the *what*... whereas in the Spirit we are concerned rather with the *non-formal*, with the given reality or object of our knowledge as it outruns all forms of our understanding.”<sup>593</sup> Secondly, the work of the Spirit in Christian epistemology should not be interpreted as an abstract, detached enabling. Rather, because the Holy Spirit is “the living action and personal presence of God himself among men,”<sup>594</sup> his revealing agency should be understood as God’s dynamic activity. The Spirit is the “speaking Spirit,” and “who speaks to us in Person.”<sup>595</sup> Thirdly, the revealing work of the Holy Spirit is the revelation of the Triune God. There can be no “independent epistemology of the Spirit as if He had His own epistemological ground apart from the Father and the Son.”<sup>596</sup> Finally, and consistent with the argument for a transformational encounter with the Holy Spirit, “the epistemological relevance of the Spirit lies in the dynamic and transformational aspects of this knowledge.”<sup>597</sup>

#### The Holy Spirit and Knowledge of the Triune God

Torrance’s reservation about establishing an “epistemology of the Holy Spirit” is because it implicitly presupposes that knowledge of God is accessible by humanity on autonomous grounds. Consistent with his evangelical approach, Torrance insists that “we do not have any knowledge of God apart from the Spirit, for God is Spirit.”<sup>598</sup> This can be explored from two Trinitarian perspectives: in relation to the self-effacing nature of the Spirit, and in relation to the participative nature of our knowledge of God. First, the Spirit deliberately hides his own *hypostasis* behind the Father and the Son and throws his eternal light upon the Father in the Son and upon the Son in the Father. The Holy Spirit is the “speaking Spirit,” but speaking only in order to reveal the Father and the Son.<sup>599</sup> Secondly, knowledge of God is primarily participation in the Son’s knowledge of the Father in the Spirit.<sup>600</sup> “It is through the gift of His Spirit to us and by the presence and power of the Spirit,” Torrance writes, “that we are enabled to share in the knowledge of God grounded and established and once and for all made accessible to

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<sup>593</sup> *GR*, 166.

<sup>594</sup> Torrance, “Knowledge of God and Speech about Him according to John Calvin,” *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 44 (1964), reprinted in *TR*, 92-93.

<sup>595</sup> *TF*, 247; Kang, “Epistemological Significance,” 359.

<sup>596</sup> *GR*, 165.

<sup>597</sup> *GR*, 166.

<sup>598</sup> *GR*, 165. Torrance argues that the coming and presence of the Holy Spirit breaks humanity’s own sinful creative imagination and abstraction (*TR*, 255).

<sup>599</sup> *TF*, 247.

<sup>600</sup> Kruger, “The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,” 368.

us in Jesus Christ.”<sup>601</sup> Fundamental to this argument is that only God knows Himself, and that consequently, our knowledge of God is participation in God’s Self-knowledge through the Son in the Spirit. Furthermore, this participation is not possible from the human side; it is only “through Jesus Christ we are given access to the Father *in one Spirit*.”<sup>602</sup> This is the epistemological relevance of the Holy Spirit in the knowledge of God: that even though God infinitely transcends the grasp of human minds, the Spirit “lifts us up to the level of participation in God where we are opened out for union and communion with him far beyond the limits of our creaturely existence.”<sup>603</sup>

### The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures

Kruger argues that for Torrance, Holy Scripture is one of the earthly means of the communion of the Holy Spirit.<sup>604</sup> As long as “earthly means” is not equated with the Augustinian and Medieval concept of “means of grace,” Torrance would agree.<sup>605</sup> The Holy Spirit has a double relation to the Scripture: in inspiration and in interpretation. First, Torrance affirms that the Scripture is inspired, through “the witness of the Holy Spirit,”<sup>606</sup> not as in literal and verbal dictation, but as the operation of the Spirit to holy people obedient to the Spirit’s guidance.<sup>607</sup> Moreover, the inspiration of the Scripture is not as an isolated work of the Spirit, but is coordinated within the whole history of God’s revealing act in Israel and in the human Christ, where the Word of God and the word of humanity are perfectly bonded within the *hypostatic union*.<sup>608</sup> But specifically, it is the Holy Spirit who empowered and helped the biblical writers to fulfil the special role in their written witness to Christ.<sup>609</sup>

Secondly, regarding the interpretation of Scripture, Torrance’s primary concern is in the relation between human language and divine meaning. Torrance argues that the Holy Spirit makes the human words of the Bible transparent, so that the reality of God

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<sup>601</sup> *TS*, 52; quoted in Andrew Maurice Bevan, “The Person of Christ and the Nature of Human Participation in the Theology of T. F. Torrance: A Post-Modern Realist Approach to Personhood,” (Ph.D. thesis; University of London, 2002), 134.

<sup>602</sup> *TF*, 55 (italics mine).

<sup>603</sup> Torrance, “Toward an Ecumenical Consensus on the Trinity,” *ThZ* 31 (1975), reprinted in *TP*, 87. Deddo, “The Holy Spirit,” 101; *TR*, 226, and in 252: “He creates in us beyond all creaturely or human capacities the ability to know the Unknowable, and therein reveals himself as Creator Spirit of the living God.”

<sup>604</sup> Kruger, “Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God,” 215-216. He includes the Church and the sacraments as the other two.

<sup>605</sup> See *CAC II*, 7-8.

<sup>606</sup> *KBBET*, 102.

<sup>607</sup> *DM*, 274.

<sup>608</sup> *CAC I*, 44.

<sup>609</sup> *TR*, 137.

embedded in them shines or sounds through.<sup>610</sup> He is also concerned that human words do not sufficiently reflect the realities they refer to, and that most times linguistic forms are opaque. He solves this problem by identifying the two-fold character of the Scriptures: *somatic* and *pneumatic*.<sup>611</sup> “We cannot break through the physical sense of the Scriptures without the direct help of God and the enlightenment of his Spirit, but when our ears and eyes are trained and adapted to the divine truth we will be able to interpret the Scriptures in accordance with their deeper message.”<sup>612</sup> Thus, “interpretation,” Torrance concludes, “requires spiritual perception or *theoria*, if the divine acts and words are to be discerned in the historical, prophetic or apostolic statements of the Scriptures.”<sup>613</sup>

### The Holy Spirit and the Truth of Being

Torrance is also concerned about the nature of theological statements and their relation and function to the Truth. This area is both technical and related to general epistemology, but we will discuss this here only in relation to the agency of the Spirit. Torrance critiques both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies for their nominalistic tendencies in focusing on human statements, and their failure to differentiate truths of statement from truth of being, or between signs and the thing signified.<sup>614</sup> This is important in Torrance’s realist and objectivist theology, in which the truth of statement is but a medium and has no objective reality on its own. Its only function and significance is to serve the truth of being by directing attention to the reality on which it is grounded and which it signifies at the same time. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, its function is to *show through* and *point towards* or *beyond* itself. “Apart from the Spirit, we would not break through to the divine Being, or rather the divine Being would not break through to us in His reality as Being and thus in His distinction from our thought

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<sup>610</sup> *TR*, 94. Torrance adds that the action of the Spirit in making the Scriptures transparent for us results in the *perspicuity* of the Scripture.

<sup>611</sup> *DM*, 359.

<sup>612</sup> *DM*, 359.

<sup>613</sup> *DM*, 275. See also Richardson, “Revelation, Scripture, and Mystical Apprehension,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 188. Torrance is hesitant to use the words “mystical” and “mysticism” in his understanding of the Holy Spirit and the Scripture, but Richardson thinks that Torrance fosters “a *mystical realism* of reading Scripture in communion with God by the Spirit who inspired the Scripture” (p. 195). Overall, the Holy Spirit is “the creative agent in our reception and understanding of revelation,” in *GGT*, 166; *GR*, 168.

<sup>614</sup> Morrison, “Torrance’s Critique of Evangelical Orthodoxy,” 53-69. Torrance writes that Calvin battled against the Renaissance that separated signs from realities and the Roman Church that fused form and content, in “History and Reformation,” *SJT* 4 (1951), 280.

and speech of Him.”<sup>615</sup> Theological statements operate as “open concepts” that reveal God and allow God to reveal himself to us, and it is the Spirit who is “the act of God upon us which keeps our concepts or cognitive forms open, so that our thought and speech are stretched out beyond themselves toward the inexhaustible nature of the divine Being.”<sup>616</sup>

### The Holy Spirit and the Social Coefficient of Knowledge

In Torrance’s understanding of God’s revelation, human reception requires participation. This can be approached in three ways: personal participation, participation in the movement of grace, and participation in the social coefficient of knowledge. First, he emphasizes that knowledge of God requires the personal coefficient of knowledge, and the consequent participation and wilful humility of the human mind to the objective claims of God’s revelation. “To know the Truth is to become a participant to it.”<sup>617</sup> Alan Torrance follows the same argument in rejecting the idea of the neutral theologian, arguing that “to be absolutely neutral before God is to be absolutely hostile to God,” because knowledge of God entails intellectual obedience and submission.<sup>618</sup> To truly know God is to be transformed. Secondly, knowing God involves “participation and coordination with its communicated pattern and inner organization.”<sup>619</sup> Just as the movement of grace has a pattern, so too is the knowledge of God: “Knowledge of God takes place through a movement of divine revelation from the Father through the Son *in the Spirit* and an answering movement of faith *in the Spirit* through the Son to the Father.”<sup>620</sup> The emphasis here is that knowledge of God is only possible *in the Spirit*. Finally, the motion of grace involves a social coefficient of knowledge: the Church. In the context of the Church, where one develops *tacit knowledge* through *indwelling*, Torrance adds, following Polanyi, our minds gain thought patterns and semantic tools that are common to the Christian Church.<sup>621</sup> But what exactly is the role of the Spirit? Torrance asserts that it is the Personalizing Spirit

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<sup>615</sup> *GR*, 175.

<sup>616</sup> *GR*, 187; and Torrance’s elaborate discussion in *RST*, 140-146.

<sup>617</sup> *TS*, 87; “A Study in New Testament Communion,” *SJT* 3 (1950), reprinted in *CAC II*, 62.

<sup>618</sup> Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, 12-15; *GR*, 166.

<sup>619</sup> *TCFK*, 92; *TDORCI*, 96.

<sup>620</sup> Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” 461 (italics mine); *DM*, 201. Torrance adds: “Unless theological activity is grounded upon, and made to conform to, this motion of grace, then every step of theology can only be from alienation to alienation in the continued self-assertion of self-will,” in *TR*, 116.

<sup>621</sup> *TCFK*, 93. See *RST*, chapter four for Torrance’s elaborate discussion; and also Flett, “Persons, Powers and Pluralities,” 209-214.

who creates the earthly communion of the Church, grounded in the inter-personal Communion of the Triune God, not only as the social coefficient of knowledge, but also as a “circle of knowing.”<sup>622</sup>

### *The Spirit of Participation*

Torrance’s theological reflection is imbued with participation theology. This is not surprising, because several of the Reformed theologians to whom Torrance is indebted, like Calvin and Campbell, had strong participatory languages in their own theologies.<sup>623</sup> In Torrance’s theology, the Spirit is the “Agent of participation.”<sup>624</sup> But the Pneumatological element cannot be dissected from the Christological and the Trinitarian elements, because participation in the Spirit implicitly refers to participation in Christ’s relation to the Father in the power of the Spirit. Alan Torrance rightly argues that participation in Christ means: (1) participation in his worship of the Father in the Spirit, (2) participation in his knowledge of the Father in the Spirit, and (3) participation in his mission from the Father in the Spirit.<sup>625</sup> Our only concern here however is participation in the Son’s union with the Father in the Spirit.

Torrance repeatedly accentuates that sharing in the life and love of the Trinity is the goal of salvation, and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Communion and Love, is the One who is sent in order to sanctify us and facilitate our communion with the Trinity. “By coming *into* man,” Torrance writes, “the Holy Spirit opens him *out* for God.”<sup>626</sup> Through the incarnation and the Spirit, humanity, without being consumed or overwhelmed by the presence of God, is able to commune with the Trinity, though this sharing and indwelling in God is “not ours but is the Spirit’s who is in us and abides in us.”<sup>627</sup> Torrance refers to this experience in the Spirit as “objective inwardness.”<sup>628</sup> Elaborately, “As the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in one another, so God is in us by the indwelling of the Spirit and by participation of the Spirit we are in God, and thus our being in the Father is not ours but is the Spirit’s who is in us and dwells in us.”<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> Achtemeier, “The Truth of Tradition,” 60; *GR*, 189.

<sup>623</sup> Concerning Campbell’s participation theology, see particularly James Torrance, “Contribution of McLeod Campbell,” 310.

<sup>624</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 151-165.

<sup>625</sup> Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, 360.

<sup>626</sup> *TR*, 238; *KBET*, 211, 214.

<sup>627</sup> *TF*, 268; quoting Athanasius, *Contra Arius*, III.25.24 (*NPNF* 4): 407.

<sup>628</sup> *DM*, 198.

<sup>629</sup> *TRE*, 232; *TF*, 208-209, 213.

Therefore, in the Triune order of mediation, “from the Father through the Son and in the Spirit [and] to the Father through the Son in the Spirit,” it is undeniable that the Spirit himself fulfils a mediatorial role between humanity and God. Like the Son, referred to by Torrance as “the One and the Many” in light of his vicarious incarnate redemption,<sup>630</sup> the Holy Spirit fulfils a similar office in his God-humanward descent and human-Godward ascent: “By his nature the Holy Spirit not only proceeds from the Father but *lifts up to the Father*... Not only is he God the Holy Spirit descending to us, the Spirit by whom God bears witness to himself, but God the Holy Spirit lifting up all creation in praise and rejoicing in God, himself the Spirit of worship.”<sup>631</sup> This raises the question why Torrance did not explicitly call the Spirit “Mediator,” arguing that Christ is the “One Mediator” between God and humanity instead.<sup>632</sup> This is another area where Torrance differs from Barth, who considered the Spirit as “*Mediator* of communion.”<sup>633</sup> Again, it appears that his Christocentrism leads to understatement about the Holy Spirit, even on something as significant as this. It would have been more consistent for Torrance, especially since he faithfully employs the Athanasian soteriological formula “from the Father through the Son in the Spirit and in the Spirit through the Son to the Father,” if he also unreservedly referred to the Spirit as *Mediator* mediating reconciliation in accordance with his hypostasis as the Holy Spirit. In a sense, what is missing is just Torrance’s explicit affirmation of this, because he himself implicitly considers the Spirit fulfilling a mediatorial office like Christ, evident in his appropriation of the *topos* to both Christ and the Holy Spirit. Notice the double *topos*-ascription in the following quotations: “Jesus Christ is the *place (topos)* where God and man meet, where God stoops down to man and man draws near to God: the one place where we have access to the Father in the Spirit”<sup>634</sup> and “the Holy Spirit is the ‘place’

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<sup>630</sup> *IPLC*, 105-114; *SF*, cxi, cxxiii.

<sup>631</sup> *TR*, 242 (italics mine). Torrance also relates this to the twofold activity of the Spirit, in conjunction with the man-ward and God-ward work of the Son, so that he refers to the Spirit as One “who goes forth from God and returns to God... supervening upon the Church and lifting it upwards in its faith and rejoicing in God,” in *TR*, 248.

<sup>632</sup> *TP*, 12.

<sup>633</sup> See George Hunsinger, “The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (ed. John Webster; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 177-194. Aside from his disagreement with Barth on natural theology, Torrance critiques Barth in (1) the element of subordinationism in his doctrine of the Trinity, which in turn affects his views on the *filioque*, (2) his failure to offer a fully trinitarian view of creation, (3) his limited treatment of the implications of the *enhypostasia* for his ecclesiology, (4) his neglect of the ascension of Christ as high priest, and (5) his interpretation of Calvin’s doctrine of election (see *KBET*, 131-135; *SF*, lxxvii).

<sup>634</sup> *TRE*, 210.

(*topos*) where men may meet with God and are enabled to have communion with him, receive his revelation and worship him.”<sup>635</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit and the Church**

In *Trinitarian Faith*, Torrance observes two central affirmations that can be gleaned from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed regarding the Church. First, the doctrine of the Church belongs to and follows from the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, “for *holy* Church is the fruit of the *Holy* Spirit.”<sup>636</sup> Secondly, the church belongs to the articles of saving faith, so that the ministry of the Gospel as embodied in the church is affirmed.<sup>637</sup> In relation to the first, that the church belongs to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in particular and to the Trinity in general, is important to Torrance, particularly in his affirmation that the church cannot be considered as an institution founded on human ideals and beliefs. He asserts that the church is founded in Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and is rooted in the Holy Trinity.<sup>638</sup> A problem this thesis faces is that owing to Torrance’s integrative approach, his doctrine of the church is intertwined with several elements of his theology, such as Christology, pneumatology, eschatology, and soteriology. The constraints of this thesis mean that we can only briefly deal with three specific aspects: the church as (1) the Body of Christ, (2) the Community of the Holy Spirit, and (3) a communion-constituting community.

#### *The Church as the Body of Christ*

Torrance’s soteriology balances the personal and the corporate elements of salvation. He considers salvation as union with Christ through the Spirit as a one-on-one relationship, but also emphasizes that the Spirit unites us into Christ by incorporating us into an earthly-historical community “which the Lord Jesus Christ through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit has formed and continually renews.”<sup>639</sup> The

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<sup>635</sup> *TF*, 229.

<sup>636</sup> *TF*, 252.

<sup>637</sup> *APWC*, 358; *ST*, 27.

<sup>638</sup> *TF*, 254. In *CAC I*, 18, Torrance spells out the importance of pneumatology in the church to keep the church from being a hierarchical institution, and to maintain the centrality of Christ and of the reconciled life.

<sup>639</sup> *KBET*, 25. The Church, Torrance writes in *SF*, cxxiv, is “a corporate Communion, that is a Communion of mutual participation through the Spirit in Christ and His graces, and a personal Communion which each may have with Christ within the corporate Communion. That is the doctrine of the Church as the Communion of Saints, in which each shares with the other and all share together in the life and love of God in Jesus Christ. In that Communion no one can live for himself alone, or believe or worship alone, for he is nothing without his brother for whom Christ died, and has no relation to Christ except in Christ’s relation with all for whom He died.”

church, then, is the communion of the Holy Spirit where our union and communion with Christ is actualized “in the actual structure of our human, personal and social being.”<sup>640</sup> The relationship between Christ and his Body, however, should not only be understood analogically or metaphorically. Rather, precisely because reconciliation is achieved by Christ through his own incarnate constitution as true God and true man in one person, the Church is internally and ontologically related to Christ, made possible by Christ’s incarnational and atoning union with us and our consequent union with him through the Spirit.<sup>641</sup> This is consistent with Torrance’s overall theology of internal relations, which must also govern the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ. Because of the ontological relation between Christ and the Church, Torrance thus argues that “Body of Christ” is the best designation for the church, although the emphasis should not be on the *Body*, but on the *of Christ*, stressing that Christ Himself is the Head, King and Saviour of the Body.<sup>642</sup> This is interesting, because although Torrance argues that the doctrine of the church is “a function of belief in the Spirit,”<sup>643</sup> following the creedal formulations, he still defines the church primarily as the Body *of Christ*. At first sight, this might appear both as a contradiction and another evidence of Torrance’s undervaluing of the Holy Spirit. But actually, Torrance is being consistent here with his view of the self-effacing nature of the Spirit. Thus, the church is primarily the Body of Christ and not the Body of the Holy Spirit because it is Christ to whom believers are united to in the church by the Spirit. The Spirit’s *kath hypostasin* agency is not to create a new communion or a new union apart from what Christ has already established. Although there is a sense in which the Church is the *koinonia* of the Spirit (as will be elaborated later), it is not a unique communion isolated from Christ’s union with us.

Moreover, the church as the Body of Christ has several implications. First, it implies that Christ is the law of the church’s life, although it is through the Spirit that the Church is able to share in Christ’s obedience.<sup>644</sup> The incarnate Son is “the regulative centre with reference to which all the worship, faith and mission of the Church take

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<sup>640</sup> *TF*, 9.

<sup>641</sup> *APWC*, 368-369; “Where Do We Go from Lund?” *SJT* 6 (1953), 57; Lee, *Living in Union*, 221. Referring to the Church, and following Irenaeus, Torrance thus optimistically believes that in the Body of Christ, there takes place “a soteriological and ontological unification of people in whose midst God himself dwells through the presence of the Holy Spirit” (*TF*, 254).

<sup>642</sup> Torrance, “What is the Church?” *EcuRev* 11 (1958), reprinted in *CAC I*, 105-106, 134; “The Pre-eminence of Jesus Christ,” *ExT* 89 (1977), 54-55; *APWC*, 362-363.

<sup>643</sup> *TF*, 252.

<sup>644</sup> Torrance, “The Meaning of Order,” *ChQRev* 160 (1959), reprinted in *CAC II*, 17.

their shape.”<sup>645</sup> Secondly, the church, therefore, can never justify itself by claiming historical succession or doctrinal faithfulness, or by referring to its own place and time in history. The church should not displace Christ as the Head of the Church by any human agenda, be it in the form institutional regulations or political authorities.<sup>646</sup> The relation between Christ and his Church is the irreversible relation between the *Head* of the Body and the *members* of the Body. Thirdly, the irreplaceable Headship of Christ in the church also forms the foundation of the proper understanding of “catholicity” and “ecumenicity” of the Church: “The essential nature of the church is catholic because it is the one Body of Christ, and the essential life of the Church is ecumenical because it consists in the sanctification and gathering of mankind into a unity in Christ the Head of all creation.”<sup>647</sup>

### *The Church as the Community of the Spirit*

The Spirit’s personalizing and incorporating agency could be understood as: (1) uniting us to Christ, and (2) forming “a community of reciprocity” on earth that reflects the Trinitarian communion in heaven.<sup>648</sup> In Torrance’s theology, the Holy Spirit plays a dominant role in creating a threefold relationship. The Holy Spirit is the bond of love of the Father and the Son, and therefore of the Triune God. This can be called as *onto-horizontal* relationship. The Holy Spirit also makes possible our union with Christ to the Father, ushering us into sharing in the very life and love of the Triune God. “The Spirit creates not only personal union but corporate union between us and Christ and through Christ with the Holy Trinity, so that it is the Holy Spirit who creates and sustains the being and life of the Church, uniting the Church to Christ as his one

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<sup>645</sup> *TDORC I*, 83; *KC*, 57-60; Lee, *Living in Union*, 253. Torrance also argues that the Spirit of Truth should inform all authentic magisterium in the Church, in “Truth and Authority: Theses on Truth,” *IrishThQuar* 39 (1972), reprinted in *TCFK*, 332.

<sup>646</sup> *CAC I*, 12-13; *TRE*, 19, 34-40. Torrance critiques both Roman Catholicism and Liberalism as falling into this error. Gunton also critiques ecclesiology defined in terms of clergy, like the Church of England, or when theology of the church is derived by analogy of an earthly empire, in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 57-59.

<sup>647</sup> *TRE*, 17; and “Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches,” *The British Weekly* (2 February 1954), reprinted in *CAC I*, 263-283. See also Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in Biblical and Patristic Tradition* (trans. Anthony P. Gythiel; New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1999), 132-134.

<sup>648</sup> Deddo, “The Holy Spirit,” 98; Flett, “Priest of Creation, Mediators of Order: The Human Person as a Cultural Being in Thomas F. Torrance’s Theological Anthropology,” *SJT* 58 (2005), 170. Gunton refers to the church as “a living echo of the communion that God is in eternity,” in *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 200.

Body.”<sup>649</sup> This could be referred as *economic-vertical* relationship. The Holy Spirit also creates, within space and time, “a community of reciprocity among ourselves.”<sup>650</sup> This can be called a *creature-horizontal* relationship, which is only possible in light of the first and second relationships.<sup>651</sup>

In the economy of salvation, thus, the communion of the Spirit means communion with Christ by way of and within communion with others in their communion with Christ. This highlights Torrance’s stress on the primary and secondary meanings of *koinonia* in the Church as participation in Christ and communion with one another in Christ, respectively.<sup>652</sup>

It is only through a vertical participation in Christ that the Church is horizontally a communion of love, a fellowship of reconciliation, a community of the redeemed. Both these belong together in the fullness of Christ. It is only as we share in Christ Himself, that we share in the life of the Church, but it is only as we share with all saints in their relation to Christ that we participate deeply in the love and knowledge of God. Participation is a conjoint participation, a participation-in-communion, but the communion is above all a communion-in-participation in Christ.<sup>653</sup>

The emphasis here is on the conjoint participation in Christ effected by the agency of the communion-constituting Spirit. Because the Church is created in the power of the Spirit, the communion shared by its members is a “communion of love,” grounded in the *agape*-love of God.<sup>654</sup> The Church “represents that area within humanity where the love of God is poured out by the Holy Spirit and where men and women are given to share together in their life on earth, and within the social cohesions of humanity, in the overflow of the divine Life.”<sup>655</sup> The fellowship of the Church is “the great communion of saints.”<sup>656</sup>

### *The Church as a Communion-Constituting Community*

The Church as a communion-constituting community can be regarded in three distinct ways. First, the Church is an *already communion-constituted community*. The Church

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<sup>649</sup> *TF*, 9. In *TP*, 106, Torrance argues that the indwelling presence of the Spirit in the Church establishes “full communion between the divine Persons [of the Trinity] and the Church.”

<sup>650</sup> *TF*, 250.

<sup>651</sup> It is true, however, as Kang discerns, that Torrance does not elaborate this aspect more fully. Apart from his preoccupation about the communion in the Church, his theology as a whole lacks positive wider social and political concerns. See “The Concept of the Vicarious Humanity,” 433-436.

<sup>652</sup> *CAC I*, 109, 115; *TDORC I*, 90; “Reconciliation in Christ and in His Church,” *BibQ* 11 (1961), 29-31.

<sup>653</sup> *CAC I*, 109, 115.

<sup>654</sup> See Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 217-221.

<sup>655</sup> *CAC I*, 116.

<sup>656</sup> *CAC I*, 116.

embodies the already existing union with Christ in the communion of the Spirit. It is the community of the already reconciled in Christ, living in communion with God through the Spirit.<sup>657</sup> Those who are already engrafted into Christ and who share in his objective and finished work through union with Him are unified in the Spirit in the earthly community for co-sharing, co-participation and co-fellowship. The Church is a community constituted *by* the communion of the Holy Spirit *for* communion with the Triune God and with others.

Secondly, the Church is a *continuing communion-constituted community*. This highlights the fact that relationship with God and others is a dynamic and on-going event. Just as Christ himself through the Spirit is active in continuous Self-giving and receiving, the members of the *koinonia* should be active participants in self-giving and receiving, according to our own finite and creaturely natures. The communion in the Church, thus, allows for and encourages a deepening of both vertical and horizontal relationships. This is also evident in Torrance's understanding of the sacraments "as signs and seals of the saving grace of Christ given to the Church *to preserve and deepen* its union with Christ and the participation of its members in all his benefits in regeneration and sanctification."<sup>658</sup> In differentiating between Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Torrance refers to the former "as the sacrament of what has taken place once for all in Christ, and the other [as] the sacrament of the continuing union and communion of the believers in Christ."<sup>659</sup> Thus, while Baptism is administered once, the Lord's Supper is celebrated continuously in the Church as the sacrament of our continuous union, communion, and participation in the Body of Christ by the power of the Spirit.<sup>660</sup>

Thirdly, the Church is a *reconciling communion-constituted community*. Deddo argues that in Torrance's theology, the Church is the immediate sphere of the Spirit's work and the world is the mediate sphere.<sup>661</sup> This assessment is true, and could be explained more fully by examining the interrelationship between the work of the Spirit

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<sup>657</sup> *APWC*, 361.

<sup>658</sup> *ST*, 88 (italics mine). According to Torrance, the understanding that new birth transpires at baptism is already clearly understood in Judaism, in "Proselyte Baptism," *NTS* 1 (1954), 150-154; and "The Origins of Baptism," *SJT* 11 (1958), reprinted in *CAC II*, 93-105.

<sup>659</sup> *ST*, 147; "The Meaning of Baptism," *CanJTh* 2 (1956), reprinted in *CAC II*, 131. Christian baptism is our participation in the one baptism of Christ; in "One Aspect of Baptism in the New Testament," *ThZ* 14 (1958), reprinted in *CAC II*, 106-125.

<sup>660</sup> *MC*, 91. For a discussion of Torrance's view of the sacraments, see Kang, "The Concept of the Vicarious Humanity," 385-398; and George Hunsinger, "The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper," *SJT* 54 (2001), 155-176.

<sup>661</sup> Deddo, "The Holy Spirit," 99; *CAC I*, 16.

in the Church, the work of the Spirit in the world, and the mission of the Church empowered by the Spirit in the world. The Holy Spirit is “poured out immediately only upon the Church, and yet through the Church it was destined for all men, for the Church is sent out on a mission to all nations... that they too might receive the promise of the Spirit and be incorporated in the One Body.”<sup>662</sup> The Church is the community where reconciliation is intensively actualized through the Spirit, but it is also a “royal priesthood,” a reconciling community participating in the ministry of the Spirit in restoring alienated humanity to fellowship with God and ordering our disrupted existence through the ministry of proclamation and reconciliation.<sup>663</sup> The nature and mission of the church are inseparable. Thus, the Church should live the reconciled life, as a witness to the world.<sup>664</sup> Torrance affirms that the Holy Spirit is quenched when the church fails to fulfil its mission.<sup>665</sup> As the eschatological community reaching out to the age to come,<sup>666</sup> the Church embodies the unified and reconciled life, and is also “always thrust forward into the world and into world history in the fulfilment of the divine purpose for the reconciliation and unification of the world... for the realization in the world of the coming *oikoumene*, the universal community in which the redeemed life of the people of God and the life of all mankind will be one and the same.”<sup>667</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

As with the Person and Work of the Father and of the Son, the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation is important in Torrance’s Trinitarian theology. Even though there is an evident imbalance in Torrance’s greater treatment of the incarnate Son and the Father than of the Holy Spirit, overall, this does not entail a lesser appropriation of ontological and soteriological significance for the Spirit, although there are instances that could be developed more fully in Torrance’s Christ-Spirit equality.

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<sup>662</sup> *RP*, 26. See also Petros Vassiliadis, “Reconciliation as a Pneumatological Mission Paradigm: Some Preliminary Reflections by an Orthodox,” *IRM* 94 (2009), 30-42.

<sup>663</sup> Torrance, “The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church,” *SJT* 7 (1954), 259; “The Mission of the Church,” *SJT* 19 (1966), in *APWC*, 378-380; *CAC I*, 118; and “The Place of Christology,” 21-24.

<sup>664</sup> This is one of the primary reasons of Torrance’s major involvement in ecumenical movement, and his expressed remorse concerning worldwide church divisions. He argues that “by failing to achieve reconciliation in its own life, the Church is acting a lie against the gospel of reconciliation it proclaims with its mouth,” in “Reconciliation in Christ,” 33. Again, recognition of Jesus as Lord is Torrance’s solution, in “The Way of Reunion,” *ChCen* 71 (1954), 204-205. See also Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 279-282, on the relationship between the church as a community of reconciliation and issues like Intercommunion and ecumenism.

<sup>665</sup> Torrance, “Concerning Amsterdam I. The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Discussion of Volumes I and II of the Preparatory Studies,” *SJT* 2 (1949), 265.

<sup>666</sup> *APWC*, 433-436.

<sup>667</sup> *TRE*, 71.

Ironically, thus, Torrance's criticism of Barth's lesser treatment of pneumatology applies more to him, because he recognizes that "it belongs to the greatest need of the hour that this essential element in the life of the Church [i.e. pneumatology] be recovered in its fullness."<sup>668</sup> Torrance follows Athanasius' application of *homoousios* to the Holy Spirit, which in turn entails the Spirit's consubstantiality and co-equality with the Father and the Son. The role of the Holy Spirit as the Bond of Communion is also critical not only to the Triune Life, but also in understanding the Spirit's work in the economy of salvation. In fact, Torrance uncompromisingly states that "apart from the Communion of the Holy Spirit we could not enjoy the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God the Father."<sup>669</sup> Moreover, the Spirit's salvific agency should be understood in his triadic relation to Christ and the Father, the world and the church. These three relationships overlap and intermingle with one another, and one cannot be isolated from the others. The Holy Spirit, in his communion with us unites us to Christ, actualizing *in us* Christ's finished and objective work *for us*. This applies to the Spirit's office in creation, redemption, and revelation, in which he enables us to participate in Christ's vicarious humanity and knowledge of the Father. Furthermore, the Spirit unites us to Christ and to one another by creating an earthly communion, the Body of Christ, through which our union and reconciliation with Christ (and the Triune God) and with others are continuously renewed and reinvigorated by the Spirit's indwelling presence. Also, the Spirit through the reconciled community also reaches out to the world in the ministry of reconciliation, embracing every race and tongue, and incorporating everyone into the family of God.

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<sup>668</sup> Torrance, "Karl Barth," 209.

<sup>669</sup> *CDG*, 18.

## Chapter V

### COMMUNION WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

In these preceding chapters, the Persons of the Trinity with their distinct Works in the salvific economy were presented. These chapters are both important and evangelically purposive, because they reveal that a robust and biblical doctrine of salvation, instead of being neatly encapsulated as “accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour,” should actually be perceived from a Trinitarian angle: salvation means union with Christ and being adopted as sons and daughters of the Father into the incorporating communion of the Holy Spirit. Even the tempting alternative that salvation in Christ involves an *implicit* awareness of the Triune God should be regarded as insufficient. In fact, in theology and ministry alike, it is precisely this assumed adequacy of implicit Trinitarianism that paved the way towards both implicit neglect and explicit rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity. In this chapter, the primary point of discussion revolves around Torrance’s Trinitarian soteriological dictum, scattered throughout his writings, that humanity is enabled to “share in the inner relations of God’s own life and love.”<sup>670</sup> Two aspects need consideration: (1) the inner relations of the Godhead, or the Trinity *in se*, and (2) humanity’s sharing in the primordial Community of Love. These aspects are interrelated and inseparable. Therefore, in the first place, Torrance’s soteriological Trinitarianism will be discussed, and then, based on this, the final shape of Torrance’s Trinity-conditioned soteriology will be expanded.

#### TORRANCE’S SOTERIO-CONDITIONED TRINITARIANISM

Torrance’s theological hermeneutic rejects any approach to theological formulation grounded in abstract principles or pure idealism. Theologizing follows a different path, for instead of coming from anthropocentric procedures and starting points, theology proceeds from “the logic of grace.”<sup>671</sup> True knowledge of the Triune God is possible in the Son and the Spirit. Knowledge of the Trinity *in se* derives from the activity of the Triune God *ad extra*. And it is precisely because it is knowledge rooted in the Triune economy of salvation that Torrance’s trinitarianism is soterio-conditioned. Our

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<sup>670</sup> *MC*, 64.

<sup>671</sup> *TR*, 37-41; *TS*, 128-133. Kruger is right to claim in “Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God,” 15, that Torrance’s “methodological discussion is a footnote of massive proportions to his theology.”

knowledge of the Triune Being of God is derived from God's dynamic Self-revealing and reconciling Act in the world.

The question is: Is Torrance's soteriological approach different from his brother James' doxological approach?<sup>672</sup> The answer is No. Both agree that the initial formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity originated from the worship of the early church, but the defining factor of their agreement is their understanding of "worship." In the words of James, worship is "our participation through the Spirit in the Son's communion with the Father, in his vicarious life and worship."<sup>673</sup> The definition itself carries soteriological overtones. In fact, the definition above is precisely how T.F. Torrance understands what constitutes salvation. Furthermore, worship and knowledge are inseparable in his theological epistemology. Put simply, knowledge of God involves a self-prostrating subjection of the human mind to the rationality and revelation of God in Christ. *Theologia*, "which is properly the knowledge of the Holy Trinity," and *eusebia*, "defined through Jesus Christ the Son of God incarnate," are inseparable: "The more truly God is known in accordance with his nature, the more godliness is advanced, and the more godliness is advanced the more likely we are to know God in a godly way that is worthy of his nature as God."<sup>674</sup> In Torrance's theology, therefore, the soteriological, the doxological, and the scientific approaches are cohesive.<sup>675</sup>

### **The Evangelical Trinity and Theological Trinity**

Although Torrance frequently employs the conventional terminologies "economic Trinity" and "ontological Trinity," he suggests that it is better to speak of them as the *evangelical Trinity* and *theological Trinity*.<sup>676</sup> His proposed alternative *evangelical Trinity* is particularly important, for it is related to his overall approach to theology in general and to the doctrine of the Trinity in particular: that knowledge of the Trinity is evangelically grounded, because "it is revealed to us through the incarnate or human economy which Christ undertook toward us, in the midst of us, and for our sakes."<sup>677</sup> Torrance opts for the term *evangelical Trinity* because of his emphasis on the

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<sup>672</sup> See Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (1996).

<sup>673</sup> Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 15.

<sup>674</sup> *TF*, 38; *TDORC II*, 4, and 159-160, where it is argued that the intention of theology is not "gnosiological" but doxological. See also Colyer, *How to Read*, 374.

<sup>675</sup> Colyer, *How to Read*, 287.

<sup>676</sup> *CDG*, 7.

<sup>677</sup> *CDG*, 7.

evangelical-soteriological nature of the Triune God, because there is no God who is not a redeeming God.

Torrance holds a more lenient position than, for example, Catherine LaCugna, a Roman Catholic Trinitarian theologian who not only avoided using Rahner's terminologies but also criticized them for their several supposed weaknesses.<sup>678</sup> Whereas LaCugna considers the terms "economic" and "immanent" misleading altogether, Torrance considers them only insufficient. She is not only opposed to such terminologies, but is also prejudiced against talk regarding the Trinity *in se*. Gunton does not exaggerate when he judges that LaCugna deems ontology as the enemy in Trinitarian theology.<sup>679</sup> LaCugna blames the Cappadocians for speculating on the intra-divine Trinity, leading the church to abstraction and the neglect of the practical aspects of the doctrine.<sup>680</sup> Torrance, by contrast, never considers ontology as the enemy, and argues that the historical manifestations of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit have evangelical significance only when they have "a transhistorical and transfinite reference:" the Being of God himself.<sup>681</sup> Even though LaCugna proposes *oikonomia* and *theologia* to replace "economic" and "immanent," her interest lies only in the former. She writes: "There is neither an economic nor an immanent Trinity; there is only the *oikonomia* that is the concrete realization of the mystery of *theologia* in time, space, history and personality."<sup>682</sup> For Torrance, it is clear that LaCugna's position dangerously confuses the relation between the Being and Work of God.

Interestingly, LaCugna's position is a result of her zealous soteriological Trinitarianism. That Torrance reached quite different conclusions lies in his richer theological method and realism. While LaCugna considers the discussion of the Trinity *ad intra* as an exercise in speculative abstraction, Torrance considers it as indispensable. This is portrayed in his insistent scientific epistemology, where the stratified structure of knowledge dictates that knowledge progresses from experiential,

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<sup>678</sup> See Elizabeth T. Groppe, "Catherine Mowry LaCugna's Contribution to Trinitarian Theology," *ThS* 63 (2002), 730-763, for her list of these weaknesses.

<sup>679</sup> Gunton, "Being and Person," 122. See also Mackintosh's responses to objections to the immanent Trinity in *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, 515-518.

<sup>680</sup> LaCugna, "The Trinity: Why It Takes Three Persons to Save One Soul" (interview by editors), *US Catholic* 58 (November 1993), 8. Jason E. Vickers sees what LaCugna saw in the Cappadocians in the loss of the doctrine of the Trinity in English Protestantism. He argues that a shift from *invocation* to *intellectual assent*, or *doxology* to *epistemology*, is the culprit. See *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 1, 19-20 and particularly chapters two and three.

<sup>681</sup> CDG, 6.

<sup>682</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 223.

intuitive knowledge to knowledge of being *in se*.<sup>683</sup> In line with this, Torrance's proposed terminologies "evangelical Trinity" and "theological Trinity" are closely related to his scientific theology. The similarity in terminologies is just too weighty to dismiss. But if Torrance's Trinitarian terminologies are consistent with, if not completely grounded in, his stratified epistemology, then one may wonder why Torrance opts to use "theological Trinity" rather than "meta-theological Trinity," which is human knowledge (and description) of God at its peak level. Certainly, Torrance's use of *theological* Trinity is purposive, grounded in a worshipful apophatism. It may be that Torrance wishes to avoid possible misunderstandings if his terminologies were juxtaposed with Rahner's dictum "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and *vice versa*."<sup>684</sup>

The first part of this axiom, "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity," if interpreted to mean that knowledge of the Trinity *ad intra* is possible through the Trinity *ad extra*, resonates well with Torrance's epistemology, because it "has the effect of making the Economic Trinity the norm of all our thought and speech about God."<sup>685</sup> Unfortunately, Rahner's grounding of the economic Trinity in the immanent Trinity, and his making the economic Trinity universally immanent and available in human consciousness prior to God's free act of Self-communication, make his understanding of the relationship between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity radically different from Torrance's. This is because Rahner's epistemology is primarily grounded in his theological anthropology, in which knowledge of God is an existential capacity of human-ness, while Torrance's is grounded in God's concrete Self-revelation in Christ and the Holy Spirit.<sup>686</sup>

The element of abstraction which Rahner, in spite of his axiom of identity, has introduced between the Immanent and the Economic Trinity has to do only with a logical movement between sets of concepts taken from official declarations of the Church, and with an underlying desire on his part finally not to break with scholastic formulations of dogma. On the other hand, it must be recognized that

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<sup>683</sup> *TCFK*, 94-101; *GGT*, 156-173; *RST*, chapter 5; Yeung, "Being and Knowing," 167-170.

<sup>684</sup> Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22.

<sup>685</sup> *TP*, 78.

<sup>686</sup> See Molnar, "God's Self-Communication in Christ: A Comparison of Thomas F. Torrance and Karl Rahner," *SJT* 50 (1997), 288-320. For further discussion on Rahner's epistemology, see Dick Eugenio, "Karl Rahner's Primary Epistemology of God's Self-Communication: An Existentialist-Transcendental Analysis of Rahner's Theological Anthropology," (MST thesis; Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2008), and on how Rahner's epistemology influenced his Trinitarian dictum, see Gary Badcock, "Karl Rahner, the Trinity and Religious Pluralism," in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 143-154; and Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 67-70.

Rahner poses the identity of the Economic Trinity and the Immanent Trinity, first only as a methodological principle, as an instrument to reveal and organize understanding of the material presentation of God's self-communication, which in the course of his arguments results in the conviction that in reality there is only *one Trinity*, for the Economic Trinity is found to be the same thing as the Immanent Trinity.<sup>687</sup>

This displays that although Torrance perceives Rahner as essentially "a prisoner of a scholastic metaphysical framework,"<sup>688</sup> he notes the profound implications of Rahner's aphorism when perceived from Athanasius' and Barth's perspective of the oneness between God's Being and Act. "The Trinity *ad extra* and *ad intra* are identical because the self-communication of God to us in the Son and in the Spirit would not be a self-communication of God to us, if what God is for us in the Son and in the Spirit were not proper to God himself."<sup>689</sup> Thus, to say that the Self-communication of God in his revelation and the Self-giving of God in his Being are one and the same is just another way of saying the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity are one, and *vice versa*.

However, because Torrance agrees with Rahner's identification of the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity, he has made himself vulnerable to the same critiques posed against Rahner's axiom on the problem of identity.<sup>690</sup> This may be posed as a question: what is the degree of the is-ness in the statement "the economic Trinity IS the immanent Trinity, and *vice versa*"? In recent Protestant theology, this problem can be seen in the debate between Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar, both followers of Barth, concerning the relationship between God's triunity and self-determination, or more particularly on the identity of the *logos asarkos* and the *logos incarnandus*. For McCormack, God's economic Trinity reveals that God is being-toward the economy of grace, and that God's self-determination to be God with us is logically prior to God's triunity.<sup>691</sup> There is no Triune God who is not always a redeeming God. Molnar's suggestion is that such a logical identification blurs the distinction between the economic Trinity and immanent Trinity, following Torrance's argument.<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>687</sup> TP, 80.

<sup>688</sup> TP, 81.

<sup>689</sup> TP, 80; "The Christ Who Loves Us," 20; Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1: 479.

<sup>690</sup> See Bruce D. Marshall's discussion of the problems of complete identification in "Trinity," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Modern Theology* (ed. Gareth Jones; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 193-197; and Christoph Schwöbel, "Introduction: The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology: Reasons, Problems and Tasks," in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, 6-7.

<sup>691</sup> McCormack, "Grace and Being: The Role of God's Gracious Election in Karl Barth's Theological Ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, 92-110.

<sup>692</sup> Molnar, "The Trinity, Election and God's Ontological Freedom: A Response to Kevin W. Hector," *IJST* 8 (2006), 297. Kevin Hector, who jumped into the middle of the debate, agrees with

Torrance argues that both creation and incarnation, God's activities *ad extra*, are *new* even to God.<sup>693</sup> Epistemologically and ontologically, complete and logical identifications grounded in necessitarian, projectionist, and mechanistic relations, and not encased within the boundaries of God's concrete Act in the economy, whether they are analogies *from above* (logical deductions from the immanent Trinity imposed on the economic Trinity) or analogies *from below* (projectionist deductions from the economic Trinity imposed on the immanent Trinity), simply have no place in Torrance's theology. The only identity that Torrance allows is based on soteriological-evangelical foundations, not metaphysical considerations.

Finally, Torrance's epistemological optimism must be balanced with his worshipful apophatism.<sup>694</sup> Thus, although humanity is given the privilege to know God at the highest human level, the meta-theological level of knowledge, humanity could not claim that the meta-theological level is everything. To know God "does not mean that we can know *what* the being of God is, but it does mean that we are given knowledge of God that is directly and objectively grounded in his eternal being."<sup>695</sup> Torrance adds: "Only God can comprehend himself, and only God can name himself... What God ultimately is in the essence of his eternal being we cannot know, but we are given by God to know *who* he is."<sup>696</sup> Two interrelated realities are evident in Torrance's

Molnar's argument, in "God's Triunity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar," *IJST* 7 (2005), 246-261. Aaron T. Smith, on the other hand, agrees with McCormack's position in "God's Self-specification: His Being is His Electing," *SJT* 62 (2009), 1-25. Robert Jenson seems to align himself with McCormack's position in his interpretation of the "for us" in the incarnation when he argues that "creaturely circumstances are the occasion of an event in the life of God," and "that creaturely circumstances are involved in what it means for God to be God" (Jenson, "For Us... He was Made Man," in *Nicene Christianity*, 77). Gunton appropriates the Athanasian distinction between the *being* and *will* of God in order to highlight the difference between economy and theology, in "Being and Person," 123.

<sup>693</sup> *TRE*, 223, 224. Thus, although Jesus is identified as Creator, "this does not mean that somehow the humanity of Christ existed before the Incarnation," Torrance writes in "Pre-eminence of Christ," 54. This also marks the difference between Moltmann's panentheistic trinitarianism and cosmology and Torrance's doctrines of creation and the Trinity. See the discussion in Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 79-82, 84.

<sup>694</sup> *TR*, 30. Torrance also adds that there is a basic impropriety in all human language about God, in *TF*, 43-44. Fiddes furthers Torrance's linguistic apophatism in arguing that images and symbolisms do not do justice to the personal and relational nature of God, in *Participating in God*, 11.

<sup>695</sup> *TF*, 67; *TP*, 37-38; *CDG*, 26, 50, 73-75, 81, 110-111; "Implications of Oikonomia for Knowledge and Speech of God in Early Christian Theology," in *Oikonomia: Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie: Oscar Cullman zum 65. Geburtstag Gewidmet* (ed. Felix Christ; Hamburg: Herbert Reich, 1967), 230, 235. The agreed statement between Reformed and Orthodox Churches is guided by the conviction that "while the Trinity captures our minds, our minds cannot capture the Trinity," in *TP*, 111. Elsewhere, Torrance writes that "the Trinity is more to be adored than expressed," in *TDORC I*, 7; *GGT*, 167; *ST*, 83, 86.

<sup>696</sup> Torrance, "The Christian Apprehension of God the Father," in *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism* (ed. Alvin F. Kimel, Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 136; *TR*, 30; *TP*, 42.

view of the incomprehensibility of God. Just as knowledge of God is predicated in God's own act of Self-revelation and humanity's ability as a recipient, so too is the incomprehensibility of God. In the former, God's Being is essentially inexhaustible by human knowledge. Rahner's description of God as "Holy Mystery" perfectly fits Torrance's apophatism; God is "Mystery" "in the fact that we experience it as that which cannot be encompassed... and hence it cannot be defined."<sup>697</sup> In this sense, incomprehensibility is both a religious and an anthropological category: it is a statement *about* humanity as a limited creature incapable of exhausting the Being of God in both comprehension and articulation.

### **Substantial *versus* Relational Trinity**

One of Bruce Marshall's six theses characterizing recent Trinitarian theology is an overall recourse, particularly among Protestant theologians, to the Eastern or Greek approach to the doctrine of the Trinity as a better alternative to the Western or Latin model.<sup>698</sup> Christoph Schwöbel agrees and explains the reasons for this phenomenon: (1) the recent encounter with Eastern Orthodoxy in the ecumenical context, (2) the interplay between the inspiration of Eastern Trinitarianism and the self-critical examination of the history of Western Trinitarianism, and (3) Eastern Orthodoxy's criticism of Western Trinitarianism.<sup>699</sup> Deeply entrenched in this is the generally accepted difference (and even incompatibility) that Rahner made in *The Trinity* between Eastern and Western approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>700</sup> In this, he suggests that the Western church, by looking mainly at Tertullian's famous formula "*tres personae, una substantia*," Augustine's psychological Trinity and Aquinas' bifurcation and placing of *De Deo Uno* before a section on *De Deo Trino*,<sup>701</sup> has approached the doctrine of the Trinity through the category of substance, or an abstract property that is shared by the Three Persons. It is then argued that this substantialist perspective should

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<sup>697</sup> Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (trans. William V. Dych; New York: Crossroads, 1985), 65.

<sup>698</sup> Marshall, "Trinity," 190. The other five characteristic theses are: (1) "the Trinity is the most essential, basic, or distinctive Christian doctrine," (2) "the doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian way of identifying God," (3) "the 'economic' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity are the same," (4) "Father, Son and Spirit are genuine *persons*," and (5) "the doctrine of the Trinity should suffuse the whole of Christian theology."

<sup>699</sup> Schwöbel, "The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology," 3-6.

<sup>700</sup> Rahner, *The Trinity*, 15-21, 45-46; Donald G. Bloesch, *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 167.

<sup>701</sup> See LaCugna's argument that Aquinas, contrary to Rahner's assessment, actually espoused a relational view of God, in "The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond," *ThS* 46 (1985), 647-663.

be abandoned in favour of the Eastern-Cappadocian view of the priority of three *hypostases* in one *ousia*. As John R. Franke notes, at the heart of this proposal is “the apparent incompatibility of an eternal, essentially immutable God with the portrait in the biblical narratives of a God who has entered into loving relationship with creation.”<sup>702</sup> Rather than perceiving God in light of Aristotelian immutable substance, God should be seen as a relational God, a Person-in-relation. Consequently, as LaCugna argues, “person, not substance, is the ultimate ontological category.”<sup>703</sup>

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen’s comment that the “move to relationality is also in keeping with the dynamic understanding of reality and the human being” resonates with Torrance’s views on the necessary relational change of frame of thought in theology, parallel to the changes in the structure of natural sciences from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics.<sup>704</sup> Is Torrance thus in agreement with the rejection of the Western substantialist approach in favour of the Eastern relational approach? No. Richard A. Muller’s judgment that Torrance has driven a wedge between patristic Trinitarian Orthodoxy and Western, Latin Christianity, is unfounded.<sup>705</sup> In fact, as Mun-Chul Shin argues, Torrance holds a “dialogical” approach.<sup>706</sup> Torrance’s comments in *Trinitarian Perspectives* on the agreed statement by the Reformed and Orthodox Churches illustrates his stance:

The Agreed Statement is also of considerable ecumenical significance in offering an approach to the doctrine of the Trinity which is neither from the Three Persons to the One Being of God, nor from the One Being of God to the Three Persons. As such, it cuts across the *mistaken views* of the doctrine of the Trinity according to which Western theology moves from the One Being of God

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<sup>702</sup> Franke, “God is Love,” in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church*, 112.

<sup>703</sup> LaCugna, *God for Us*, 14-15. See also LaCugna, “The Trinity,” 6, in which she adds: “The doctrine of the Trinity is primarily a teaching about our salvation and about the God who saves us, not about essences.” For a counterargument regarding the viability of a substantialist understanding of the Trinity, see William P. Alston, “Substance and Trinity,” in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kenall and Gerald O’Collins; Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1999), 179-201; and for a different reading of Gregory of Nyssa’s approach to the Trinity, see Sarah Coakley, “‘Persons’ in the ‘Social’ Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion,” in *The Trinity*, 125-143.

<sup>704</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 387; quoted in Franke, “God is Love,” 114. See also *TNS*, 13, 15; *PCT*, 21-23, 42, 60; *TCFK*, 70-73; “The Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Eucharist,” *LitRev* 6 (1976), 10-11; “Theological Realism,” 182-185; and “The Light of the World,” *RefJ* 38 (1988), 10-11.

<sup>705</sup> See Muller, “The Barth Legacy: New Athanasius or Origen Redivivus? A Response to T. F. Torrance,” *Thomist* 50 (1990), 684.

<sup>706</sup> See Shin, “A Dialogical Trinitarian Pneumatology: A Critical Appraisal of Contemporary Pneumatological Discourse in Light of Torrance’s Theology,” (PhD thesis; University of Aberdeen, 1997). Roger Newell thinks otherwise. He writes that Torrance’s “prescriptive style lacks a dialogical quality and this has at times rendered his thought inaccessible to the sceptic,” in “Torrance, Thomas Forsyth (b. 1913),” in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology* (ed. Trevor A. Hart; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 550.

to the Three Persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, while Eastern theology moves from the Three Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to the One Being of God. It is preeminently a statement on the *dynamic Triunity* of God as Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity.<sup>707</sup>

Torrance is not trapped into choosing from two neatly categorized opposing options. In this aspect of his Trinitarian theology he transcends all others. His Trinitarian theology refuses to be categorized as essentially substantialist or relationalist. His Trinitarian discourse does not operate either from the Unity detached from the Distinction or from the Distinction detached from the Unity. In Torrance, it is not a matter of choosing between two *wrong* independent approaches, but developing or rediscovering an integrative approach that does justice to both biblical revelation and patristic theology. Torrance, therefore, does not reject theologizing concerning the *ousia* of God *per se*. Theological ontology occupies a central place in Torrance's Trinitarian theology, but it is not a speculative ontology grounded in *a priori* abstract philosophical categories imposed on theology, but an ontology that is primarily a *reflection* grounded in *a posteriori* evidences provided by God's own Self-naming and Self-revealing activity in space and time.<sup>708</sup> In other words, Torrance's Trinitarian ontology is both soteriological and relational.

### The Personal Triune God

Like Zizioulas and Gunton, Torrance believes that a significant contribution of the church fathers is the concept of "person," and its concomitant argument that being is essentially personal-relational.<sup>709</sup> This patristic contribution developed slowly. The Cappadocians' identification of *hypostasis* with *prosopon* to refer to a self-identifying personal being or reality paved the way for *hypostasis* to be redefined to become "suitable for theological speech expressing the objective, identifiable self-manifestations of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."<sup>710</sup> Three things are noteworthy. First, Torrance argues that it is the concrete Self-evidencing manifestation of the Triune God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit that required the early theologians to question and abandon the Greek static view of God. Secondly, an acknowledgment of God's Triunity required the redefinition of terms, so that *ousia* and *hypostasis*, when applied to God,

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<sup>707</sup> *TP*, 113-114 (italics mine).

<sup>708</sup> *TP*, 18; *KBBET*, 225-227.

<sup>709</sup> Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 18, chapters 1 and 2; Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 13-15.

<sup>710</sup> *DM*, 208-209.

could no longer be framed without regarding them as essentially relational terms. Thirdly, this redefinition of *old terms* resulted in the development of the *new concept* of personhood. Subsequently, in Christian theology, ontology and relationality could no longer be separated. Unlike Greek tragedy, Christian theology could no longer view relationality or personhood as a secondary quality attachable to and detachable from primordial nature.<sup>711</sup> To be and to-be-in-relation are the same.

Torrance's appropriation of the concept of "person" in God is coupled with other important patristic terms: *homoousios* and *perichoresis*.

It was in connection with this refined concept of *perichoresis* in its employment to speak of the intra-trinitarian relations in God, that Christian theology developed what I have long called its *onto-relational* concept of the divine Persons, or an understanding of the three divine Persons in the One God in which the ontic relations between them belong to what they essentially are in themselves in their distinctive *hypostases*. Along with this there developed out of the doctrine of the Trinity the new *concept of person*, unknown in human thought until then, according to which the relations between persons belong to what persons are.<sup>712</sup>

In Torrance's thought, relation possesses an ontic value. Torrance admits that his concept of Persons as "substantive relations" owes much to Naziansen's alternative to the concept of *tropos hyparxeos* proposed by the other Cappadocians. Torrance asserts that the relations among the divine Persons are not just modes of existence but "hypostatic interrelations which belong intrinsically to what Father, Son and Holy Spirit are coinherently in themselves and in their mutual objective relations with and for one another."<sup>713</sup> In short, the relations among the Three Persons are as substantial as they are in themselves as Persons. In this area, Torrance deviates from Barth and Rahner, who both refused to use the term "Person" in their Trinitarian discourses.<sup>714</sup> Also, this is where Alan Torrance fills in Torrance's unexpressed critique of Barth's mistaken preference for *Seinsweise* over the more theologically robust *Person*.<sup>715</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>711</sup> See Zizioulas' discussion in *Being as Communion*, 27-38. Harriet A. Harris disagrees from sociological, cultural and psychological perspectives, in "Should We Say that Personhood is Relational?" *SJT* 51 (1998), 214-234.

<sup>712</sup> *CDG*, 102-103; *TP*, 99; *RST*, 171-178. Torrance understands God's being as self-identifying personal being, i.e. that personhood is a characteristic of his inner being and not derived from a necessary relation to the world. See Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, 180.

<sup>713</sup> *CDG*, 157. See particularly *GGT*, 172-178 on the help of *perichoresis* in understanding the essential Trinity.

<sup>714</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, esp. chapter 2: section 9; and Rahner, *The Trinity*, 73-76, 103-115.

<sup>715</sup> Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, 121, 214-301; and also Hart, *Regarding Karl Barth*, 100-116. See Dennis W. Jowers' presentation of what is at stake in Barth's decision in "The Reproach of Modalism: A Difficulty for Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Trinity," *SJT* 56 (2003), 231-246.

Torrance's use of *perichoresis* in his understanding of personhood in God also explains his difference from Zizioulas, who anchored his understanding of Person only in the Person of the Father as the *Arche* and *Aitia* of the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>716</sup> Zizioulas and other Orthodox theologians defend Basil's view of the *Monarchia* of the Father on the ground that it refers to the fact that the source of divineness is a personal one, or that the ground of the personhood of God is in a Person, the Person of the Father.<sup>717</sup> Torrance's alternative follows Gregory of Nazianzus, who argued for the indivisibility of the *Monas* from the *Trias*, and *vice versa*.<sup>718</sup> Molnar encapsulates Torrance's argument: "The *homooousion*, *perichoresis*, and the *onto-relational* concept of persons function together with the result that God is understood as fully three distinct persons in communion with one another within the eternal Godhead."<sup>719</sup>

### *Being as Communion*

One of the immediate implications of understanding God as a relational Being is the realization that communion is what makes being "be." Christian discussion of God's being cannot proceed *via* speculating from a neutral impersonal essence, but *via* an acknowledgment of dynamic Personal Being, "for God is who he is in the Act of his revelation, and his Act is what it is in his Being."<sup>720</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be an addendum to the doctrine of God; rather, the doctrine of the Trinity *is* the doctrine of God.<sup>721</sup> In God, Being and Communion, *Ousia* and *Koinonia*, are one and the same.<sup>722</sup>

The Being of God is to be understood, therefore, as living and dynamic Being, fellowship-creating or communion-constituting Being, but if it is communion-constituting Being toward us it is surely to be understood also as ever-living, ever-dynamic *Communion* in the Godhead. By his very Nature he is a Communion in himself, which is the ground in the Being of God for his communion with his people.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> *TF*, 317-318. See Paul M. Collins' discussion of the difficulties and differences of approaches to the concept of Triune Personhood in *Trinitarian Theology West and East: Karl Barth, the Cappadocian Fathers, and John Zizioulas* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2001), 107-161.

<sup>717</sup> *TDORC II*, 67.

<sup>718</sup> *TF*, 319.

<sup>719</sup> Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 63. See also *TDORC I*, 156.

<sup>720</sup> *CDG*, 4. Related here is Torrance's appreciation of Athanasius' preference in using verbs rather than nouns in speaking of God, whose Nature is dynamic (see *CDG*, 117).

<sup>721</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity, Wolfhart Pannenberg writes, is "the specifically Christian idea of God," in "The Christian Vision of God: Trinitarian Doctrine," *AsburyThJ* 46 (1991), 28.

<sup>722</sup> *CDG*, 104. Thus, although Torrance is critical of Basil in several aspects of his theology, he favours Basil's conception of the Trinity as *koinonia*. See *Basil, On the Holy Spirit*, 37-47; in *CDG*, 126. See also Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 17. "Community," Boff says, "is the deepest and most fundamental reality that exists," in *Holy Trinity*, 4.

<sup>723</sup> *CDG*, 124, 133.

In light of the above quotation, Collins is clearly mistaken to say that Torrance understands the personhood of the Godhead in terms of an Absolute Subjectivity with its roots from Augustine.<sup>724</sup> Also, Torrance cannot be subject to LaCugna's critique of theologians who neglect the practical import of the Trinity by focusing entirely on the Being *in se* of God, because Torrance's doctrine of God's Being is not a neutral uninvolved Communion, but is rather a Being for others.<sup>725</sup> The divine *ousia* is also *parousia*, God's communing presence with others. "The Being of God," Torrance writes, "known only in the fellowship created through his personal, self-naming, self-affirming and self-giving to his people, is the living dynamic Being of God's redeeming presence *to* them, *with* them and *for* them."<sup>726</sup> Thus, the Being of God should not be understood simply in terms of a self-grounded being, but as "*the Being of God for others* with whom he seeks and creates fellowship."<sup>727</sup>

One of the characteristic features of Torrance's theology is his purposive comparative approach, which highlights the distinctiveness of Christian, Trinitarian and scientific ways of thinking, in contrast to strictly philosophical, cultural and dualist points of view. It is therefore surprising that he does not fully elaborate, given his deep knowledge of early Greek philosophy (as his discussion and critique of Platonic and Stoic views of space reveal),<sup>728</sup> some aspects of the profound change in Christian theology from the Greek mindset, when personhood and relationality were given an elevated status equal to that of being.<sup>729</sup> In this, we should turn to Zizioulas' writings. In *Being as Communion*, Zizioulas argues that in Greek ontology, nature, as a neutral essence, is given priority. In the relationship between God and the world, for instance, one possesses a hypostasis given by the gods, which is subject to fate (or the will of the gods). In this deterministic world view, personality and personhood are like masks (*prosopon*) worn by an individual, but these do not constitute the being or hypostasis of the person. Personhood and relationality are extrinsic elements attachable to and

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<sup>724</sup> Collins, *Trinitarian Theology West and East*, 125.

<sup>725</sup> *CDG*, 133.

<sup>726</sup> *CDG*, 123.

<sup>727</sup> *CDG*, 123. "Unless we begin with God-as-God-is-toward-us and think first of all in terms of God in relation to us and we in relation to God," Toon writes, "we shall miss the biblical emphasis upon the Holy Trinity," in *Our Triune God*, 234.

<sup>728</sup> *STI*, 4-10; *DM*, chapter 9.

<sup>729</sup> In Torrance's defence, Molnar argues that Torrance's understanding of personhood derives primarily from his view of Christ as the Personalizing Person and his understanding of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in perichoretic relations rather than from an analysis of Greek culture and philosophy. See *Theologian of the Trinity*, 348.

detachable from one's given nature, and possess no ontological content. While Zizioulas admits, following Basil, that this might be the case for created beings (grounded in creation *ex nihilo*), this cannot be made into a metaphysical principle to be applied to the Being of God. Rather, the fact that God exists simultaneously as the One in Three and Three in One means that Personhood should be given equal ontological primacy. In God, it is neither Being/Nature preceding Persons nor Persons preceding Being/Nature. Rather, Being/Nature is Person-in-relation and *vice versa*. In short, Being is Communion.<sup>730</sup> Even Torrance, who is usually critical of Zizioulas' preference to Basil and Gregory Nyssen over Gregory Nazianzen and Athanasius in his trinitarian formulation, acknowledges Zizioulas' and other modern Orthodox theologians' weighty contribution to the centrality of thinking of God's Being as a Personal and Communal Being.<sup>731</sup> Nevertheless, as Gunton remarks, it is unfortunate that it is only this aspect in Zizioulas' theology that Torrance engages with, and that he did not fully engage with Zizioulas' work more than he could have.<sup>732</sup>

### *Perichoresis* and Personhood

According to Torrance, the term *perichoresis* was first used "in a verbal form" by Gregory of Nazianzus as a Christological device to express the hypostatic union. As trinitarian debates continued, the term came to refer to "the way in which the three divine Persons mutually dwell in one another and coinhere or inexist in one another while nevertheless remaining other than one another and distinct from one another."<sup>733</sup> Refined further, *perichoresis* means the "complete containing and interpenetration of the three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in one God."<sup>734</sup> *Perichoresis*,

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<sup>730</sup> See Zizioulas' discussion in *Being as Communion*, 27-64; and in "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution," in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, 44-60; Athanasios G. Melissaris, "The Challenge of Patristic Ontology in the Theology of Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon," *GrOrThRev* 44 (1999), 467-490; and also Paul Cumin, "Looking for Personal Space in the Theology of John Zizioulas," *IJST* 8 (2006), 356-370. Lucia Turcescu, however, thinks that Zizioulas misreads the Cappadocians and that Zizioulas' main sources are actually from modern philosophy and theology, in "'Person' versus 'Individual', and Other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa," *MTh* 18 (2002), 527-539; and see Aristotle Papanikolaou's response to Turcescu in "Is John Zizioulas an Existentialist in Disguise?" *MTh* 20 (2004), 601-607.

<sup>731</sup> See especially *TP*, 98 footnote 48.

<sup>732</sup> Gunton, "Being and Person," 131. Torrance's response to Gunton gives a hint as to why Torrance does not engage with Zizioulas, particularly on the doctrine of the Trinity. Torrance writes that Greek orthodox theologians themselves disagree with Zizioulas "in spite of some of his very fine theological works." See "Thomas Torrance Responds," 314.

<sup>733</sup> *CDG*, 102. See also Jürgen Moltmann, "Perichoresis: An Old Magic Word for a New Trinitarian Theology," in *Trinity, Community and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology* (ed. M. Douglas Meeks; Nashville: Kingswood, 2000), 111-115 for a short history of the term.

<sup>734</sup> *CDG*, 102.

therefore, carries an intensely personal meaning. As Bevan concludes, “The true nature of personal being is revealed to us in the *perichoretic* relations of the Trinity as a communion of persons.”<sup>735</sup> In relation to his stratified structure of knowing, Torrance refers to *perichoresis* as the supreme point of our knowing of God in his inner relations.<sup>736</sup>

Furthermore, *perichoresis* also highlights the real enhypostatic relations in the Triune God so that personal distinctions are acknowledged and retained. Torrance writes: “While the three Divine Persons differ from one another precisely as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they are nevertheless conjoined in all their distinctiveness, for the entire and undivided Godhead resides in each Person, and each Person dwells in or inheres in the Other; so that the whole of one Person is imaged in the whole of the Other.”<sup>737</sup> As such, *perichoresis* safeguards against the tendency towards a generic view of *ousia*, which can result in a tautological view of the Persons and a partitive view of distinctions. Following Athanasius, coinherent relations within the one Being of God imply “not merely a linking of intercommunication of the distinctive properties of the three divine Persons but a completely mutual indwelling in which each Person, while remaining what he is by himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is wholly in the others as the others are wholly in him.”<sup>738</sup> The doctrine of appropriation, Jüngel stresses, should be balanced with the doctrine of perichoresis.<sup>739</sup>

Finally, *perichoresis* not only expresses the relational and Personal Being of the Triune God, but also implies the essential dynamism and activism of the Triune God. God’s Self-revelation in the world is grounded in God’s own and primordial essential dynamic Being. Activity and movement are not something external and only economic to God. The dynamism of the *enousios energeia* is grounded in the dynamic *enousios logos*.<sup>740</sup> *Perichoresis* “gives expression to the dynamic nature of the consubstantial Communion between the three Persons,” which should be interpreted “in an intensely personal way, not in a static, but in a dynamic yet ontological way, as the movement of Communion which the Triune God ever is within himself.”<sup>741</sup> Thus, in contrast to

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<sup>735</sup> Bevan, “The Person of Christ,” 112.

<sup>736</sup> *CDG*, 102.

<sup>737</sup> *TDORC II*, xv; *RST*, 168.

<sup>738</sup> *TF*, 305.

<sup>739</sup> Jüngel, *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, xv.

<sup>740</sup> *KBBET*, 171, 200.

<sup>741</sup> *TP*, 141.

Aristotle's God as the "Unmoved Mover," the biblical God is a dynamic active Being. Life, Movement and Activity are intrinsic to the very Being of God.<sup>742</sup>

### TORRANCE'S TRINITY-CONDITIONED SOTERIOLOGY

Colyer's statement that the Trinity is "the ultimate focus of Torrance's theology"<sup>743</sup> appears to contradict Torrance's 1959 statement that his "main theological work or interest" is "in the field of Christology and Soteriology."<sup>744</sup> Colyer's assessment, however, is based on Torrance's later Trinitarian writings. In an interview with Michael Bauman in 1990, Torrance admits that of the [many] books he had published, he was "most pleased with *The Trinitarian Faith* (1988)."<sup>745</sup> From merely a retrospective view, it appears that Torrance's main interests have shifted from Christology and soteriology to the doctrine of the Trinity, but did they? As Fred Sanders notes, the word "Trinity" encompasses an "extraordinary range of dogmatic material," and even though Christology and Pneumatology are the obvious immediate subjects, the doctrines of revelation and salvation soon follow.<sup>746</sup> Thus, Torrance's Trinitarian theology did not abandon Christology and soteriology, but subsumed these fields under the doctrine of the Trinity. And, conversely, even from a chronological perspective, Torrance's earlier fascination with Christology and soteriology could only lead to the doctrine of the Trinity. This double movement is what Torrance refers to as the circular character of Christian theology.<sup>747</sup>

If the word "Trinity" is a comprehensive term, so is the word "salvation." "Salvation," Paul Fiddes writes, "is a concept of the widest scope."<sup>748</sup> This is especially the case in recent theological formulations, where an integrative frame of thought is prevalent, i.e. that doctrines are treated not as isolated but intertwined components. To a certain degree, therefore, firstly, this thesis is an ambitious project, in that it seeks to discuss two of the most encompassing doctrines in Christian theology: Trinity and salvation. The only major parameter that delimits the study is that the discussions revolve primarily around Torrance's theology and not the whole of the Christian

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<sup>742</sup> CDG, 4-8, 149-155; DM, 200; TP, 105. See also Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 51; Roger Nicole, "The Meaning of the Trinity," in *One God in Trinity*, 6-7.

<sup>743</sup> Colyer, "Thomas F. Torrance, 1913-," 464.

<sup>744</sup> CAC I, 7.

<sup>745</sup> Bauman, "Thomas F. Torrance," 117.

<sup>746</sup> Sanders, "The Trinity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance; Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2007), 35. See also TDORC II, 80-82.

<sup>747</sup> CDG, 27-28.

<sup>748</sup> Fiddes, "Salvation," 176.

theological tradition. Secondly, in a sense, the phrase “Trinitarian soteriology” is redundant, in that there should be no doctrine of the Trinity which is not also a doctrine of soteriology. As Sanders asserts, “the task of the doctrine of the Trinity is to describe the connection between God and the economy of salvation,”<sup>749</sup> or as Jenson writes, the Trinity has to do with “the simplest mysteries: that we may in God’s own Spirit approach him as Father, because we do so with the man Jesus.”<sup>750</sup> Nevertheless, the phrase is used here for emphatic purposes, and also to underline the fact that the thesis is an attempt to make explicit the inseparable connection between two often separated aspects in Christian theology.

### **Atonement and the Trinity**

Accentuated throughout the thesis is the claim that Torrance’s soteriology is Trinitarian. Unlike the traditional models of atonement, which seem to be interested only in the crucified Christ and the efficient benefits, Torrance’s incarnational approach inquires into ontological aspects that are overshadowed by mere causal and logical considerations. Although traditional models of atonement appear to value the necessity of Jesus being fully God in order for redemption to be possible, their statements are not robustly Trinitarian. At best, these models’ view of Jesus as God is unqualifiedly monotheistic and primarily apologetic. Torrance, by contrast, grounds and views the deity of Jesus not in Jesus’ relation to a generic term “God,” but in Jesus’ relation to the Persons of the Father and the Holy Spirit. “Since Jesus Christ the only-begotten Son of God is of one being with the Father, and since he is God and man inseparably united in his incarnate Person, then, like the incarnation, the atoning work of the incarnate Son falls within the inner life of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>751</sup>

While it is perhaps inevitable for a theologian of the Trinity to think of salvation Trinitarianly, there are reasons why Torrance is emphatic about perceiving salvation in terms of the Triune God at work in the economy. Historically and ecclesially, Torrance is reacting against some disturbing tenets prevalent in his own theological tradition. Torrance is an outspoken critic of the fascination of federal Calvinists with the benefits

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<sup>749</sup> Sanders, “The Trinity,” 35; John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1994), 21-25. Fiddes writes: “The Trinity will always be about humankind, including us within the richness of the divine life,” in “The Atonement and the Trinity,” in *The Forgotten Trinity*, vol. 3, 120.

<sup>750</sup> Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 187.

<sup>751</sup> *MC*, 112.

of the death of Christ, understood in a mechanistic-logical manner.<sup>752</sup> Kevin Kennedy identifies these Calvin interpreters as particularists who espouse an *ex opere operato* view of salvation that ultimately leads to limited atonement.<sup>753</sup> At the root of this view, according to Torrance, is a logical one-to-one mechanistic view of the relationship between what Christ accomplished and what humanity receives (i.e. because not everyone is saved, Christ died only for the elect) without consideration of the dynamic nature of the Triune salvific economy (i.e. Christ is elected by the Father in the Spirit for the world). Thus, one effect of an explicit Trinitarian view of atonement is that the dynamic nature of redemption is highlighted. Instead of perceiving atonement primarily in terms of a transaction, it is perceived as a dynamic movement that “begins with the Father, extends through the Son and reaches its fulfilment in the Holy Spirit,” so that humanity through the Son in the Holy Spirit may become sons and daughters of the Father.<sup>754</sup>

The effects of a robust Trinitarian view of atonement could be portrayed in Torrance’s view of the suffering of Christ on the cross. Although distinctions should be made concerning the agency of the Persons of the Triune God in the economy of salvation (grounded in the distinct hypostases of the Persons of the Triune God), the oneness in being and the perichoretic relations in the Triune God highlight the interpenetration in both God’s Being and Act. As such, although it is not the Father who is crucified, the Father suffers with the Son in the Son’s agony on the cross. Torrance even writes that the “passion of the Father” and “the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ” “is a passion in which the Holy Spirit shares equally.”<sup>755</sup> Furthermore, if Jesus is not the true Son of the Father, Molnar writes, “his death could easily be construed as immoral,”<sup>756</sup> for it would indeed portray a sadist Father leaving a masochist Son to suffer and die. If such were the case, the critique of liberation and feminist theologians of an immoral Father would be justified. Torrance finds no problem with the idea that

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<sup>752</sup> This critique flows throughout his book *Scottish Theology*. See also James Torrance, “The Incarnation and ‘Limited Atonement’,” *SBulEvTh* 2 (1984), 32-40; “The Covenant Concept of Scottish Theology and Politics and its Legacy,” *SJT* 34 (1981), 225-243; “Calvin and Puritanism in England and Scotland—Some Basic Concepts in the Development of ‘Federal Theology’,” in *Calvinus Reformator: His Contribution to Theology, Church and Society* (Institute for Reformational Studies; Potchefstroom U. for Christian Higher Education, 1982), 264-286; “Covenant or Contract?” 51-76; and Cass, *Christ Condemned in the Flesh*, chapter 2, for an excellent elaboration.

<sup>753</sup> Kevin Nixon Kennedy, *Union with Christ and the Extent of the Atonement in Calvin* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 40, 106, 151.

<sup>754</sup> *TDORC II*, 112; Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 32.

<sup>755</sup> *CDG*, 252-253.

<sup>756</sup> Molnar, “The Centrality of the Trinity in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance,” *Participatio* 1 (2009), 92.

Christ suffered on the cross, but views it not in terms of the Father punishing the Son. Rather, the cross is understood in terms of what took place in Christ as the incarnate Son of God the Father obediently and joyfully, in which he took upon himself, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the predicament of humanity.<sup>757</sup> Torrance even asserts that because the atonement is a “*joint act* of Christ and God, ... the blood of Christ shed on the Cross could be spoken of as ‘the blood of God’.”<sup>758</sup>

### Participation in the Life and Love of God

For Torrance, salvation is *grounded in* the Communing and Communal Being of the Triune God, whose perfection and fullness of Love “will not be confined within the Godhead but freely and lovingly moves outward toward others whom God creates for fellowship with himself so that they may share with him the very Communion of Love which is his own divine Life and Being.”<sup>759</sup> Salvation is also the *work of* the Triune God. Salvation is not only willed and initiated by the Triune God, but is also enacted and accomplished *pro nobis* by the Persons of the Triune God in their Unity-in-Distinction and Distinction-in-Unity. Finally, salvation is *oriented toward* the Triune God, because the final goal of salvation is ultimately communion with the Triune God.<sup>760</sup>

Among Torrance’s favourite terms in depicting our at-one-ment with God are our “sharing,” “joining” and “participation” in the inner life and love of the Triune God. These are relational terms, and there is no question that Torrance’s soteriology is relational. The phrase “relational soteriology,” however, is not strong enough to convey Torrance’s thoughts. Rather, the alternative “participation soteriology,” which resonates with participation theology that has gained prominence even in recent Calvin studies, is a better choice.<sup>761</sup> Participation theology is not new in the history of the Christian faith,

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<sup>757</sup> See *ST*, 18, 301-303; and James Torrance, “Contribution of McLeod Campbell,” particularly 304 on his critique of federal theology, which for him inverts the biblical order of the relationship between forgiveness and atonement, or love and satisfaction.

<sup>758</sup> *ST*, 171. In *CDG*, 252, Torrance adds: “The passion of Christ considered apart from the passion of the Father would be no more than the noblest martyrdom for it would be empty of ultimate divine validity.”

<sup>759</sup> *CDG*, 6; *TF*, 90-91.

<sup>760</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 101.

<sup>761</sup> Webster even suggests that Torrance presents theology “in a manner not wholly dissimilar from the way in which it is presented in contemporary theologies of participation,” in “T. F. Torrance,” 370. For Calvin’s participation theology, see particularly Mosser, “The Greatest Possible Blessing,” 36-57; Slater, “Salvation as Participation,” 39-58; Hart, “Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind,” 67-84; and Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God,” 169-184. See also Frans Jozef van Beeck, “Trinitarian Theology as Participation,” in *The Trinity*, 295-325.

but the representative traditions or movements will not be presented here (Instead, see Appendix I). Here, the focus is on Torrance's participation soteriology, trifurcated for the purpose of elucidation, but in reality and experience are inseparable. First, the concept of *mediated participation* comprehends chapters II, III and IV, and emphasizes union with the Son and communion of the Spirit so that humanity may become children of the Father. Secondly, the concept of *perichoretic participation* describes the nature and shape of what it means to "share[s] in [God's] own eternal Life and Love."<sup>762</sup> Finally, it is argued that humanity's participation in the Triune Life and Love is a genuine *human participation*.

### *Mediated Triune Participation*

Chapters II, III, and IV highlighted salvation as the work of the Three Persons of the Triune God. Torrance espouses a doctrine of appropriation in the evangelical Trinity, grounded in the Distinction-in-Unity and Unity-in-Distinction in the Trinity *in se*. But the unique agencies of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit should be understood in light of the one act and goal of the "mediation of reconciliation," in which "men and women are savingly reconciled to God by being taken up in and through Christ to share in the inner relations of God's own life and love."<sup>763</sup> In short, the mediating Act of the incarnate Son is *an Act within the Act* of the Triune God which culminates in humanity's reconciliation with God. The same is true with the Holy Spirit's mediating communion with us, whereby the Spirit enables us to participate in the Primordial Communion.

### Union with Christ through the Spirit to the Father

On the work of Christ, the concept of mediated participation is best portrayed in Torrance's view of the interpenetration of the hypostatic union and atoning union in Christ and the double movement of the mediation of reconciliation, *katabasis* and *anabasis*, in which the Son mediates the Father in the Holy Spirit to humanity in his incarnation and correspondingly mediates humanity to the Father in the Holy Spirit in his ascension. It is in this sense that Torrance first understands Christ as Mediator.<sup>764</sup> As in Calvin's participation in Christ, our union with Christ's humanity, grounded in his prior union with us in the incarnation, enables us to receive the benefits of Christ. But

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<sup>762</sup> *TP*, 2.

<sup>763</sup> *MC*, 64.

<sup>764</sup> "The essential nature of the Gospel message of reconciliation through the mediation of Christ," Torrance writes, is "reconciliation with the divine Trinity," in *ST*, 86, 87.

Torrance transcends Calvin because he argues that the benefits of Christ do not end in justification and sanctification, but ultimately in relationship with the Triune God. “It is not atonement that constitutes the goal and end of that integrated movement of reconciliation but union with God in and through Jesus Christ in whom our human nature is not only saved, healed and renewed but lifted up to participate in the very light, life and love of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>765</sup> Participation theology does not have union with Christ as its final goal; rather, union with Christ mediates to us union with the Triune God. The difference is perhaps found in Torrance’s emphasis on the fact that “the hypostatic union is grounded in, derived from and is continuously upheld by what is called the ‘consubstantial communion’ within the Trinity.”<sup>766</sup> Consequently, this implies that to be “in Christ” ultimately means to be in relationship with the Triune God.

The eternal communion of love in God overflows through Jesus Christ into our union with Christ and gathers us up to dwell with God and in God. This is another way of saying that the Incarnation, and the reconciliation that took place within it, fall within the life of God... for in Christ our human relations with God, far from being allowed to remain on merely external basis, are embraced within the Trinitarian relations of God’s own Being as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>767</sup>

#### Adoption as Sons of the Father through Christ in the Spirit

The Father, in virtue of his distinct *hypostasis* as the Father, is not sent into the world in the manner that we understand the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures nowhere depict the agency of the Father in the active sense in which the two other Persons engage with the world. The best summary of the role of the Father in the mediation of reconciliation is that, with some qualifications, the Father is the Mediated One, because his Love is the ground of the Election of the Son and the Communion-constituting activity of the Spirit in the salvific economy. Torrance quotes McLeod Campbell: “the love of God [is] the cause, and the atonement [is] the effect.”<sup>768</sup> Mediation has a starting point: the love of the Father.<sup>769</sup> Nevertheless, that the Father is the Mediated One does not mean that the Father is only passively involved in the mediation of reconciliation. In Torrance’s Athanasian formula “from the Father,

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<sup>765</sup> *MC*, 66.

<sup>766</sup> *MC*, 65.

<sup>767</sup> *MC*, 64; “Karl Barth,” *SJT* 22 (1969), 4.

<sup>768</sup> Campbell, *The Nature of Atonement*, 17; quoted in *ST*, 298.

<sup>769</sup> *CDG*, 238.

through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and to the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit,”<sup>770</sup> the phrases “*from* the Father” and “*to* the Father” should be regarded as the distinct and active mediating agencies of the Father in the reconciling economy. Remove or disregard these two phrases and the Trinitarian economy will collapse. The phrase “to the Father” is particularly noteworthy. The Father’s active Sending and Receiving enables us not only to enter into relationship with the Father as sons. Rather, they also enable our actual participation in the Familial Communion of the Triune God. In this sense, adoption could not be interpreted only as a two-way relationship between the Person of the Father and humanity. Rather, adoption refers to the dynamic relationship between humanity as brothers of Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with the loving and electing Father. Adoption is Trinitarian adoption. Put differently, adoption is another metaphor for participation in the Triune Communion. As Clark Pinnock writes, “God has not left us outside the circle of his life. We are invited inside the Trinity as joint heirs together with Christ. By the Spirit we cry ‘Abba’ together with the Son, as we are drawn into the divine filial relationship and begin to participate in God’s life.”<sup>771</sup>

#### Communion in the Spirit with the Father through Christ

The concept of mediated participation finds its clearest expression in the agency of the Communion-constituting Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is “the Bond of the Trinity,”<sup>772</sup> and is “the Communion of the Father and the Son in the Godhead,”<sup>773</sup> his distinct work in the reconciling economy is discernibly to enable human communion with the Triune God as well.<sup>774</sup> The Spirit accomplishes this on two levels. First, the Spirit’s communion enables us to be united with Christ so that we may both enjoy the benefits of Christ’s atoning work and be united in relationship with Christ as our Brother. The Holy Spirit mediates Jesus Christ to us and us to Jesus Christ.<sup>775</sup> As the “Agent of participation,” the Spirit enables us to participate in Christ’s own worship and knowledge of the Father.<sup>776</sup>

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<sup>770</sup> Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem*, 1:6, 9, 12, 14, 28, 3:5; 4:6 (NPNF 4); in *TRE*, 251; *TF*, 5.

<sup>771</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), 153.

<sup>772</sup> Deddo, “The Holy Spirit,” 86; *CDG*, 167.

<sup>773</sup> *CDG*, 167.

<sup>774</sup> *WCCCA*, 190-192.

<sup>775</sup> *TDORC II*, 9.

<sup>776</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 163.

The Holy Spirit who is the consubstantial Communion of the Father and the Son in the Trinity, is the Spirit through whom the Word was made flesh in the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the Person of the Son, but it is the same Spirit through whom we have union with Christ and partake of the communion between the Father and the Son and the Son and the Father.<sup>777</sup>

The last part of the quotation hints at the second level of the Spirit's Communion-constituting work, and is the main focus here: the mediating role of the Spirit in bringing us into the life and love of the Triune God. The Spirit's saving communion with us and our communion with the Spirit does not function as an ultimate end in itself. Rather, through the Spirit's communion, we are lifted up to share in the Triune Communion. "As the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in one another," Torrance writes, "so God is in us by the indwelling of the Spirit and by participation of the Spirit we are in God."<sup>778</sup> Again, this is related to the "from the Father... to the Father" economic formula. The Spirit comes from God and returns to God.<sup>779</sup> Torrance explains this double movement: "By coming into man the Holy Spirit opens him out to God,"<sup>780</sup> and when the Spirit returns to God, he "raises us up in Jesus to participate in the worship of heaven and in the eternal communion of the Holy Trinity."<sup>781</sup>

### *Perichoretic Triune Participation*

As argued above, all Three Persons of the Triune God, in their own distinct hypostatic agencies, have their part in the mediation of reconciliation. Also, the mediatorial work of each Person has its ultimate end in humanity's participation in the Triune Life. It can therefore be said that *mediated participation*, or reconciliation through the agencies of the Triune God, forms the ground of our actual *perichoretic participation*, or our inclusion, by grace, into the eternal Communion that the Triune God is. *Perichoretic participation* is derived from Torrance's thoughts that *perichoresis* is the highest possible semantic expression of the co-inherent Triune relations,<sup>782</sup> and is an eternal movement of Communion in which humanity is invited to participate.

[The Triune Persons] coinhere in one Another by virtue of their one Being for one Another and by virtue of the dynamic Communion which they constitute in their belonging to one Another. Hence in establishing communion with us

<sup>777</sup> GR, 180; "The Mission of the Church," *SJT* 19 (1966), 136.

<sup>778</sup> TRE, 232; TF, 208-9.

<sup>779</sup> TR, 248.

<sup>780</sup> TR, 238.

<sup>781</sup> TR, 150.

<sup>782</sup> CDG, 102-103.

through his Son and in his Spirit God wants us to participate in his living Communion which as Father, Son and Holy Spirit he eternally is.<sup>783</sup>

Torrance's theological corpus is replete with similar statements and arguments concerning our sharing in the Triune Communion. He does not, however, elaborate on the nature or shape of such a Trinitarian participation. Perhaps Torrance purposefully left this unarticulated for fear of abstract speculation, but to leave such a prominent aspect of his soteriology to mere indicative statements without further elucidation is regrettable, and seems un-Torrance-like, and opens him to broad interpretation. The work of Habets that argues for *theosis* as a hermeneutical linchpin in reading Torrance's soteriology, is perhaps the first attempt to explain the nature and shape of Torrance's participation theology. Habets' overall study is excellent, but his insistence that Torrance's soteriology should be understood in light of *theosis* is unwarranted, because although Torrance employs the concept in his theologizing, it does not occupy the exalted position in Torrance's theology that Habets ascribes to it. Instead, Torrance's Trinitarian participation soteriology could be better explained in light of the concept of *perichoresis*, coupled with his understanding of "relational space."

At one level, *perichoresis* is an ontological concept, for it expresses the tension that should be maintained between enhypostatic relations and hypostatic distinctions in the Triune Being of God. Thus, in its most developed meaning, *perichoresis* refers to the co-inherent relations or the mutual indwelling of the Triune Persons. On another level, and of primary interest here, *perichoresis* is a spatial concept. This is evident in *chora*, "space" or "room" or *chorein*, "to contain" or "to make room" as its etymological roots.<sup>784</sup> Thus, the eternal Triune perichoretic relation is involved in an eternal movement of mutual Space-giving and Space-receiving, corollary to each of the Persons' reciprocal Self-giving and Self-receiving in the Triune Life. The Father opens himself for the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Son opens himself for the Father and the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit opens himself for the Father and the Son. In other words, each of the Three Persons is Room-giving and Room-receiving at the same time. The Three Persons of the Trinity, Torrance writes, "wholly dwell in each other and who each have room fully for the others in the one God."<sup>785</sup>

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<sup>783</sup> CDG, 132-133.

<sup>784</sup> CDG, 102; TP, 141.

<sup>785</sup> STI, 16; Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, 87.

Our participation in the Life and Love of the Triune God could be said to follow the same shape, and is only made possible by the inherent Space-giving and Space-receiving nature of the Godhead. Torrance argues that the Triune relations must be thought of “in terms of ‘abiding’ and ‘indwelling’, in which each wholly rests in the other.” He adds: “This is the doctrine of *perichoresis*.”<sup>786</sup> Expressed using the concept of Love: “That God is Love means that he is the eternally loving One in himself who loves through himself, whose Love moves unceasingly within his eternal life,”<sup>787</sup> and it is “the perfection and fullness of Love that will not be confined within the Godhead but freely and lovingly moves outward toward others whom God creates for fellowship with himself so that they may share with him the very Communion of Love which is his own divine Life and Being.”<sup>788</sup> God’s Being is Being-for-*Others* and Being-for-*others*. God’s life and love allows beings-essentially-created-for-the-purpose-of-fellowship to participate. This can be called *perichoretic participation*.

Torrance’s relational view of space sheds more light in understanding *perichoretic participation*. Our entry into the Divine Space is not an intrusion into the Divine Life. Contrary to the static receptacle views held by Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, the Christian view of “space” is Subject-oriented. “Space,” Torrance writes, “is a predicate of the Occupant.”<sup>789</sup> This means that it is God himself who creates what we call “space,” the arena of God’s gracious Communion-creating activity. As such, the Newtonian and Kantian view of space as a transcendental that limits the interaction between God and the world should be abandoned, for God, as the author of space, could not be confined both within himself and by our human categories. In God, space “is a sort of differential concept that is essentially open-ended.”<sup>790</sup> To put it more vividly, the Divine Space, or the arena of God’s dynamic Communion of Love, is essentially open to creatures. Through the creative and salvific activity of the Triune God, creatures are embraced in the perichoretic Communion that God is.

Furthermore, perichoretic participation is only possible from above, that is, from the side of God. “Mere creatures are unable to make ‘room’ for God in their natures.”<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>786</sup> *DM*, 367.

<sup>787</sup> *CDG*, 5.

<sup>788</sup> *CDG*, 6.

<sup>789</sup> *DM*, 366. See Torrance’s larger discussion of the early father’s struggle with cultural-philosophical spatial concepts in “The Greek Conception of Space in the Background of Early Christian Theology,” *Ekklesia kai Theologia* 11 (1992), reprinted in *DM*, 289-342.

<sup>790</sup> *DM*, 371.

<sup>791</sup> *DM*, 366.

It is only because God's Being is Being-for-Others that our participation in God is made possible. But this participation is also neither automatic nor could be interpreted in a mechanistic necessitarian manner. To make the logical connection between God's open Being and our participation in God's Life and Love is something that Torrance would immediately reject. Thus, Torrance's appropriation of *perichoresis* in his Trinitarian soteriology differs from Moltmann's *pericherotic* panentheism, which is rigid and deterministic, in that God and creation cannot but be in perichoretic relation. For Moltmann, because God's nature and love "is a self-evident, unquestionable 'overflowing of goodness' which is therefore *never open to choice at any time*,"<sup>792</sup> God *must* be in an eternal relation with creation. Creation, too, cannot escape this perichoretic oneness with God. Torrance, however, understands humanity's perichoretic participation in the Triune Life and Love as completely gratuitous. God *elects* and humanity *participates* freely and only by grace. Perhaps the distinguishing factor between Moltmann and Torrance is the latter's emphasis on *mediated participation*. For instance, in elaborating the mediating agency of Jesus Christ, Torrance writes: "Now when the Son, who abides in the Father in that way [i.e. mutual indwelling] became incarnate, He became for us the 'place' where the Father is to be known and believed, for He is the *topos* or *locus* where God is found."<sup>793</sup> In short, participation in the life and love of God is through mediation. Humanity participates in the perichoretic communion of the Trinity only when we participate in the Son's internal relationship with the Father in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

#### *Human Participation: Theosis and Theopoiesis*

The revival of interest in Eastern theology equally ushered in renewed interest in the doctrine of *theosis*, neglected for centuries in Western theology due to the categories it employed—categories that are incomprehensible and misunderstood in Western theology. Equally disturbing are the translations "divinisation" and "deification" which, when interpreted using Aristotelian substantial philosophy rather than through the Triune mediation of reconciliation, create theological problems. Such was the case for Aquinas' doctrine of participation modelled on Neo-Platonic philosophy, and adopted in contemporary theology by Radical Orthodoxy. Torrance quotes Georges Florovsky:

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<sup>792</sup> Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 55; quoted in Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 84.

<sup>793</sup> *STI*, 16.

The term *theosis* is indeed embarrassing, if we would think of it in “ontological categories.” Indeed, man simply cannot become “god.” But the Fathers were thinking in “personal” terms, and the mystery of personal communion was involved at this point. Theosis means a personal encounter. It is the ultimate intercourse with God, in which the whole of human existence is, as it were, permeated by the Divine Presence.<sup>794</sup>

*Theosis*, therefore, is primarily a relational concept. Torrance himself is defensive of his use of the term: “Let us not quarrel about the word *theosis*,” he writes, “offensive though it may be to us, but follow its intention.”<sup>795</sup> He makes clear that in his use of the term, he does not employ it as “divinization,” but as the grace of God in redeeming human weakness and allowing us to commune with Him in his glory.<sup>796</sup> Torrance interprets *theosis* in its interconnected two-fold significance. First, *theosis* refers to “the emancipation of man from imprisonment in himself,” the alienation from God and self-centredness which is sin.<sup>797</sup> Secondly and consequently, “*theosis* describes man’s involvement in such a mighty act of God upon him that he is raised up to find the true centre of his existence not in himself but in [the] Holy God.”<sup>798</sup>

A systematic study of Torrance’s appropriation of *theosis* in his soteriology was undertaken by Habets in his book *Theosis*. Although Habets admits that *theosis* is not the central point of Torrance’s dogmatics, he argues that the concept “is of fundamental importance” in Torrance’s soteriology in particular, and “is a necessary crucial integrating theme within his overall theological *oeuvre*” in general.<sup>799</sup> Based on this conclusion, in an almost apologetic manner, the book thus shows how *theosis* can be a justifiable hermeneutical key in a presentation of Torrance’s soteriology. Habets admits that he undertakes his project with an assumption that Torrance employs “conceptual equivalents” of *theosis* in his writings, such as “union, communion, participation, transcendental determination, reordering, humanising, personalising and atoning exchange.”<sup>800</sup> Although Habets failed to represent the scientific character of Torrance’s soteriology by placing cosmological and anthropological discussions as the basis and background of his presentation of Torrance’s soteriology, Habets’ appropriation of the

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<sup>794</sup> CDG, 96; quoting Georges Florovsky, “St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers,” in *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Collected Works, vol. 2; Belmont: Nordland, 1972), 115.

<sup>795</sup> TR, 243.

<sup>796</sup> TR, 243.

<sup>797</sup> TR, 244.

<sup>798</sup> TR, 243.

<sup>799</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 16.

<sup>800</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 15.

incarnate Son's and the Holy Spirit's agencies in bringing humanity into relationship with the Triune God are noteworthy. It serves to reinforce the argument for mediated participation in the Triune Life and Love. In Torrance's words: God, "through the Son and in the Spirit lifts us up to the level of participation in God where we are opened out for union and communion with him far beyond the limits of our creaturely existence – which is another way of describing *theosis*."<sup>801</sup> Even the Athanasian term *theopoiesis*, which essentially refers to our adoption as sons and daughters of God by grace,<sup>802</sup> is indubitably communal, for it refers to "the staggering act of God in which God gives himself to us and *adopts us* into the communion of his divine life and love through Jesus Christ and in his one Spirit."<sup>803</sup>

In Torrance's theology, the primary significance of *theosis* is not that it affirms (or restates) his Trinitarian participation soteriology. Rather, negatively, Torrance rejects the interpretation of *theosis* in the Thomist and Radical Orthodoxy tradition as substantial metamorphosis or absorption into one divine *esse* that negates all human characteristics. Positively, grounded in the saving agency of the Son from the incarnation to his ascension in his resurrected body and the Spirit's affirmation of creatures' otherness, *theosis* in Torrance means the personalization and humanization of humanity.<sup>804</sup> *Theosis* or *theopoiesis* is not divinization or deification but the adaptation of humanity in our contingent nature for knowledge of and fellowship with the Triune God.<sup>805</sup>

The Athanasian doctrine of *theopoiesis* (or *theosis*) through the Spirit, in which we are sanctified, renewed and enlightened through adoption in the Incarnate Son to be sons of God, does not import any inner deification of our human nature, but the assuming of us into the sphere of the direct and immediate activity of God himself in such a way that our human being is brought to its *teleiosis* in relation to the Creator and we find our real life hid with Christ in God.<sup>806</sup>

Our participation in the Communion of the Triune God is a *human participation*, and could not be anything other. Just as the resurrected human body of Christ has ascended and is in the presence of the Father in the Holy Spirit, so our fellowship with the Triune

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<sup>801</sup> *TP*, 87.

<sup>802</sup> *TRE*, 230-231.

<sup>803</sup> *MC*, 64.

<sup>804</sup> Torrance refers both to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as Personalizing Persons, while humanity is referred to as personalized persons. See *TR*, 243; *MC*, 67-72; *TF*, 188, 250; *GR*, 189. In other places, Torrance just refers to God as a whole as effecting a personalizing ministry. See *RST*, 173-374; *CDG*, 126, 206; "Soul and Person," 116; and Colyer, *How to Read*, 178.

<sup>805</sup> Torrance, "Soul and Person," 113.

<sup>806</sup> *DM*, 198; *TRE*, 234.

God is bodily, tangible and real. This is only possible, Torrance argues, because of the personal power of God, which is “not power that overrules the creature but sustains the creature, ... power therefore that sustains the relation and freedom of the creature before God, for it is always creative, and in relation to his human creatures always personalizing and humanising power.”<sup>807</sup>

### **Communion with the Triune God in the Church**

Torrance’s consistent argument that the Trinity is “the ground and grammar of Christian theology,” and therefore the foundational element of all doctrinal formulations, is reflected in his ecclesiology. As to the specific relationship between the Church and the Trinity, three categories merit discussion: (1) the Church is grounded in the Trinity, (2) the Church images the Triune Communion, and (3) the Church as a communion within Communion.

Firstly, as the Archbishop Simon of Ryazan and Kasimov writes, “the Holy Trinity is the Beginning and Archetype of the life of the Church, as well as the ultimate goal of all its spiritual aspirations.”<sup>808</sup> Torrance is critical of churches that turn into social institutions trying to be gods, and thus, rather than serving God, oppose him.<sup>809</sup> He argues that the Church’s being is rooted in the Being of God, and does not have any independent existence.<sup>810</sup> More elaborately, Torrance relates both the being and mission of the Church to the Head of the Body, Jesus Christ, and to the Communion-constituting Holy Spirit. Torrance agrees with Zizioulas’ suggestion that “the Church is the outcome of the Father’s will, a will he shares with the Son and the Holy Spirit, and which is realized through the economy in which each of the persons of God is engaged.”<sup>811</sup> Torrance’s long history of ecumenical endeavours and his critical stance

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<sup>807</sup> *CDG*, 206. This is what Bobrinskoy calls the *reciprocal* element of our participation in the divine life, in *The Mystery of the Trinity*, 61.

<sup>808</sup> *TDORC II*, 202.

<sup>809</sup> See “Babylon – Symbol of Worldly Power,” *LW* (December 1988), 16-17; *AT*, 138-148. Included here is Torrance’s critique of ecclesiologies centred on the bishop, rather than on Christ, the Sole Head of the Body. See *DGAF*, 71-74. Torrance is referring particularly to the Church of England (see *CAC I*, 48-68), the Roman Catholic Church, and even without mentioning his name, Zizioulas (see *Being as Communion*, 136-137, 152-153, and *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 145-148). See also Gunton’s critique in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 57-60.

<sup>810</sup> Torrance, “The Foundation of the Church: Union with Christ through the Spirit,” *SJT* 16 (1963), reprinted in *TR*, 192, 204-205.

<sup>811</sup> Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 132, 149-150. Roland Walls argues that this is one of the greatest contributions of Zizioulas to ecclesiology, in “The Church: A Communion of Persons,” in *Christ in Our Place*, 103. See also Yves Congar’s view of the church in the Trinity in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2: *Lord and Giver of Life* (trans. David Smith; New York: Seabury, 1983), 5-14.

against his own ecclesiastical tradition also have influenced his argument for grounding ecclesiology into the doctrine of the Trinity. This is one of the conclusions in both volumes of *The Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*.<sup>812</sup>

Secondly, inasmuch as the Communion of Love is the source of the church's life, the communion in the Church also images the Triune Communion. Torrance's emphasis here is primarily on the unity in the church, which, Timiadis writes, reflects "the Trinity's inner love, like a mirror-image."<sup>813</sup> Gunton, too, following both Zizioulas and Torrance, refers to the church as "a living echo of the communion that God is in eternity."<sup>814</sup> However, this does not imply a direct analogy between the Trinity and the church. Gunton's concern about inferring logical and analogical deductions between the being of the church and the being of God is also the reason why Torrance himself did not deal too much with the idea of the church mirroring relation to the Triune God.<sup>815</sup> In places where this idea surfaces, it is usually qualified by the assertion that the Church is grounded in the Being and Act of God. For instance, in *Reality and Scientific Theology*, where Torrance deals with personhood in general, he writes: "What images the Trinity is our interpersonal structure, and not least the interrelations of love which reflect the fact that God is Love in the consubstantial Communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, although in the nature of the case our inter-personal relations of love have properly to be understood from the Communion of Love in God which is both their source and their goal."<sup>816</sup> This "profound unity arises ultimately from the Holy Trinity."<sup>817</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> *TDORC I*, 121-156.

<sup>813</sup> *TDORC I*, 131.

<sup>814</sup> Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 198, 200.

<sup>815</sup> For critiques of this idea, see Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000), 432-445; Mark Husbards, "The Trinity is Not Our Social Program: Volf, Gregory of Nyssa and Barth," in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church*, 120-141; Kathryn Tanner, "Trinity," in *Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (ed. William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Scott; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 328-329; Michael C. Rea, "Relative Identity and the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Philosophia Christi* 5 (2003), 431-445; Kelly James Clark, "Trinity or Tritheism," *RelS* 32 (1996), 463-476; and Brian Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," in *The Trinity*, 203-249. For those who strongly adhere to this idea, particularly in the so-called "social Trinity," see Cornelius Platinga, Jr.'s "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 21-47, and David Brown, "Trinitarian Personhood and Individuality," 48-78, in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*; "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," *Thomist* 50 (1986), 325-352; LaCugna, "The Trinity," 11; Miroslav Volf, "'The Trinity is Our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *MTh* 14 (1998), 405-423; and Volf's book *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Roland Walls encapsulates the whole principle operating in social Trinitarians in "The Church: A Communion of Persons," in *Christ in Our Place*, 109: "God created the human race to be a communion of persons 'in his image' so that they might reflect the glory of the Three in One."

<sup>816</sup> *RST*, 178; *TDORC II*, 78, 83. See also James Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in our Contemporary Situation," in *The Forgotten Trinity*, vol. 3, 14-15.

<sup>817</sup> *TF*, 270.

Finally, precisely because the source and goal of the Church are in the eternal love of God, which freely and graciously overflows in creation and redemption, the church could be considered a communion of people within the Communion of God. Torrance explains this by referring to the vertical and horizontal relations in the Church.

Through God's self-communication to us within the personal structures of our human being we are drawn into the "vertical" relation of the incarnate Son on earth to the heavenly Father, and thereby share in the relation of mutual knowing and loving between the Father and the Son. At the same time God communicates himself to us in another act by pouring out upon us the Spirit of the Father and of the Son in such a way that there is set up on the "horizontal" level within our social or interpersonal existence a communion of love as a created counterpart or reflection of the trinitarian Communion of Love within the Life of God... Through the Communion of the Holy Spirit we are given to share in a meeting with God with himself within the structured relations of our personal and social being and are thereby enfolded within the divine Self-Communion of the Holy Trinity.<sup>818</sup>

This illustrates that although it is true that the horizontal interpersonal communion in the Church mirrors the Triune Communion, it is clear that for Torrance, this mirroring function does not constitute the *telos* of the Church. As in Kathryn Tanner's arguments, a Trinitarian ecclesiology does not end with merely human social functions, but rather, "we should seek to understand what it means to participate in the fellowship of the triune God."<sup>819</sup> This is proper because the true being of the Church is not found in its horizontal relation, but primarily in its vertical relation with the Triune God. "The Church is truly Church in so far as it dwells in the Holy Trinity,"<sup>820</sup> and "it is only through vertical participation in Christ that the Church is horizontally a communion of love, a fellowship of reconciliation, a community of the redeemed."<sup>821</sup> Thus, in Torrance, the Church is a communion within Communion, "*ecclesiola in Ecclesia*". This is a vital element in ecclesiology, because it prevents the Church, through the Holy Spirit, "from remaining content with its own fellowship."<sup>822</sup>

To be in the Church essentially means to be in the Life and Love and Communion of the Triune God. Torrance thinks that in participating in Christ in his Body, there transpires "a soteriological and ontological unification of people in whose

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<sup>818</sup> *RST*, 186-187.

<sup>819</sup> Tanner, "Trinity," 16.

<sup>820</sup> *TF*, 268; Moltmann, "Perichoresis," 121. In *APWC*, 373, Torrance writes, "The term communion or *koinonia* applied to the church refers primarily to our participation through the Spirit in Jesus Christ and therefore in the holy Trinity."

<sup>821</sup> *CAC I*, 109.

<sup>822</sup> Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 88.

midst God himself dwells through the presence of his Spirit.”<sup>823</sup> As God dwells in the Church, we also dwell in God. In more Eastern formulation, Timiadis argues that the church “is the mystical ladder on which man ascends and God descends, so that a real ascent and descent take place, resulting in the blessed meeting of Creator and creature.”<sup>824</sup> The way in which the church becomes the avenue where humanity participates in the Communion of the triune God – as consistently stressed by Torrance’s argument for mediated participation in the Triune Life – is in the Son and in the Spirit.<sup>825</sup> The Church, therefore, performs the function of secondary mediatorial role in our participation in the Triune God, but only because the Church is the Body of Christ and the Communion of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, although reference to Christ as the Head of the Body abounds, the Communion-constituting agency of the Holy Spirit seems to take primacy in this discussion. In *Trinitarian Faith*, Torrance writes that “the church to be *in the Spirit* in an objective and ontological sense, is to be *in God*.”<sup>826</sup> Later on, he then refers to the church as a “divine dimension in the world” and “the direct fruit of God’s Holy Spirit.”<sup>827</sup>

### **Possible Objections and Critiques to Creaturely Communion with the Triune God**

Torrance’s high optimism is evident in his view that salvation is ultimately humanity’s participation in the Triune Life, Love and Communion through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church – here and now. This soteriological vision is not grounded in humanity’s achievement or capability. It is actually quite the opposite. Torrance’s optimism is grounded in the power and love of the Triune God as revealed in the saving economy to redeem and reconcile hopeless, depraved, and fallen humanity. Torrance’s Trinitarian soteriology as humanity’s participation in the eternal Life of the Triune God, can, however, be critiqued from a few perspectives.

#### *A Cosmonistic or Uniform Communion*

Succinctly, the ultimate *telos* of human salvation as participation in the Communion of the Triune God could be mistakenly interpreted to imply humanity’s absorption into the

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<sup>823</sup> *TF*, 254; Colyer, *How to Read*, 219-220.

<sup>824</sup> *TDORC I*, 44. Even the traditional marks of the Church, *una, sancta, catholica, apostolica*, in relation to ecumenism, should be understood in light of “the sanctification of the Church through and in the Spirit whereby it participates in the eternal life of the Triune God” (*TRE*, 17).

<sup>825</sup> *TF*, 274-275.

<sup>826</sup> *TF*, 251.

<sup>827</sup> *TF*, 254.

Life and Light of God at the cost of human individuality (weak form), or loss-of-being through substantial re-absorption into a primordial mass of Substance (strong form). The participation theologies of Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy are susceptible to the strong form, although the weak form could also be implied. Because their cosmology facilitates Neo-Platonic emanation philosophy, their teleological vision for gradated existents could not be other than the gradual return of borrowed essence to their source of Being.<sup>828</sup> This is what we mean by a “cosmonistic communion,” or that persons would disappear in “one vast ocean of being.”<sup>829</sup> Torrance’s Trinitarian soteriology is not susceptible to this critique. His appropriation of creation *ex nihilo*, and rejection of both *analogia entis* and vestigial anthropology are sufficient safeguards against this substantialist absorption. Therefore, even though, as Groppe writes, “we exist in a being-from and being-toward God and as such we have an ontological relation to eternity,”<sup>830</sup> this should be understood primarily in relational and not essential terms. Our relation to the Triune God is not a partitive sharing, but a relational sharing.<sup>831</sup>

The question, however, is whether Torrance’s soteriology possesses the propensity towards the weak form: that participation in the Triune Life implies the loss of human identity. Is there, in Gunton’s words, “the loss of the mansidedness of our humanity in the undifferentiated unity of the whole”<sup>832</sup> in Torrance’s soteriological vision? Torrance does not explicitly deal with this problem in his writings, but his position is discernible. In fact, it is similar to adherents of social Trinitarianism who ground their defense in the eternal hypostatic distinctions among the Persons of the Trinity in the Triune perichoretic Communion.<sup>833</sup> The important point here is that *personal distinction* is a necessary ingredient of *onto-relation*, because only persons who are different from one another can establish a relationship of intimacy, mutual

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<sup>828</sup> O’Donoghue, “Creation and Participation,” in *Creation, Christ and Culture*, 136-138. This seems to be the case for ideas of participation in the Triune God understood in and resulting in panentheistic cosmologies and soteriologies, such as Moltmann’s unqualified use of *perichoresis*. Graham Buxton’s *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry: Imaging the Perichoretic God* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), and Fiddes’ *Participating in God* ultimately fall into this category, which Fiddes openly admits (p.292).

<sup>829</sup> Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 87.

<sup>830</sup> Groppe, “LaCugna’s Contribution to Trinitarian Theology,” 752-753.

<sup>831</sup> *TF*, 53; O’Donoghue, “Creation and Participation,” 138. Interestingly, Torrance detected and combated this way of thinking in Scottish theology during his lifetime, referring to this thinking as “‘A Dark Whirlpool of Error’ on the Scottish Identity” in *LW* (July 1982), 18-19.

<sup>832</sup> Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 86.

<sup>833</sup> Volf, “The Trinity is Our Social Program,” 407-411; *After Our Image*, 87, 182-183.

surrender and love that ground a communion and a community.<sup>834</sup> Thus, in communion, there happens “a new and paradoxical conception of united separation and separated unity,”<sup>835</sup> or a “personological unity.”<sup>836</sup> The mediation of Christ and the Holy Spirit play important roles here as well. Just as Christ as truly human in his resurrected body communes with the Father, so does and will humanity commune with God in our resurrected bodies, distinct from God and from other fellow human beings.<sup>837</sup> Also, because the Spirit enables us to recognize the utter Godness of God in our communion with Him, our finitude as contingent created existents, along with our finite consciousness are retained.<sup>838</sup>

### *Intermingling of Uncreated and Created Realities*

In general, the relationship between created and Uncreated realities is an issue that both philosophers-metaphysicians and theologians are concerned with, although their fundamental concerns and responses diverge. At the basic level, metaphysicians would immediately dismiss the idea of *personal* relationship between the two. This attitude is portrayed by Arius, who thought that the only relation between Uncreated and created realities is that of separation, or at best, subordination. This, of course, is grounded in Greek dualism, where *personal* relation between entities of the *kosmos noetos* and *kosmos aisthetos* is inconceivable.<sup>839</sup> In contrast to philosophy, possibility is presupposed in theology, and it could be said that the whole point of theology is to articulate the personal relationship that exists between God and the world.

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<sup>834</sup> Boff, *Holy Trinity*, 57. As Ellen K. Wondra also argues, elements of asymmetry are present in mutual relationships in “Participating Persons: Reciprocity and Asymmetry,” *AngThR* 86 (2004), 57-73.

<sup>835</sup> Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 94.

<sup>836</sup> Smail, *The Giving Gift*, 187.

<sup>837</sup> *WCCCA*, 153-154.

<sup>838</sup> *TR*, 242-245. Some theologians use the distinctions and “plurality” of Persons in the Trinity as the ground to vindicate religious pluralism, or to say that pluralism is inherent, essential and primordial in reality. This is not a major element in my research, but suffice it to say that these approaches dangerously appropriate the doctrine of the Trinity to absurd proportions. See for instance Keith E. Johnson, “Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Hold the Key to a Christian Theology of Religions?,” in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church*, 142-160; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Does the Trinity Belong in a Theology of Religions? On Angling in the Rubicon and the ‘Identity’ of God,” in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 41-71. Gunton’s response to this agenda is sufficient: “The doctrine of the Trinity is concerned with unity in plurality, not an absolute pluralism,” in “The Trinity, Natural Theology and a Theology of Nature,” 89. See also Trevor Hart, “Karl Barth, the Trinity, and Pluralism,” in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 124-142. For another argument against using Trinitarian concepts wrongly, see Randall E. Otto, “The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology,” *SJT* 54 (2001), 366-384.

<sup>839</sup> *CTSC*, 22-24. Thus, as Alan Torrance writes, what was missing from Arius was God himself active in the world in Christ, in “Being of One Substance with the Father,” 53.

Torrance's theology embodies a fundamental rejection of cosmological and epistemological dualisms.<sup>840</sup> In the relationship between God and creatures, Torrance admits "a mutual, but not a symmetrical, relation of detachment,"<sup>841</sup> but only in order to safeguard the distinction between "the Godness of God" and "the naturalness of nature."<sup>842</sup> His overall position concerning the relationship between God and creature is optimistic, not because of inherent creaturely potentiality or capacity, but because of God's gracious Act of Self-giving.

The distinction between Grace and nature must not be interpreted as a dichotomy, as if there were only a deistic relation between the creature and the Creator. There is a relation of being between the creature and the Creator immediately maintained by the Creator, but it is the irreversible relation of Grace which He freely posits and preserves in love. It is a Creator-creature relation which God establishes freely out of pure Grace; as such it is neither explainable from the side of the creature nor logically definable, and therefore is not reversible.<sup>843</sup>

Thus, it could be concluded that concerns about the possibility of creaturely communion with the Divine are propelled by philosophical presuppositions, rather than thinking out of the "logic of grace."<sup>844</sup> In short, impossibility is perceivable only if anthropocentric considerations (i.e. finite limitations) form the underlying and controlling factor. But if the controlling foundation is predicated in the dynamic being of God, then Creator-creature relationship is essentially not impossible at all. In the first place, God's Being is Being-for-others – "others" understood as every being that is not God. In the words of Jenson, God's essential Being is "roomy."<sup>845</sup> In soteriology, therefore, the most important considerations are the active and dynamic Being of God and the mediation of reconciliation in Christ and the Holy Spirit. As Gunton discerned, "If God and the world are ontologically other, some account of their relation – some theology of *mediation* – is indispensable."<sup>846</sup> Through the incarnation of the Son in the Spirit, Torrance writes, "God in himself is no longer closed to us, but has opened

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<sup>840</sup> Lee argues that in Torrance, dualism is a "perpetual foe," in *Living in Union*, 11-17; see also *DM*, 181; and Gunton, "Being and Person," 117-118. Still, Morrison argues that Torrance never really overcame dualism in his theology because of his indebtedness to Kierkegaard and Barth, in *Knowledge of the Self-revealing God*, xiii, 294-319, 359-361.

<sup>841</sup> *TCFK*, 26.

<sup>842</sup> *TS*, 66.

<sup>843</sup> *TS*, 66; *TR*, 64-65.

<sup>844</sup> *TS*, 214-222.

<sup>845</sup> Jenson, "Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation," in *The Doctrine of Creation* (ed. Colin E. Gunton; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 27. Earlier, on page 24, Jenson writes: "for God to create is for him to open place in his triune life for others than the three whose mutual life he is. John of Damascus again: 'God is... his own place.' In that place, he *makes room*, and that act is the event of creation."

<sup>846</sup> Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 93; *TCFK*, 29.

himself” so that “we may now enter into personal communion with God without being limited by our creaturely incapacities or being obstructed by our alienation.”<sup>847</sup>

### *Economic versus Essential Communion*

For Torrance, the indwelling participation of humanity in the Communion of the Triune God is not only metaphorical or psychological, but real.<sup>848</sup> Because the coming of God in Christ and the Holy Spirit is a genuine *parousia*, the presence of God in space and time, this reciprocally enables us to share in God’s Communion.<sup>849</sup> Torrance repudiates the invented concepts of uncreated grace, created grace, and “means of grace” whereby it is thought that God does not directly or personally act with us without a created medium, often called “grace.”<sup>850</sup> He is also suspicious of the Eastern distinction between ineffable divine essence and uncreated energies.<sup>851</sup> The reason is that this distinction undermines genuine and intimate contact with God,<sup>852</sup> and has “the effect of restricting knowledge of God to his divine energies, and ruling out any real access to knowledge of God in the intrinsic relations of his eternal triune being.”<sup>853</sup>

Consequential to this held distinction is the view, particularly expressed by Lossky, that *theosis* is participation only in the energies of God.<sup>854</sup> “Union with the Trinity,” Timiadis writes, “means union with the divine energies not the divine essence. We do not become the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit; rather we share so intimately in their life-creating energies that we are joined to them.”<sup>855</sup> On the contrary,

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<sup>847</sup> *TF*, 67. The fact that the incarnation of the Son of God in the world falls within and not without the inner life of God, Torrance argues, teaches us about both the openness of God for others and the openness of the world for God (in *TP*, 101). The question of possibility and impossibility of communion with God is tied to the question of the incarnation. See the debates in John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM, 1977); M. D. Goulder, ed., *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), and Oskar Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?* (trans. Trygve R. Skarsten; St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1991).

<sup>848</sup> Or even allegorical, which happens when dualisms are not overcome. See *DM*, 19.

<sup>849</sup> *CAC II*, 157; *TRE*, 130-131. In “Deposit of Faith,” 6, Torrance speaks about “the *oikonomia* of the divine *ousia*.” Elsewhere, Torrance explains, “in God, *logos* and *pneuma* are not separated from *ousia* and *physis* or therefore from *aletheia*,” in *TFCK*, 304. In *DM*, 182, Torrance argues that the *ousia* of God should be interpreted as both *being* and *presence*: presence in being and being in activity.

<sup>850</sup> Sanders, “The Trinity,” 50. See *TR*, chapter 10 on Torrance’s critique of both Roman Catholic and Protestant views of grace.

<sup>851</sup> One of the arguments of Eastern theologians against the *filioque*, for instance, is grounded in this distinction. See Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 71-73. Palamas asserts that the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son is only at the level of the divine energies, not essence. See Heron, “The *Filioque* Clause,” in *One God in Trinity*, 72. On page 74, Heron adds that this distinction in general is dubious.

<sup>852</sup> Sanders, “The Trinity,” 49.

<sup>853</sup> *TF*, 336. See also Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 126-127.

<sup>854</sup> Papanikolaou, “Divine Energies or Personhood: Vladimir Lossky and John Zizioulas on Conceiving the Transcendent and Immanent God,” *MTh* 19 (2003), 358.

<sup>855</sup> *TDORC I*, 128. See also Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity*, 73-76.

for Torrance, God's *energeia* inheres in Being, so that God's Being is in his Act and his Act is in his Being. To separate the two in our knowledge of God means knowing God's Being apart from his Act or knowing his Act behind his Being.<sup>856</sup> To separate the two in God's salvific economy implies a loss of genuine relationship between God and humanity. In fact, reconciliation is diluted to reconciliation only with the Act of God. The economic Trinity is all that there is in both the doctrines of the Trinity and salvation. Against this, Torrance argues that our participation in the Triune God is a sharing "in the inner communion of his divine Being so that we are given to share in the mutual knowing of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit in the immanent relations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."<sup>857</sup> For Torrance, the key to the oneness of God's Act and Being and our actual participation is the *homoousios*.<sup>858</sup>

### *Degrees of Participation in God?*

A serious question relating to Torrance's view of humanity's participation in the Triune Communion concerns the element of temporality, or more precisely, the origin and event of participation. Ironically, confusion emerges from Torrance's understanding of relational space and his view of the oneness between the Act and Being of God. Put plainly, it appears that in Torrance, there are several levels or moments of participation in God, and their relation is not articulated. For example, because Torrance regards space as the sphere of God's activity, it implies that by default, created existence is already embraced in God's Life and Love. He writes: "God is not contained by anything but rather that He contains the entire universe, not in the manner of a bodily container, but by His power."<sup>859</sup> Contingent creaturely being only finds its existence within the sphere of God's creative and sustaining activity.<sup>860</sup> Outside of God's activity is *nihil*, nothingness, and therefore non-being. Could we then say that there is a pre-salvific participation in God? The fact that Torrance rejects the idea that God "deistically abandon[s] what he has brought into existence" could imply that God and creaturely existence are in an unbroken relationship in the first place.<sup>861</sup> Could this be a pre-incarnation, pre-atonement and pre-Pentecost participation in the Triune Life and Love?

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<sup>856</sup> *GGT*, 151-153.

<sup>857</sup> *GGT*, 154.

<sup>858</sup> *MC*, 111; *IESNCC*, xx.

<sup>859</sup> *STI*, 11.

<sup>860</sup> *CDG*, 218.

<sup>861</sup> *CDG*, 218.

Furthermore, when Torrance discusses our participation in the Triune God through the incarnate Son and the communion of the Holy Spirit, whereby we share in the Life and Love of God in his inner Being, could this be different from the first level presented above? The problem is heightened by Torrance's view that the incarnation and Pentecost are *new* to God. We can add that these events also have their temporal and spatial beginning, and thus are *new* to creation. Torrance explains that the incarnation and Pentecost are "decisive" moments in the economy of salvation, because God deals with humanity at a whole new personal level.<sup>862</sup> But then this would seem to mean that there are also degrees of God's *personal* relation with the created order. God is already involved personally in creation and providence, so is there a new and higher level of personal relation inaugurated by the incarnation and Pentecost that is distinct from the first?<sup>863</sup> Moreover, the issue becomes more complicated by the fact that our creaturely body is not in its incorruptible form yet. If this is added to the equation, could there be another level of participation in the Triune Communion? Unfortunately, Torrance does not deal with these questions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Tityu Koev writes that there are three fundamental truths in Trinitarian theology. These are (1) that God is trihypostatic: *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*, (2) that each of the three Persons possesses personal, hypostatic quality, and (3) that creation and redemption are the works of these Three Persons.<sup>864</sup> It is fair to say that Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology, presented in this chapter, encompasses all these three considerations. Moreover, if, as Barth asserted, the doctrine of the Trinity distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian,<sup>865</sup> could we not also add that salvation understood and formulated in light of the doctrine of the Trinity is the exclusive Christian understanding of soteriology? If so, then Torrance's accomplishment in his Trinitarian soteriology cannot be overrated. As demonstrated in this chapter, Torrance's

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<sup>862</sup> Torrance, "Goodness and Dignity of Man," 314-322.

<sup>863</sup> The whole issue is recognized by Torrance in *CDG*, 238, but he did not offer any elaboration: "The transcendent Spirit of God had always been actively present in the world immanently sustaining its continuing relation to God the creator, but what happened at Pentecost manifested a change not only in the form of his activity but in the mode of his immanence which is difficult for us to conceive or express."

<sup>864</sup> *TDORC II*, 62.

<sup>865</sup> Hart, "Karl Barth, the Trinity and Pluralism," 137.

soteriology consistently makes the doctrine of the Trinity both the source and goal of human salvation.

The doctrine of the Trinity, in Torrance's thought, is not just concerned with the Being of God as such, but is concerned with the Being of God in relation to others: "The doctrine of the Trinity gives expression to the fact that through his self-revelation in the incarnation God has opened himself to us in such a way that we may know him in the inner relations of his divine Being and have communion with him in his divine life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."<sup>866</sup> Because God's Triune Being (or Nature) is a dynamic Communion of Love, he does not remain closed to us but has opened up his Being both for knowledge and communion.<sup>867</sup> As Moltmann asserts, the Trinity is an "open Trinity. It is open for its own sending... It is open for men and for all creation. The life of God within the Trinity cannot be conceived of as a closed circle... [and] is open to man, open to the world and open to time."<sup>868</sup> Furthermore, God's openness is reciprocated by God's radical closeness to his creatures. In contrast to Eastern thought regarding the ineffability of God's *esse* and therefore the necessity of viewing God's relation to his creatures in terms only of God's energies, Torrance perceives God's presence as the real presence of God in the fullness of his Being in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the evangelical Trinity is the theological Trinity. In the economy of salvation, God is with us, *Immanuel*, in the most literal sense.<sup>869</sup>

The possibility of real sharing in the Life and Love of the Triune Communion hinges on God's free and gracious Act of real Self-giving and real Self-presence in the world. Torrance's optimism, predicated on (1) God's Being as essentially Being-in-Act-for-others and (2) God's Act in his own Being in the world, is justifiable. His foundations are purely *theo-logical*, within the logic of grace. The only way, albeit wrong, to critique real relations with God's Communion is by grounding the impossibility in humanity's finite "nature." This is an *anthropo-logical* reasoning,

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<sup>866</sup> *TP*, 1.

<sup>867</sup> *TP*, 86; *RET*, 23.

<sup>868</sup> Quoted in Richard Bauckham, "Jürgen Moltmann," in *One God in Trinity*, 126; Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 69. See also *TDORC II*, 65: "It is this trinitarian interdependence and conditionality within the love of God which precludes the thought of selfishness in God." As indicated earlier, Torrance's difference from Moltmann is that for Torrance, the openness of the Triune God, even though stemming from his nature as Love, is also gratuitous and free. See Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 84.

<sup>869</sup> *MC*, 29; *PCT*, 11, 14, 27; *WCCCA*, 40. He adds in the ensuing pages that "God with us" means God *is for us*, and God is *on our side*.

grounded in human principles, which Torrance abhors.<sup>870</sup> In accordance with the logic of grace, or in the double movement of salvation from the Father to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, there transpires a *mediated participation* in the salvific Persons and Works of the Three Persons so that we are lifted up into the inner communion of his divine Being.<sup>871</sup> In Torrance's words, God "assimilates us into the communion of love in his triune Being."<sup>872</sup> This is humanity's enabled *perichoretic participation* in the Triune Life, Love and Communion, which Torrance refers to as humanity's destiny.<sup>873</sup>

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<sup>870</sup> Christos P. Voulgaris strongly argues that anything anthropocentric is ultimately satano-centric, in *TDORC II*, 127. John McIntyre, however, argues that a tension in our understanding of theology is inevitable because it still remains a human endeavour, in "Theology and Method," in *Creation, Christ and Culture*, 205.

<sup>871</sup> *GGT*, 161; *RST*, 186.

<sup>872</sup> *GGT*, 154.

<sup>873</sup> *TCFK*, 98-99.

## FINAL CONCLUSIONS

This thesis accomplishes two things. First, it argues *that* Torrance's soteriology is Trinitarian. In fact it could only be Trinitarian, especially because Torrance consistently applies his scientific and evangelical theology to every aspect of his theology. To a certain degree, that Torrance's soteriology is Trinitarian is assumed as a fact in this thesis—not in an *a priori* way of thinking—but achieved (1) *a posteriori* through an indwelling of Torrance's large theological corpus, and (2) deductively from his assertion that the doctrine of the Trinity is *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*. This thesis argues that Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity is soteriologically conditioned and that his soteriology is conditioned by his doctrine of the Trinity, although this is just an instance of Torrance's general insistence about an appropriate inherent circularity in the relationship between Christian doctrines and the doctrine of the Trinity. In *Belief in Science and in Christian Life*, Torrance speaks about “the fiduciary programme,” or a self-expanding system of belief in which initial beliefs and subsequent beliefs mutually relate to one another.<sup>874</sup> It is indubitable that for Torrance, the doctrine of the Trinity is at the very centre of this system. As such, Flett's assessment that Torrance's works originate and terminate in the Triune God is not an overstatement.<sup>875</sup>

Torrance understands salvation as having *one reconciling purpose, proceeding in two movements, and accomplished by Three Persons*. Although it would appear that salvation is Trinitarian only explicitly at the last aspect in this compressed soteriological formula, each facet is actually fully Trinitarian. First, there is only one origin and goal of salvation: the Life and Love of the Triune God. Thus, although the Father, the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit fulfill distinct reconciling agencies in accordance with their *hypostases*, there are not three separate salvation stories. Rather, the mediation of the Father, the mediation of Jesus Christ and the mediation of the Spirit form the mediation of one salvation that culminate in our being reconciled to the Triune God. Secondly, the whole salvific economy proceeds through a double movement of divine *katabasis* and *anabasis*: “from the Father through the Son in the Spirit and in the Spirit through the Son to the Father.” And finally, salvation is accomplished through the

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<sup>874</sup> *BSCL*, 17-18; *TCFK*, 195-196.

<sup>875</sup> Flett, “Priest of Creation,” 182.

agency of the Three Persons of the Triune God, each fulfilling a distinct role in strict accordance with their hypostases as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Secondly, this thesis also shows *how* Torrance's soteriology is Trinitarian. The primary concern is the qualifying term *Trinitarian*. Torrance himself did not formulate a "systematic" Trinitarian soteriology, nor did he enumerate guidelines or institute a canon that would warrant the Trinitarian-ness of a specific soteriological formulation. What is clear, however, is that he follows Athanasius' insistence that *Christian* salvation could not but be Trinitarian: "This is the salvation of Christians, that believing in the Trinity, that is in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and being baptized into it, we may indubitably believe the Trinity to have the Same One True Godhead and Power, Majesty and Substance," and that "he who should fall away from it would no longer be a Christian and should no longer be so called."<sup>876</sup> This is rightly so, because as Gunton argues, "the only satisfactory account of the relation between the Creator and creation is a trinitarian one."<sup>877</sup>

The challenge, thus, for Torrance scholars is to formulate his Trinitarian soteriology in a manner that he himself would most likely have done. This is what this thesis sought to accomplish. By considering Torrance's own theological methodology and concerns, this thesis appropriates his evangelical theology and scientific theology as guidelines in sketching his Trinitarian soteriology. This decision has several significances. First, it does justice to Torrance's integrative approach. Like any aspect of his overall theology, his soteriology could not be divested of both his theological hermeneutic, methodology and holism. Secondly, as a follower of Barth, Torrance's evangelical theology dictates that the salvific economy cannot be separated from God's Triune Self-revelation. The content of the Gospel of salvation is none other than the Triune God in his gracious reconciling work. Moreover, presentation of soteriology should follow the *taxis* of Triune revelation and reconciliation. Thirdly, in light of Torrance's *kataphysic* theology, soteriology is perceived primarily in light of the Agents of reconciliation. Torrance does not have an *ex opere operato* soteriology. His soteriology is Subject-oriented. As such, his soteriological position offers a promising alternative to utilitarian soteriologies and their primary fascination with the benefits of salvation. For Torrance, the blessing, the gift and salvation cannot be understood apart from the Blesser, the Giver and the Saviour.

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<sup>876</sup> Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem* 1.28; quoted in *TDORC II*, 33, 48, 115.

<sup>877</sup> Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, 92.

As such, and in relation to Flett's assessment that Torrance's view of the being of God as personal is "the most important, yet understated feature" of his theology,<sup>878</sup> this thesis actually argues that the personal Being of God is indispensable in Torrance's soteriology. But here, the personal God is understood in two levels. First, it is highlighted that God's personal Being could be understood in light of his personal *ousia* by arguing that God's Being is essentially Communion-for- and Communion-with-others. In light of his personal Being, his interaction with the created other is also personal and personalizing. This has been called in the thesis the Triune God's *kat'ousian* soteriology. Secondly, God is Personal in light of the personal activities of the Three Persons. The Three Persons interact with the created other in the salvific economy in light of their hypostatic uniqueness, acting personally and dynamically in the mediation of reconciliation. This is why chapters II, III, and IV begin with the *who* of the Three Persons, because it is only in light of their Personal hypostases that their salvific agency could be properly understood. This has been called in the thesis the Triune God's *kath hypostasin* soteriology.

Chapter I discussed Torrance's *scientific, evangelical and Trinitarian* soteriology, and how the three qualifying adjectives are interrelated. As such, the chapter served as an explanatory account of the outline of the whole thesis, and the foundation upon which the subsequent chapters may be understood. Highlighted there is the fact that theological *procedure* inevitably affects theological *product*, or that methodology affects theology. The decision to follow the evangelical formula "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" is therefore not arbitrary, but is in light of Torrance's own insistence on it, and reflects his scientific, evangelical and Trinitarian approach to soteriology. By outlining the succeeding chapters in light of the benediction formula, the thesis also responds to Gunton's critique of Torrance's tendency to obscure the plurality of God's activity and identity by an overemphasis upon the unity of God's operations in the economy of salvation.<sup>879</sup> As shown in the thesis, the distinction in the Works of the Persons in Torrance's soteriology does not neglect the Unity, and *vice versa*.

Chapter II presented the Person and Work of the incarnate Son in the economy of salvation. Highlighted there is Torrance's emphasis on incarnational redemption, so that even in the discussion of every aspect of the Person and Life of Christ, soteriology

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<sup>878</sup> Flett, "Persons, Powers and Pluralities," 221.

<sup>879</sup> Gunton, "Being and Person," 121-129.

is already discussed. Nevertheless, in light of Torrance's *kath hypostasin* soteriology, the God-man fulfills distinct roles in the salvific economy in strict accordance with his Person as the Son, or *kata Christon*. In contrast to the Holy Spirit and the Father, only the Son is incarnate and crucified on a wooden cross. Only the incarnate Son is both *homoousion to Patri* and *homoousion hemin ton auton*. In his oneness with the Father and with us, the Son fulfills a God-humanward and human-Godward mediation in his own incarnate constitution, and reconciles us to the Father and mediates to us the Holy Spirit through his vicarious life, death, resurrection and ascension. As such, through the hypostatic union and atoning union, we are not only united to Christ, but are also invited to share in the Life and Love of the Triune God. "It is not atonement," Torrance argues, "that constitutes the goal and end of that integrated movement of reconciliation but union with God in and through Jesus Christ in whom our human nature is not only saved, healed and renewed but lifted up to participate in the very light, life and love of the Holy Trinity."<sup>880</sup> Torrance's incarnational view of redemption and its ultimate end in the participation in the Triune Communion makes his soteriology surpass that of many others.

Two interconnected problems-by-implication of Torrance's emphasis on the objective and finished work of Christ *pro nobis* are also discussed in Chapter II: universalism and de-emphasis of human response. First, Torrance himself vigorously rejects universalism, and considers it a heresy like limited atonement, arguing that both arise through a logico-mechanistic way of thinking about the *beneficia Christi*. Nevertheless, Torrance's vicarious incarnational redemption does not completely dispel all possible universalistic interpretations. It is undeniable that his optimism about Christ's atoning exchange tends to lean towards universalism. Secondly, with his tendency to emphasize the objective pole of salvation *in Christ* come views of salvation as passive reception (weak form) or coercive reception (strong form). Torrance's *totus/totus* understanding of the vicarious and atoning exchange may lead to undervaluing humanity's contingent freedom. In its weak form, human freedom is unnecessary, and in its strong form, human freedom is overpowered. Like the problem of universalism, Torrance's theology does not offer a sufficient buffer against this

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<sup>880</sup> MC, 66.

critique. And although he explicitly rejected both in his writings, still, as Morrison writes, “vigorous assertion does not overcome incoherence.”<sup>881</sup>

The beginning of Chapter III explains why a presentation of the agency of the Father has to proceed only after a chapter on the Son’s Person and Work. On the one hand, it takes seriously Jesus’ statement, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The concern here is not the order of being, but the order of knowing the Father in revelation and reconciliation. The Torrance theological tradition’s strong participatory theology highlights that we only know the Father by participation in the knowledge of the Son in the Holy Spirit. Moreover, it is Jesus Christ the Son who knows the Father, and so his revelation of the Father must be considered absolute authority. Knowing the Father behind the back of Christ or from any speculative abstraction does not have any place in Torrance’s theology and methodology. On the other hand, the outline follows the Pauline benediction formula. The unresolved tension left, however, is in Torrance’s equation of “the love of God” with “the love of the Father.” Torrance himself affirms that “Father” could be considered as God’s Name. The question, however, is how this could be affirmed without contradicting his rejection of the Cappadocian’s view of the Father as the sole *Arche* and *Monarchia*.

It could be said that Chapter III is quite unique to the thesis, because the Person of the Father is normally invisible in soteriological discourses. For Torrance, the Father, like the Son and the Spirit, fulfills a distinct role in the salvific economy in strict accordance with his hypostasis as the Father, or *kata patera*. This is another unique aspect of Torrance’s soteriology. Whereas the economy of salvation is typically treated only in light of the two missions (of the Son and of the Spirit), Torrance considers the “from the Father” and “to the Father” in the double movement of salvation as soteriological statements depicting the Father’s active involvement in the mediation of reconciliation. In terms of the “from the Father” aspect, the chapter elaborated that the Father’s loving, electing and sending roles are distinct to him in the salvific economy. In terms of the “to the Father” aspect, the concept of adoption into the family of God as sons and daughters of the Father was highlighted. But again, the reconciling paternity of the Father has as its ultimate goal sharing in the Life and Love of the Triune God. Adoption into the family of God is a conceptual equivalent to participation in the Triune Communion.

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<sup>881</sup> Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-revealing God*, 253.

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit is then discussed in Chapter IV. The imbalance in Torrance's treatment of the Persons and Works of the Triune God, first noticeable in comparing chapters II and III, is further confirmed in this chapter. Like his handling of the Father, the Spirit's agency, in comparison with his treatment of the Son's agency, is not as intensively treated. This imbalance reflects Torrance's acceptance of economic subordination in the Trinity. This does not mean, however, that Torrance does not have a robust pneumatology. The chapter has actually demonstrated that the Holy Spirit plays many central roles in the economy of salvation. Using a human analogy, it is the Holy Spirit who is actually over-worked in the economy! It was demonstrated that the Spirit operates in the salvific economy in light of his hypostasis and nature as the Self-effacing Spirit, which consequently requires worshipful apophatism on the part of the theologian. Again, this is in line with Torrance's *kath hypostasin* soteriology, which, in this case, is *kata Pneuma*. Therefore, it is not as if Torrance held an instrumental pneumatology.<sup>882</sup> Rather, it is the Spirit's Self-effacing hypostasis and will that his agency in the salvific economy is that of being the *vinculum caritatis* in three levels of relationship: (1) *onto-horizontal*, or between the Father and the Son (and also even in the incarnate life of the Son); (2) *economic-vertical*, or in humanity's union with Christ to the Father; and (3) *creaturely-horizontal*, or in humanity's relationship with one another in the Church. This is the *koinonia* of the communion-constituting Spirit.

Again, just as in the case of the Father and the Son, the work of the Spirit has as its origin and goal the lifting up of humanity into participation in the Communion of Love that God is. And it is precisely because of this that the thesis critiqued Torrance's reluctance to affirm fully the Spirit as Mediator. The Spirit also fulfills a mediatorial office between God and the world in accordance with his hypostasis as the Spirit, which does not contradict the mediation of Christ, who reconciles the world to the Triune God in light of the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Christ's own Person. Of course it is not a mediation-in-isolation, because like the Son, the mediating work of the Spirit has its ground, origin and goal in the Triune communion.

Another aspect in Torrance's pneumatology that is left undeveloped by Torrance is the important Pauline concept of "life in the Spirit" and its moral-ethical implications. (He had a robust understanding of the Trinitarian and relational implications of the

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<sup>882</sup> Kruger accuses Torrance of this error in "Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God," 321-324.

term.) In a sense, this neglect corresponds to Torrance's non-engagement with practical theology as a distinct branch of theology, and he should thus be acquitted of blame. But there is also a sense in which this neglect portrays a fundamental weakness in Torrance's overall theological framework, and which is also reflected in his view of the passive role of humanity in the salvific economy discussed in Chapter II. As a consolation, this void has given others, like Ray S. Anderson, the opportunity to extract the practical implications of Torrance's theology.<sup>883</sup>

As repeatedly asserted throughout the thesis, the reconciling agency of the Three Persons of the Trinity has its goal in the participation of humanity into the Life and Love of the Triune God. Union with Christ means being united to the Father in the Spirit; to be children of the Father means to be a brother of Christ in the Spirit; and to be in the *koinonia* of the Spirit means to be united to Christ with the Father. The Three Persons all fulfill distinct roles in the economy, but there is ultimately one purpose: for humanity to be mediated into the Triune Communion. In a chiasmus, and elaborating the Athanasian "from the Father through the Son in the Spirit and in the Spirit through the Son to the Father" soteriological formula, the katabatic and the anabatic reconciling activities of the Triune God could be portrayed as:

- p*, Communion of the Persons of the Triune God as the ORIGIN of human salvation
  - m1*, The Father sends the Son and the Spirit to the world
  - m2*, The Son mediates the Father in the Spirit to the world
  - m3*, The Spirit mediates the Son of the Father to the world
    - m3*, The Spirit lifts humanity in union with Christ to the Father
    - m2*, The Son unites humanity to the Father in the communion of the Spirit
    - m1*, The Father receives humanity as brothers of Christ in the Spirit
  - p*, Communion with the Persons of the Triune God as the GOAL of human salvation

Chapters II, III and IV emphasized the Three Persons' mediation of reconciliation and humanity's *mediated* participation in the Triune Life and Love (*m1*, *m2*, and *m3*), and they form the basis for Chapter V's emphasis on humanity's *perichoretic* participation. The thesis outline is heuristic because humanity's *perichoretic* participation finds its ground in *mediated* participation. Without mediation, there is no communion in the Life and Love of the Triune God. Also, if Chapters II, III, and IV argued for a *kath hypostasin* Trinitarian soteriology, Chapter V explained Torrance's *kat'ousian*

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<sup>883</sup> See "The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Participatio* 1 (2009), 49-65; and "Reading T. F. Torrance as a Practical Theologian," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 161-183.

Trinitarian soteriology, and argued that the origin and goal of humanity's salvation is in strict accordance with the nature of God as a Communion of Love (*p*). Humanity's *perichoretic* participation in the Triune Life and Love, therefore, finds its basis in the perichoretic Life and Love of the Triune God himself. The chapter also underscored Torrance's soteriological Trinitarianism and Trinitarian soteriology, or the reciprocal inseparability of both knowledge of the Triune God's Being in his Act and Act in his Being. Knowledge of the Triune God has its *telos* not in "complete clarification or understanding of God, but the reaching of a *communion* with him."<sup>884</sup>

Chapter V not only summed up and interrelated the arguments of the preceding chapters, but also offered caveats about Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology. It concluded that although Torrance holds that our communion with God is not only with his energies but with God's essence, he does not hold a cosmonistic or uniform communion. But the most important caveat is that, far from understanding participation in the Triune Communion as humanity's substantial metamorphosis or divinization, redeemed humanity actually communes with God as humanized humans and personalized persons. "The exaltation of human nature into the life of God," Torrance writes, "does not mean the disappearance of man or the swallowing up of human and creaturely being in the infinite ocean of divine Being, but rather that human nature, remaining creaturely and human, is yet exalted in Christ to share in God's life and glory."<sup>885</sup> Important and interrelated here again are the humanizing agency of the incarnate Son and the creative and sustaining office of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the main weakness of this thesis is its generally appreciative tone, and therefore it only offers rudimentary critiques of Torrance's position. As an overall evaluation, Torrance's theology is phenomenally coherent and his writings exude consistency in both thought and methodology, which explains his somewhat repetitive style of writing as well. The critiques presented in the thesis were more like detection of avenues that need further elucidation or correlation rather than pointing out inconsistencies. On one hand, these critiques are only minor, and Torrance could easily be acquitted, because any theologian could not be really considered at fault for failing to elaborate all the issues involved in a particular theme. But on the other hand, it seems that Torrance may be guilty of purposively evading topics that might provide avenues of critiques for inconsistency in his theology. For instance, he did not develop Irenaeus'

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<sup>884</sup> *TDORC II*, 63.

<sup>885</sup> *STR*, 135.

“two hands of the Father” because it might vindicate the sole *Monarchia* of the Father. He also did not have a well-treated view of the kingly office of Christ in relation to the *Christus Victor* and the Pauline “life in the Spirit” because they might lead to discussions on human agency, and thus subvert his emphasis on the objective and finished work of Christ. As such, Torrance’s determination towards theological consistency is achieved at the expense of neglecting important theological aspects.

The thesis also avoided making critiques of Torrance’s theology by imposing them from a different perspective. But this is just proper, because this thesis is descriptive and analytical in nature, and was never intended to be comparative. The fallacy of approaching Torrance’s theology from a specific perspective is also purposively evaded to desist from imposing and measuring Torrance in accordance with the biases of a particular theological tradition. Similarly, approaching Torrance from a supposed Archimedean point is just spurious. If these approaches are undertaken, there will be many critiques of Torrance’s position, but only because of prejudiced preferences rather than an informed engagement. Ho’s *A Critical Study on Torrance’s Theology of Incarnation* is an example of this biased reading of Torrance, and so although the book offers many critiques, these critiques do not really have an overall cohesive theological ground other than approaching Torrance from several traditions that are in conflict with Torrance’s views. This is why I referred to the book as “a cornucopia of awkward theological critiques.”

Finally, this thesis has at least two strengths and contributions to wider Torrance studies. First, it is the first to offer an analysis of Torrance’s *Trinitarian* soteriology. It argues that Communion *of* and *with* the Triune God constitute the *origin* and *goal* of human salvation, and brings to focus Torrance’s interrelated ideas of *mediated* participation and *perichoretic* participation in the Triune Life and Love. Both are actually important in Torrance’s view of humanity’s sharing in the Communion of Love that God is, and they qualify each other. In summary, Torrance’s soteriology is Trinitarian because for him (1) the Communion of God is the *origin* of human salvation, (2) the Persons of the Triune God are the Agents of mediation and reconciliation, and (3) Communion with God is the *goal* of human salvation. Because of this three-fold consideration, how he understands each aspect, and how he sees their interrelation, Torrance’s soteriology has a lot to offer to Christian theology. Secondly, this thesis uniquely presents the interrelation of Torrance’s scientific theology, evangelical theology and Trinitarian soteriology. It argues that Torrance’s unique

soteriological formulation is informed by *kat' ousian* and *kath hypostasin* principles. It also argues that Torrance's evangelical theology or understanding of the Gospel guides both the *content* and *procedure* of his Trinitarian soteriology.

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<sup>899</sup> Reprinted in *TR*, 150-168.

<sup>900</sup> Reprinted in *KBBET*, 1-26.

<sup>901</sup> Reprinted in *KBBET*, 213-240.

<sup>902</sup> Reprinted in *TR*, 76-98.

<sup>903</sup> Reprinted in *KBBET*, 160-181.

<sup>904</sup> Reprinted in *CAC II*, 125-132.

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<sup>908</sup> Reprinted in *CAC II*, 74-82.

<sup>909</sup> Expanded in *CAC I*, 263-283.

<sup>910</sup> Reprinted in *CAC II*, 93-106.

<sup>911</sup> Reprinted in *TCFK*, 107-173.

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<sup>915</sup> Reprinted in *WCCCA*, 180-192.

<sup>916</sup> Reprinted in *TR*, 209-228.

<sup>917</sup> Reprinted in *CAC II*, 58-74.

<sup>918</sup> Reprinted in *TP*, 77-102.

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## Appendix I

### PARTICIPATION THEOLOGY

Participation theology is not new in the history of the Christian faith. Early and contemporary theologies from both Catholic and Protestant traditions have their representatives to name. There are three theological schools in particular that will be discussed in this section: participation Thomism, Radical Orthodoxy and participation in Calvin.

#### Participation Thomism

David Tracy enumerates five principal schools of modern Thomism: (1) modern defenders of the commentators, (2) existential Thomism, (3) participation Thomism, (4) transcendental Thomism, and (5) Thomistic linguistic analyses.<sup>922</sup> Our concern is the third, as initiated by Cornelio Fabro and Louis Bertrand Geiger, in which Aquinas' metaphysics are withdrawn from the essentialism of Aristotle and interpreted using neo-Platonic emanationism instead.<sup>923</sup> Cosmologically, this means that everything is nothing other than a derivation or emanation from God. The problem is that the emanation process did not arise out of God's volitional willing, but just involuntarily flowed out of God's brimful Being. Consequently, because the existence of all beings-other-than-God come from the very Being of God, a certain amount of God's *esse* is transferred to all other degrees of reality.<sup>924</sup> One would therefore understand Aquinas' interrelated views on the relationship between nature and grace, *analogia entis*, and natural theology, in which in all three, a necessary and unbreakable proportionality between God and creatures is presupposed. In short, to exist is, by default, to possess a certain degree of divine *esse*. By the sheer act of existing, humanity, whether consciously or

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<sup>922</sup> David Tracy, "The Analogical Imagination in Catholic Theology," in *Talking About God: Doing Theology in the Context of Modern Pluralism* (eds. David Tracy and John B. Cobb; available at <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=162&C=1575>).

<sup>923</sup> Their discovery instigated acrimonious conflicts over Thomas' Aristotelianism. Other than transcendental Thomism, which regards Aristotle's philosophy to be dominant in Aquinas' thoughts, the prevailing view now is that Aquinas' thoughts are best interpreted as neo-Platonic. See the informative study by Wayne Hankeys, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (eds. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones; London: Routledge, 1998), 139-184. For an appreciation and argument for the appropriation of Aristotelian metaphysics in theology, particularly with the doctrine of the Trinity, see William P. Aliston, "Substance and Trinity," in *The Trinity* (eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins; Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1999), 179-201.

<sup>924</sup> Along with participation Thomism, this position was also advocated by the existential Thomist and Anglican theologian Eric Marcall. See Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 145-147.

unconsciously, and wilfully or unwilfully, are ontologically related to God. This is reinforced by the fact that existence is dependent upon God, and that in itself, created nature is nothing. Echoing Augustine, “matter participates in something belonging to the ideal world, otherwise it would not be matter.”<sup>925</sup> Overall, participation in God is understood primarily in mechanical ontological-substantial terms.

While the approach of this participation theology is noteworthy, in that it articulates the being of created realities in terms of the Being of God, it has several disagreeable overtones. Firstly, although it is an attempt to overthrow Aristotle in Aquinas’ thoughts, the substantive aspect of Aristotle’s metaphysics still remains, so that emphasis is still given to substantial participation. This view leads to a serious misunderstanding of *theosis*. Secondly, in connection to the first, the nature-grace relationship it advocates leads to panentheism with its emphasis on immanence, which consequently overlooks the Wholly Otherness of God.<sup>926</sup> In comparison, although Torrance also advocates the real presence of God in the world, he does not view it as an infused involuntary presence, but as a *parousia* grounded in God’s free and gracious Act of Self-communication. And finally, because ontological participation is a presupposed given, whether creatures will it or not, there is also the tendency to undervalue human created and contingent autonomy. This has a further implication in soteriology. With this approach, the eschatological options are either universalism, when everything returns back to God, or annihilationism, when some existents are reduced to absolute nothingness, *nihil absolutum*.

### Radical Orthodoxy

At the beginning of the emergence of the theological revolution that emerged out of Cambridge in the late 1980s known as Radical Orthodoxy, its major advocates spelled out that their central framework is “*participation* as developed by Plato and reworked by Christianity.”<sup>927</sup> James K. A. Smith outrightly questions whether their foundation is really Platonic, instead of neo-Platonic.<sup>928</sup> Smith’s critique is well grounded, for Radical

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<sup>925</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione* 11.21; cited in Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 87.

<sup>926</sup> This pantheistic tendency is particularly most evident in Buxton’s *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry*. Molnar argues that there is no panentheism in Torrance, in *Theologian of the Trinity*, 139.

<sup>927</sup> John, Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

<sup>928</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 198.

Orthodoxy owes its participation theology to Aquinas' metaphysics.<sup>929</sup> Milbank, probably the first proponent of the movement, encapsulates their starting point: "Once upon a time, there was no secular."<sup>930</sup> To this condition does Radical Orthodoxy seek to re-integrate the metaphysical to the physical in their understanding of theology and reality. This is their understanding of participation, which "refuses any reserve of created territory, while allowing finite things their own integrity" and that "every discipline must be framed by a theological perspective; otherwise these disciplines will define a zone apart from God, grounded literally in nothing."<sup>931</sup> Particularly, they blame John Duns Scotus' teaching on the univocity of being, where being is given an autonomous existence and without necessary dependence upon Being, leading to modern secularization.<sup>932</sup> "In opposition to the ontology of immanence produced by the shift to the univocity of being," Smith analyzes, "RO proposes a participatory ontology that understands transcendence as an essential feature of material reality."<sup>933</sup> This participatory ontology is in turn the supposed "antidote to both nihilism and fundamental dualism."<sup>934</sup> Moreover, with a participatory hermeneutic, instead of understanding being as being-towards-death (which Karl Rahner critiques in Heidegger's philosophy as *ontochronistic*),<sup>935</sup> being is understood to be being-toward-perfection.<sup>936</sup>

Radical Orthodoxy's ambitious project to re-integrate the metaphysical in every aspect of human life, not only in theology and in the life of the church, but also in

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<sup>929</sup> Having said this, although Thomistic participation is evident in the whole of Radical Orthodoxy's participation theology, there are significant traces of influence from Anglican theology as well, as advocated by seventeenth-century theologian Richard Hooker and the Cambridge Platonists, particularly on John Milbank. See J. Todd Billings' arguments in "John Milbank's Theology of the 'Gift' and Calvin's Theology of Grace: A Critical Comparison," *MTh* 21 (2005), 93. On Anglican participation theology, see Edmund Newey, "The Form of Reason: Participation in the Work of Richard Hooker, Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor," *MTh* 18 (2002), 1-26; and A. M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988).

<sup>930</sup> John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 9. This publication is identified as the birth of the Radical Orthodox movement.

<sup>931</sup> Milbank, *Radical Orthodoxy*, 3.

<sup>932</sup> Catherine Pickstock is the proponent of Radical Orthodoxy who traced this back to Scotus. See her *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of the Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 122-123.

<sup>933</sup> Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 185.

<sup>934</sup> Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 189.

<sup>935</sup> Karl Rahner defines *ontochrony* as "a science showing that the meaning of all being as such and the meaning of being in the absolute, is *nothingness*," in "The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger," (translated by Andrew Tallon) *PhilT* 13 (1969), 136.

<sup>936</sup> Matthew Levering, "Participation and Exegesis: Response to Catherine Pickstock," *MTh* 21 (2005), 587-601. Significantly interesting in Levering's analysis of Aquinas' participatory exegesis of John 3:27-36, which is very Trinitarian and Christocentric, particularly his emphasis on the humanity of Christ in pages 592-597.

politics, economics, and other areas of society, is revolutionary. Their pronounced *telos* for humanity and social renewal explicated in terms of “divine friendship” that is grounded on an ontology of peace is also enticing.<sup>937</sup> Nevertheless, however agreeable the objective of the movement is, their particular method or system of participation is grounded upon theologically questionable foundations. Their recourse to neo-Platonic and Thomist ontology comes among the first series of their grave errors. To avoid unnecessary repetition, my critique of Radical Orthodoxy’s participation theology is the same as of Thomas’s, as underscored above.

### Participation in John Calvin

In an interesting article, J. Todd Billings makes the connection, albeit comparatively, between Milbank and Calvin on the doctrine of participation, with particular attention to the former’s critique of the latter’s understanding of grace in light of Milbank’s understanding of “gift.” Billings concludes that Milbank’s critique is unfounded, especially that the concept of “gift” (which Milbank borrows from Marcel Mauss, Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion) is foreign to Calvin. Nevertheless, he adds that amidst their differences, “Calvin has much in common with Milbank’s concerns in developing a theology of ‘participation as deification’.”<sup>938</sup> The same argument is forwarded by Carl Mosser, who asserts that evidences (which unfortunately he does not provide) are noticeable in the language and imageries that Calvin used in his soteriology, eschatology and Trinitarianism.<sup>939</sup>

Nevertheless, although both Billings’ and Mosser’s interpretation of Calvin are stimulating, they are wrong. Jonathan Slater was right when he asserts that Calvin’s understanding of participation should not be equated with deification or *theosis*. Slater is definitely sensitive about what “deification” connotes, especially if it is interpreted in

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<sup>937</sup> See particularly David Moss, “Friendship: St. Anselm, *Theoria* and the Convolution of Sense,” in *Radical Orthodoxy*, 127-142. An ontology of peace is the alternative that Radical Orthodoxy seeks to establish against a “differential ontology” or “an ontology of violence” which Milbank finds in Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Michael Foucault, stemming from the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche in their philosophies (see Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 278-325). According to Milbank, the problem with a differential ontology is that differences are construed as competing and thus ultimately oppositional. In short, being ultimately leads to war. To counter this myth of differential ontology, says Milbank, “one cannot resuscitate liberal humanism, but one can try to put forward an alternative mythos, equally unfounded, but nonetheless embodying an ontology of peace, which conceived differences as analogically related, rather than equivocally at variance” (Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 279).

<sup>938</sup> Billings, “John Milbank’s Theology of the ‘Gift’ and Calvin’s Theology of Grace,” 97.

<sup>939</sup> Carl Mosser, “The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification,” *SJT* 55 (2002), 36-57.

light of the Petrine phrase “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). In Calvin’s theology, he stresses, what is dominant is not the idea of participation in the divine nature, but of participation in the humanity of Christ.<sup>940</sup> He writes:

Although Calvin speaks of Christ uniting us to God, it is not clear that our unity with God involves a sharing in the divine nature, or that Christ performed this work according to his divinity. Without in any way denying that it is the eternal Son who is our mediator, Calvin’s emphasis is on the humanity of the mediator. It is as our substitute, which Christ is according to his human nature, that we are included in Christ.<sup>941</sup>

This emphasis on the humanity of Christ is explicit in Calvin’s *Institutes*. Discussing the work of the Mediator “to restore us to God’s grace as to make of the children of men, children of God,” Calvin writes:

Who would have done this had not the self-same Son of God become the Son of man, and had not so taken what was ours as to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his nature ours by grace? Therefore, relying on this pledge, we trust that we are sons of God, for God’s natural Son fashioned for himself a body from our body, flesh from our flesh, bones from our bones, that he might be one with us. Ungrudgingly he took our nature upon himself to impart to us what was his, and to become both Son of God and Son of man in common with us.<sup>942</sup>

The emphasis on union with the substitutionary work of the humanity of Christ, and our participation in the same humanity, is what Trevor Hart calls “the twin aspects of redemption in Christ.”<sup>943</sup> Hart even argues that union with Christ and participation in him is the central theme in Calvin’s theology.<sup>944</sup>

Julie Canlis observes that although participation theology is indubitably present in Calvin’s theology, Reformed theology in general has been hesitant to speak about it because of Calvin’s own negative reaction to the theology of participation taught by his contemporary, the Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander.<sup>945</sup> Osiander’s participation theology is a product of his critique of and alternative to Reformation theology’s stress

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<sup>940</sup> Jonathan Slater, “Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator in Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: A Reply to Carl Mosser,” *SJT* 58 (2005), 39-58.

<sup>941</sup> Slater, “Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator,” 43.

<sup>942</sup> Calvin, *Institutes* I.12.2.

<sup>943</sup> Trevor Hart, “Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,” *SJT* 42 (1989), 82.

<sup>944</sup> Hart, “Humankind in Christ,” 81. Disagreements with such notions of a central theme in Calvin, particularly on the sovereignty of God, is becoming more and more the sentiment of modern scholarship. See Billings, “John Milbank’s Theology of the ‘Gift’ and Calvin’s Theology of Grace,” 98; and especially Charles Partee, “Calvin’s Central Dogma,” *SCentJ* 18 (Summer 1987), 191-200. Partee argues that Calvin’s writings, particularly the *Institutes*, would be better interpreted using the theme “union with Christ.”

<sup>945</sup> Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God,” 169.

on the doctrine of justification, with its twin concept imputed righteousness, which for him fails to consider the ontological transformation corresponding justification.<sup>946</sup> The problem, however, was Osiander's formulation of participation in the righteousness of Christ, which is at best Apollinarian. As Mosser puts it, what was problematic in Osiander's view was "that justification was an in-pouring or infusion of Christ's divine essence into the believer which rendered the believer righteous."<sup>947</sup> It is this exact concept that Calvin could not digest. Without abandoning the doctrine of participation altogether, Calvin approached the doctrine from a different perspective. He first and foremost rejected the ontological-substantial interpretation of Osiander, then employed a Christologically-conditioned Trinitarian theology to formulate his theology. The result is that instead of Osiander's justification by the divine essence within, Calvin insisted that we participate in Christ's own righteousness through being united with him. As Canlis asserts, "It is a non-substantial participation in the person of Christ, made possible by Calvin's innovative doctrine of the Holy Spirit who is a safeguard against substantial participation."<sup>948</sup>

## Conclusions

As is evident, Calvin's debate with Osiander reveals that his understanding of participation in God is different from the one promoted by participation Thomists and Radical Orthodoxy theologians. Their dissimilarities seem to summarize the two options for understanding participation throughout its historical development and manifestation: it is either a neo-Platonic substantial participation, or a relational, Christ-centred participation. Torrance's views are akin to Calvin's participation theology, although Torrance's soteriology far exceeds Calvin in terms of trinitarian depth. This might be because while Calvin wrote on the doctrines of the Trinity and salvation, they were only among the other doctrines that Calvin was interested in. On the other hand, Torrance, because his main line of interests are in both the doctrines of the Trinity and salvation, has given more time in unpacking their relation.

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<sup>946</sup> See John Weis, "Calvin Versus Osiander on Justification," *The Springfielder* 30 (1965), 31-47; also reprinted in *Calvin's Opponents* (ed. Richard C. Gamble; *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* 5; New York: Garland, 1992), 353-369,

<sup>947</sup> Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing," 48-49.

<sup>948</sup> Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God," 184.

## Appendix II

### THOMAS F. TORRANCE'S UNPUBLISHED WORKS

All of the unpublished works listed here are found in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. They were read and consulted, but not used in the main text of the thesis.

The list here is organized according to the Box Numbers they come from. Items in brackets indicate illegible words, primarily from Thomas F. Torrance's handwritten documents.

#### **Box 23: General Theology Lectures: Revelation, the Word of God, Doctrine of God, Introduction to Christology and Soteriology (Auburn Lectures, New College Lectures and other documents)**

- "Christian Doctrine of God"
- "Christ's View of God, and Ours"
- "The Doctrine of God in Traditional Theology"
- "The Christian Doctrine of Revelation" (Auburn Lectures, 1938/9)
- "The Sovereignty of God" (draft)<sup>949</sup>
- "Where is God?" (New College Lecture)
- "Who then is God, and What is His Nature?" (draft)<sup>950</sup>

#### **Box 36: Material collected for a proposed third volume of *Conflict and Agreement in the Church***

- "From a Christocentric to a Trinitarian Ecumenism, Ecumenical Suicide or Christocentric Renewal"
- "The Heart of the Matter, 'Down with Romantic Slush'," sermon preached at The Great St. Mary's Church, Cambridge, 14 Nov 1965
- "Liturgy and Apocalypse," *Church Service Society Annual*
- "What is the Church?"

#### **Box 38: Sermons, Lectures and Addresses, in Scotland and Abroad**

- "Christ in the Centre of Mission," sermon preached at Craiglockhart Parish Church (Centenary Celebration)
- Communion Sermon, Whitekirk 5 Dec 1993 (also found in Box 39)
- "No Other Name," sermon on Num 6:22-27 and Acts 4:5-12; New Restalrig Church, Edinburgh, 9 Feb 1992
- "The Real Light," sermon on John 1:9, University Sermon, Emmanuel Church, 15 Nov 1981
- "... that in everything he might be preeminent," sermon on Col 1:13, St. Giles', Edinburgh, 24 May 1977<sup>951</sup>
- Untitled sermon preached at Beechgrove Church Aberdeen, 2 Nov 1997<sup>952</sup> (also found in Box 39)

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<sup>949</sup> Contents of this document contain lots of affinity to *CDG*, chap 8 "The Sovereign Creator."

<sup>950</sup> Content almost similar with "The Changelessness of God: Permanence, Constancy, Invariance: Preliminary Points (draft); later published in *CDG*, chap 9, "The Unchangeableness of God."

<sup>951</sup> Similar sermon to "The Centrality of Christ," First Presbyterian Church in Dillon, 2 Feb 1997. This sermon was published in *Expository Times* 89 (1977): 54-55.

Untitled sermon on 1 Cor 2:1-5 (np, nd)  
 Untitled sermon on Isa21:11-12 (np, nd)  
 Untitled sermon on Rom8:32 (np, nd)  
 Untitled sermon on John 1:6-9 (np, nd)<sup>953</sup>  
 Untitled sermon on John 5:17, Eton College, 27 Nov 1983  
 Untitled sermon outline on Matt 11:28-30  
 Untitled sermon on John 5:17, Huntly Parish Church, 14 Nov 1976  
 “With God Is Terrible Majesty,” sermon on Job 37:22 (np, nd)

**Box 39: Sermons, Lectures and Addresses, in Scotland and Abroad**

“The Centrality of Christ,” Luke 22:31-32 (np, nd)  
 “Ecumenical Service – Kirk of the Greyfriars,” sermon on Acts 2:41-47, esp. v42, Edinburgh, 24 May 1970, Trinity Sunday (also found in Box 47)  
 “Letter to Douglas Kelly,” Reformed Theological Seminary, 9 Jan 1997  
 Untitled sermon on Exo 20:1-4 and John 14:6, 9, Monkton Combe School Chapel, 3 Nov 1963  
 Untitled sermon on Mark 2:5, Athelstaneford, Whitekirk, 12 Aug 1979  
 Untitled sermon on 2 Cor 8:9, Beechgrove, 10 Dec 1967  
 Untitled sermon on Mark 15:34, “At the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice...” (np, nd)<sup>954</sup>  
 Untitled sermon on Matt 5:23-24, (np), 13 Dec 1973 and 8 Sept 1974  
 Untitled sermon from Titus 3:4ff, Baptism of Robyn Alison Meta Torrance, Hillswick, 31 Mar 1985  
 “Violence in Society,”<sup>955</sup>

**Box 40: Sermons, Lectures and Addresses, in Scotland and Abroad**

“Aristotelianism and Calvinism in Scotland”  
 “The Christian Church and Israel,” address in Capex Town Cathedral Ecumenical Centre and to Christian Missions to Jews in London, 1976  
 “Christian Protest and the Power of Evil,” Eckherd College, Fireside Chat with students, March 1980  
 “The Divine Vocation and Destiny of Israel in World History”  
 “For Modern Science ‘Prayer is ridiculous and miracles are absurd’”  
 “Implicit Faith”

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<sup>952</sup> This sermon has similarity in content with B38 Untitled sermon at Penicuik, Scotland, 5 Sept 1993; B38 Cluny Parish, Edinburgh, 17 Oct 1993; B38 McDoland Memorial Church, Bellshill, 7 June 1998; B39 “‘He that spared not his own Son...’”, Cluny Church, 17 Oct 1993; “The Cross – a Window into the heart of the Father,” First Presbyterian Church in Dillon, 2 Feb 1997.

<sup>953</sup> This sermon has similarity in content with B38 Untitled sermon from 1 John 1:5, [ ] 1973; B38 “I am the light of the World...” sermon on John 8:12, preached at Whitekirk, 31 Aug 1980; B38 “The Real Light,” University Sermon on John 1:9, Emmanuel Church, 15 Nov 1981; B38 Untitled Sermon on John 1:34, Loretto, 4 Nov [no year]; B39 “A Faith for Hard Times: The Living Light,” 20 Nov 1977; B39 “Light: It’s Theology and Physics,” Lawnswood School, Leeds, 16 Nov 1981; B39 “Light,” Moderatorial sermon while visiting Aberdeen Presbytery and University, Kings College Chapel, Aberdeen, 13 Feb 1977; “Christ the Light of the World,” Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 26 Jan 1997; B41 “Christ the Light of the World: with reference to James Clerk Maxwell,” Parton Kirk, 11 June 1989; B41 “The Christian Faith and the Physics of Light, 26 Jan (no year), Eton College, Windsor; and 27 Feb (no year), [ ] Washington; B45 Untitled sermon on 1 John 1:1-10; 2:1-11.

<sup>954</sup> See almost the same sermon B42 “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?” from Matt 27:46, Braid Church, Edinburgh, 29 Oct 1967; and also found in Box 47.

<sup>955</sup> Also preached at B41 IBA Lunch, Glasgow, 1 July 1976.

“Israel: People of God – God, Destiny and Suffering,” lecture delivered to the Anglo-Israel Friendship League and the Israel Ecumenical Working Group, Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey, 6 Feb 1978  
 Torrance’s notes on Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* on Church and Israel

**Box 41: Lectures and Addresses, in Scotland and Abroad (contains written works and other unorganized material)**

“Diaconate Service,” Cluny Parish Church, Edinburgh, 23 Nov 1979  
 “The Sanctification of the Temple,” sermon on Matt 21:1-16 (np, nd)  
 “The Secularization of the Church”  
 “The Task of the Church in Britain in the Eighties”  
 Untitled sermon on 1 Cor 3:16, Beechgrove, 8 June 1975  
 Untitled sermon on 1 Cor 1:22, Whitekirk, 6 Sept 1981  
 Untitled sermon on Matt 18:18-20, given on two occasions: (1) The Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh, 18 July 1978, 11:15AM [as an?] introduction of Rev. Charles Robertson, M.A.; and (2) Northmavine, Hillswick, Shetland [as an?] Introduction of the Rev Dr Iain R. Torrance, 24 Jan 1982

**Box 42a: Sermons on Genesis**

“Creation,” sermon on Gen 1:1, Alyth, 28 Sept 1941  
 “Sin at the Door,” sermon on Gen 4:7, Alyth, 1940  
 “Lot and Daniel,” sermon on Gen 13:12 and Dan 6:10, Alyth, 9 Feb 1941  
 “Abram the Hebrew,” sermon on Gen 14:13, Alyth, 1940  
 “Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee,” sermon on Gen 17:18, Alyth, 9 Feb 1941  
 “Mahanaim: The Punctuality of Angels,” sermon on Gen 32:1-2, Alyth, June 1940; Beechgrove, 8 Feb 1948  
 “For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?” sermon on Gen 44:34, Alyth, Ascension Day, 1940 (also celebration of baptism)

**Box 42b: Sermons on Exodus**

“Frustration,” sermon on Ex 13:17-18 and John 13:37, Alyth, Nov 1940  
 “Second-hand Religion,” sermon on Ex 20:19, Alyth 1940; Beechgrove Dec 1948  
 “Knowledge of God,” sermon on Ex 20:1, 3, Alyth, 9 March 1941  
 “Aaron’s Calf,” sermon on Ex 32:1, Alyth 1940, Blair[\_\_\_\_], Dec 1940; Dun[\_\_\_\_], Dec 1940; Pollok-Slagno, 2 May 1943  
 “Moses wist not that the skin of His face shone while he talked with him,” sermon on Ex 34:29, Alyth, 1940

**Box 42c Sermons on Leviticus**

“Harvest Thanksgiving,” sermon on Lev 26:10, Alyth, 1940

**Box 42d Sermons on Numbers**

“Balaam,” sermon on Num 23:10, Alyth, 20 July 1941

**Box 42e Sermons on Deuteronomy**

“Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” sermon on Deut 33:29, Alyth, 22 Mar 1942

**Box 42f Sermons on Judges**

“Samson,” sermon on Judg 16:20, Alyth, 1940

**Box 42g Sermons on 1 and 2 Samuel**

“Make us a King to judge us,” sermon on 1 Sam 8:5, Alyth, 2 Feb 1940

“Wherefore am I come from Geshur?” sermon on 2 Sam 14:32, Alyth, 10 May 1942; Beechgrove, 21 Aug 1949; [ ] Edinburgh, 19 Aug 1951

“Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him,” sermon on 2 Sam 16:11, Alyth, 1941; Beechgrove, 2 May 1949

“The Well at Bethlehem,” sermon on 2 Sam 23:15f, Alyth, Sept 1940; Beechgrove (Communion), 10 Apr 1949; Pl[ ] Edinburgh, 11 Nov 1951; L[ ]tt[ ], 24 Nov 1951

**Box 42h Sermons on 1 and 2 Kings**

“The unknown Prophet from Judah,” sermon on 1 Kings 13, Alyth, Oct 1940

“Naaman,” sermon on 1 Kings 5:10-12, Alyth, 1940

“Jonah and Elisha,” sermon on 2 Kings 13:14-16, Alyth, 9 Nov 1941

**Box 42i Sermons on 2 Chronicles**

“Manasseh,” sermon on 2 Chron 33:11, 13, Alyth, 27 July 1941

“The Hall [ ] the Temple,” sermon on 2 Chron 6:8, Alyth, 14 Jan 1942

**Box 42j Sermons on Esther**

“National Day of Prayer,” sermon on Esther 4:14, Alyth, 23 Mar 1941

**Box 42k Sermons on Job**

“Doth Job Fear God for nought?” sermon on Job 1:9; 21:15, Alyth, 1940

**Box 42l Sermons on Psalm**

“Prosperity of the Wicked,” sermon on Ps 73:16-17, Alyth, 1940

“Thanksgiving After Communion,” sermon on Ps 116:12, 13, Alyth, June 1940

“Wonder in Christianity,” sermon on Ps 139:14, Alyth, 9 Mar 1941

“What is Man?” sermon on Ps 8:4, Alyth, 1942

**Box 42m Sermons on Proverbs**

“There is a way that seems right unto a man,” sermon on Prov 14:12, Alyth, 27 Sept 1942

“Foreign Missions,” sermon on Prov 24:11-12, Alyth, Dec 1940

**Box 43a Sermons on Ecclesiastes**

“Keep thy Foot,” sermon on Ecc 5:1, Alyth, 1940

**Box 43b Sermons on Isaiah**

“Behold a Virgin,” sermon on Isa 7:14, Alyth, 28 Dec 1941

“The Holiness of God,” sermon on Isa 6:3, Alyth, April 1941

Untitled sermon on Isa 50:11, Alyth, 1940

“The Messenger of Peace,” sermon on Isa 52:7, Alyth, Christmas, 1940

**Box 43c Sermons on Jeremiah**

Untitled sermon on Jer 7:2 (np, nd)

“Cursed be the man that trusted in man,” sermon on Jer 17:5, Alyth, 31 May 1942

**Box 43d Sermons on Ezekiel**

“The Little Sanctuary,” sermon on Ezek 11:16, Alyth, 1940

**Box 43e Sermons on Daniel**

“O man greatly beloved – be stronger,” sermon on Dan 10:19, Alyth, 22 Mar 1942

**Box 43f Sermons on Zechariah**

“The Great Division,” sermon on Zech 14:4, Alyth, April 1941

**Box 43g Sermons on Matthew 1-9**

Untitled sermon on Matt 1:18-25, Alyth, 20 Dec 1942; Beechgrove, Christmas, 1948; Athelstaneford and Whitekirk, 28 Dec 1975

“The First Temptation of Jesus,” sermon on Matt 4:1f, Alyth, 5 Oct 1941

“The Second Temptation,” sermon on Matt 4:5-7, Alyth, 5 Oct 1941

“The Third Temptation,” sermon on Matt 4:8-10, Alyth, 12 Oct 1941

“Be ye therefore perfect,” sermon on Matt 5:48, Alyth, 1 Feb 1942

“The Hem of His Garment,” sermon on Matt 9:20, Alyth, 19 Jan 1941; Beechgrove, 6 June 1948

**Box 43h Sermons on Matthew 10-19**

“The Fatherhood of God,” sermon on Matt 11:27, Alyth, July 1941

“Beware the leaven of the Sadducees,” sermon on Matt 16:6, Alyth, 2 Nov 1941

Untitled sermon on Matt 16:24-25, Fettes College, Confirmation Service, 28 May 1978

“Conversion,” sermon on Matt 18:3, Alyth, 1941

“The Lost Sheep,” sermon on Matt 18:13 and Luke 15:14, Alyth, 1940; Beechgrove, 11 Jan 1948

**Box 44a: Sermons on Matthew 20-28**

“Labourers in the Vineyard,” sermon on Matt 20:16, Alyth, 1940; Beechgrove, 23 Jan 1949; Greentar[\_\_\_\_], 23 Sept 1951

“Following Christ in Service,” sermon on Matt 20:28, Alyth, Sept 1940

“Who is This?” sermon on Matt 21:10, Palm Sunday, Alyth, 29 March 1942

“Palm Sunday,” sermon on Zech 9:9 and Matt 21:10, Alyth, April 1941

“Watchers at the Cross,” sermon on Matt 27:36, Alyth, 1940

Untitled sermon on Matt 28:19-20, Alyth, 21 Sept 1941

Untitled sermon on Matt 28:19, Confirmation Service (np, nd)

**Box 44b: Sermons on Mark**

“Christ: God or Not!” sermon on Mark 3:21 and Matt 26:65, Alyth 1940; Beechgrove, 7 Dec 1949

“Faith and Doubt,” sermon on Mark 9:24, Alyth, 23 March 1941

“Moral Matrimony,” sermon on Mark 10:9, Alyth, 26 Jan 1941

“Communion Sermon,” sermon on Mark 10:38, Alyth, June 1940; Blairgrove, May 1940; Beechgrove, 18 Jan 1948

“Why This Waste?” sermon on Mark 14:4, Alyth 1940

**Box 44c: Sermon on Luke**

- “What manner of child shall this be?” Baptism sermon on Luke 1:66, Alyth, 1940
- “What shall we do then?” sermon on Luke 3:10, Alyth, 17 May 1942
- “The Story of Jairus,” sermon on Luke 8, Alyth, 19 Jan 1940
- “These Candidates for Discipleship,” sermon on Luke 9:57-62, Alyth, 3 Aug 1941; Beechgrove 14 March 1948
- “The Pharisee and the Publican at Prayer,” sermon on Luke 18:10f, Alyth, 18 Jan 1942
- “Then opened their understanding,” sermon on Luke 24:45, Alyth, 5 April 1942; Beechgrove, 28 March 1948
- “Emmanuel,” Easter sermon on Luke 24:30f, Alyth, March 1940

**Box 44d: Sermons on John 1-5**

- “Behold the Lamb of God,” sermon on John 1:29, Edinburgh BBC service, 28 Sept 1952
- “The Fig Tree,” sermon on John 1:48, Alyth, 1940; Beechgrove, 11 Jan 1948
- Untitled sermon on John 3:1-21; Luke 10:25-37
- “He must increase, I must decrease,” sermon on John 3:30, Alyth, 2 Feb 1941
- “Search the Scriptures,” sermon on John 5:39, Alyth, Sept 1940

**Box 45a Sermons on John 11-15**

- “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” sermon on John 14:6 (np, nd)<sup>956</sup>
- “He who has seen me has seen the Father,” sermon on John 14:9 (np, nd)
- “If a man die, shall he live again?” sermon on John 14:14, 19, Alyth, 8 March 1942
- “The Peace of Christ,” sermon on John 14:27, Alyth April 1940; C[\_\_\_\_]sshill, May 1940; Beechgrove [nd]; Black[\_\_\_\_], 9 Sept 1951; Old Hamstocks, 30 Sept 1951
- “Greater love hath no man...” sermon on John 15:13 and 1 John 4:10, Alyth, 6 Sept 1942; Beechgrove, 21 March 1948

**Box 45b Sermons on Acts**

- Untitled sermon on Acts 1:11, Beechgrove, 8 June 1975
- Untitled sermon on Acts 1:7 and Heb 13:8, Alyth, New Year, January 1941
- “Pentecost,” sermon on Acts 2:37-38, 39, Beechgrove, 5 June 1949
- “The Marks of the True Church,” sermon on Acts 2:42, Alyth, 30 Nov 1941
- “Jesus Christ our Saviour,” sermon on Acts 4:12, Alyth, 2 Nov 1947; Beechgrove, 1949
- Untitled sermon on Acts 5:3, 4 (np, nd)
- “The Conversion of Saul,” sermon on Acts 9, Alyth 17 Jan 1943
- “Paul and Silas at Philippi – Songs in Prison,” sermon on Acts 16:25, Alyth 22 Feb 1942
- “The Philippian jailer,” sermon on Acts 16:30-31, Alyth, 22 Feb 1942
- “Christian Witness – Public Christianity,” sermon on Acts 26:26, Alyth 1940

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<sup>956</sup> Similar sermon are B45 “No man cometh unto the Father but by me,” sermon on John 14:6, Alyth, 12 Aug 1945; “The Way, the Truth, and the Life,” sermon on John 14:6, Alyth, 23 May 1943 and Beechgrove, 7 Aug 1948.

**Box 45c Sermons on Romans 1-7**

- “The Epistle to the Romans (1)” sermon on Rom 1:16-18, Alyth, 13 Dec 1942
- “What is Faith?” sermon on Rom 1:16-17 (np, nd)
- “The Just Shall live by faith” (on Christian assurance), sermon on Rom 1:17, 24 Jan 1943; Beechgrove, 10 Jan 1949
- “Romans chapter 2,” Alyth, 27 Dec 1942
- “Law and Grace,” sermon on Rom 3:19-20; 11:6, Alyth, 11 Oct 1942
- “Being justified freely by his grace,” sermon on Rom 3:24, Alyth, 25 Nov 1945
- “Justification,” sermon on Rom 3:24, Alyth 24 Jan 1943
- “Reconciliation through the Person of Christ,” sermon on Rom 5, Alyth, 14 Feb 1943
- Untitled sermon on Romans 6:11, Alyth, 14 March 1943
- Untitled sermon on Romans 7, Alyth, 9 May 1943

**Box 46a Sermons on Romans 8-16**

- “Sacramental Prayer,” sermon on Rom 8:26-28 (np, nd)
- “God commendeth his love toward us...” sermon on Rom 6:7-8, Alyth, 6 Sept 1942
- “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit...” sermon on Rom 8:16, Alyth, 28 July 1946
- “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,” sermon on Rom 13:14, Alyth, Dec 1941
- “The Fullness of the Christian Gospel,” sermon on Rom 15:29, Alyth, 19 May 1946

**Box 46b Sermons on 1 Corinthians**

- “The Cross a stumbling block,” sermon on 1 Cor 1:23, 24, Alyth, Dec 1940; Beechgrove, 15 Feb 1948
- Untitled sermon on 1 Cor 2:2, Alyth, 15 July 1945; Alyth, 18 Oct 1942
- “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils,” sermon on 1 Cor 10:20, Alyth, 15 Feb 1942
- “The Contrasts to Love,” sermon on 1 Cor 13:1-3, Alyth, 23 Nov 1941
- “If Christ be not risen...” sermon on 1 Cor 15: 17, 18, Alyth, Easter April 1941
- “But now is Christ risen from the dead,” sermon on 1 Cor 15:20, Alyth, Easter April 1941
- “How are the dead raised up?” sermon on 1 Cor 15:35, Beechgrove, 19 Feb 1950

**Box 46c Sermons on 2 Corinthians**

- “Constraint of Love,” sermon on 2 Cor 5:14, Alyth, 1940
- Untitled Moderator’s sermon on 2 Cor 5:18, during the National Service of Thanksgiving in Scotland on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen, 17 May 1977
- “God in Christ reconciling the world,” sermon on 2 Cor 5:19, Alyth, Christmas 1940
- “The Poverty of Christ,” sermon on 2 Cor 8:9, Alyth, 1940
- “The Trinity,” sermon on 2 Cor 13:14, Alyth, Nov 1940; Beechgrove, 20 June 1949
- “The Communion of the Holy Spirit,” sermon on 2 Cor 13:14, Alyth, Sept 1940

**Box 46d Sermons on Galatians**

- “He loves me and gave himself for me,” sermon on Gal 2:20, Alyth 10 Jan 1943; Beechgrove, 13 Jan 1948
- “O Foolish Galatians,” sermon on Gal 3:1, 14 Feb 1948
- “Freedom from Bondage,” sermon on Gal 3:3; 5:11, Alyth, 16 Nov 1941
- Untitled sermon on Gal 3:26-29, (np), 19 Jan 1969
- “Ye have known God, or rather are known of God,” sermon on Gal 4:9, Alyth, 25 Aug 1945; Beechgrove, 14 Dec 1947; 26 Dec 1948

**Box 46e Sermons on Ephesians**

- Untitled sermon on Eph 4:26, Alyth, 10 Nov 1946; A[\_\_\_\_], 1948
- Untitled sermon on Eph 4:20-24, Alyth, 10 March 1946
- “A Disciplined Life,” sermon on Eph 4:11-15, 20-25, Beechgrove, Jan 1950
- “Predestination in Christ,” sermon on Eph 1:4-6, Alyth, 15 Sept 1946
- “Ascension and Second Advent,” sermon on Eph 4:8-10, Alyth, 18 May 1947
- “Speaking the Truth in Love,” sermon on Eph 4:2, [\_\_\_\_], 23 Nov 1947

**Box 46f Sermons on Philippians**

- Untitled sermon on Phil 2:2-8, (np, nd)
- “Work out your own salvation for..,” sermon on Phil 2:12f, Alyth, Oct 1940; Beechgrove, 18 Sept 1949
- “Incarnation,” sermon on Phil 2:5-8, Alyth, Dec 1940
- “God’s Arrows,” sermon on Phil 3:8, 12-14, Alyth, 19 (nm) 1942
- “The peace that passes understanding,” sermon on Phil 4:7, Alyth, 12 Jan 1946; Beechgrove, 16 Jan 1949

**Box 47a Sermons on Colossians**

- “Handwriting and Forgiveness,” sermon on Col 2:14, Alyth, 1940; Beechgrove, 28 Dec 1947
- “Your life is hid with Christ in God,” sermon on Col 3:3, Alyth, Dec 1940; Beechgrove, 4 Jan 1948

**Box 47b Sermons on 1 Thessalonians**

- “Prayer without ceasing... despise not prophesyings,” sermon on 1 Thess 5:16-20, Alyth, 7 Oct 1945

**Box 47c Sermons on 1 and 2 Timothy**

- “Prayer – holy, without resentment and without disputing,” sermon on 1 Tim 2:8, Alyth, 31 Jan 1943
- “God’s Faithfulness,” sermon on 2 Tim 2:12f, Alyth, 1940
- “The Believer’s sealing in Christ,” Baptism sermon on 2 Tim 2:19, Alyth, 27 Jan 1946; Beechgrove, 8 Jan 1950

**Box 47d Sermons on Hebrews**

- “Christ tempted in all points like as we are,” sermon on Heb 2:8; 4:15, Alyth, 12 Oct 1941
- Untitled sermon on Heb 4:9-16, (np, nd)
- “Leaving First Principles,” Baptism sermon on Heb 6:1, Alyth, Nov 1940
- “Christ the Priest of the Resurrection,” sermon on Heb 6:19-20, Beechgrove, 25 April 1954; St K[\_\_\_\_] L[\_\_\_\_], 13 June 1954

- “Sure and Certain Hope,” sermon on Heb 6:17-20, Ar[\_\_\_\_] Hall, NC, 7 Oct 1954
- “Such an high priest became us,” Preparatory service sermon on Heb 7:26, Alyth, 19 Oct 1945
- “Without,” sermon on Heb 9:22; 11:6; 12:14, Alyth, 1940
- “Faith,” sermon on Heb 11:1, Alyth, 19 April 1942
- “Contradiction of Sinners,” sermon on Heb 12:3, Alyth, 1940
- “Esau’s Birthright,” sermon on Heb 12:16f, Alyth, 1940
- “Thanksgiving after Communion,” sermon on Heb 13:16, Alyth, 16 Feb 1941
- “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever,” sermon on Heb 13:8, Beechgrove, 2 Jan 1949

#### **Box 47e Morning Service – Advent Series**

- “What is God Like? – God in the Face of Jesus Christ,” Advent Series 1/3; 6 Dec 1964
- “What is God Like? – God in Judgment,” Advent Series 2/3; 9 Dec 1964
- “What is God Like? – God in Mercy,” Advent Series 3/3; 20 Dec 1964

#### **Box 47f Sermons on 2 Peter**

- “Time and Eternity,” sermon on 2 Pet 3:8, Alyth, 1940
- Untitled sermon on Mark 13:33-37, Athelstaneford and Whitekirk, 4 Jan 1976

#### **Box 47g Sermons on 1 John**

- “Communion,” sermon on 1 John 1:1-3, Alyth, 16 Feb 1941
- “If we walk in the light,” sermon on 1 John 1:7, Alyth, 9 Nov 1941
- “Foreign Mission,” sermon on 1 John 2:2, Alyth, Dec 1940
- “Behold what manner of love...,” sermon on 1 John 3:1, on Christian assurance, Alyth, 14 Oct 1945; Beechgrove (nd)
- “The Condemning Heart,” sermon on 1 John 3:20, Alyth, April 1940; Blair[\_\_\_\_], May 1940; Edinburgh, Oct 1940; Beechgrove, 14 Dec 1947; Queen’s [\_\_\_\_], 6 June 1948; Bla[\_\_\_\_], 4 May 1952; M[\_\_\_\_] High Church, Edinburgh, 13 Sept 1952
- “Everyone that loveth is born of God,” sermon on 1 John 4:7-8, Alyth, 5 May 1946; Beechgrove, 11 Sept 1948
- “Herein is love...,” sermon on 1 John 4:10, Glasgow University Hall, May 1943; St Columba’s, Oxford, 22 July 1945

#### **Box 47h Sermons on Revelations**

- “The Message to the Church of Philadelphia,” sermon on Rev 3:7, 8, 10, 16; Dedication of Elders, Alyth, 3 May 1947
- “Lion and the Lamb,” sermon on Rev 5:5f, Alyth, 1940; Con[\_\_\_\_]: St. Andrews, 1940; Blair[\_\_\_\_]: St. Andrews, 1940
- “And there was no more sea,” sermon on Rev 21:1; Alyth, 3 May 1942

#### **Box 47i Other Sermons**

- Untitled sermon on Rom 12:1, preached upon the death of John Baillie, 1960
- “The Christ who came by water and blood,” Communion sermon on 1 John 5:5-8, Alyth, 19 Oct 1941; Beechgrove, 11 April 1948