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August 2010
‘The Danger of Vertigo’

An Evaluation and Critique of *Theōsis*

in the Theology of

Thomas Forsyth Torrance

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Abstract

The Christian tradition, both East and West, has developed various models and theories of the atonement as explanations of what it means to speak of the reconciling activity of God in Christ. Central to these has been the claim that God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ. One way of testifying to the reconciling love of God has been the adoption of the metaphor theōsis ('divinization', 'deification') as an explanation of salvation. While central to Eastern Orthodoxy, a doctrine of theōsis also has a rich tradition within Western, especially Reformed theology. The Reformed theologian, Thomas Forsyth Torrance, represents an attempt to construct a soteriology that incorporates both Eastern and Western models of the atonement around the controlling metaphor of theōsis. A close reading of his theology presents a robust and clearly articulated doctrine of theōsis as a key way of expressing God's reconciling activity in Christ. As the true Man and the last Adam, Christ represents the archē and telos of human existence, the one in whose image all humanity has been created and into whose likeness all humanity is destined to be transformed from glory to glory. Through the Incarnation the Son becomes human without ceasing to be divine, to unite humanity and divinity together and effect a 'deification' of human nature, mediated to men and women who are said to be 'in Christ' by the work of the Holy Spirit. By means of a 'wonderful exchange' Christ takes what is ours and gives us what is his. For Torrance, this is the heart of atonement. The goal of humanity is worship, something Torrance defines as the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father. The locus of worship, and thus of theōsis, is the church, the communion of saints created by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Throughout Torrance's doctrines of creation, anthropology, incarnation, reconciliation, and pneumatology, the concept of theōsis plays a central and constitutive role in explaining a Christian theology of salvation. Theōsis is thus foundational to Torrance's theology and is one way in which he holds together in systematic fashion his diverse theological oeuvre.
‘Some people think that after this life, or perhaps after several lives, human souls will be ‘absorbed’ into God. But when they try to explain what they mean, they seem to be thinking of our being absorbed into God as one material thing absorbed into another...If this is what happens to us, then being absorbed is the same as ceasing to exist. It is only the Christians who have any idea of how human souls can be taken into the life of God and yet remain themselves – in fact, very much more themselves than they were before...The whole purpose for which we exist is to be thus taken into the life of God. Wrong ideas about what that life is will make it harder.

And now, for a few minutes, I must ask you to follow rather carefully.

• C.S. Lewis

Preface

I owe a debt of gratitude to many people for their support and encouragement over the duration of this project. This work would not have been possible without the help of a University of Otago Postgraduate Scholarship and a scholarship from the John Baldwin Memorial Trust.

I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Ivor Davidson, a theologian whom I admire, whose critical comments and theological insight made the thesis a much better piece of work than it would otherwise have been. I also acknowledge the contribution of my second supervisor, Dr Graham Redding, minister of St John's in the City Presbyterian Church, Wellington, for sharing his wider knowledge of Torrancean theology with me. The views represented in this study are obviously my own and any mistakes are clearly mine, not theirs.

I appreciate and thank the librarians at the University of Otago Remote Services division who understand the needs of a doctoral student so well. To my colleagues and friends at the Carey Baptist College, Bible College of New Zealand, and Pathways College of Bible and Mission, I wish to express my deep gratitude for providing ongoing centres of theological discussion, along with the members of the Systematic Theology Association of Aotearoa-New Zealand, who interacted with aspects of my research.

The process of academic research is a journey, but one that is not made entirely alone. Many people have generously helped me with their time and knowledge. Numerous theologians have given their time freely to discuss aspects of the present work with me, to add valuable critique, and at times much-needed encouragement; for this I am truly grateful. I especially wish to acknowledge the enthusiasm shown to my project by Professor Elmer Colyer (Dubuque Theological Seminary), perhaps the foremost commentator on Torrance today. Professors Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M. Cap. (formerly of Greyfriars, Oxford), Alister McGrath (Wycliffe Hall, Oxford), and Alan Torrance (St Mary's College, St Andrews), offered encouragement and critique mid-way through the study. I especially wish to thank Professor Thomas Torrance himself for his brief but encouraging comments on the nature of the project.

I am grateful to those who listened and helped by reading and commenting at various stages of the work, especially to Associate Professor Peter Lineham (Massey University, Albany) for editorial suggestions on the completed thesis; to my friends Peter and Fleur McGhee, fellow viatores on The Way; and even to those chance acquaintances who had some of the ideas presented here inflicted on them from time to time. Last but certainly not least, to my wife Odele - my favourite theological interlocutor - I owe the greatest thanks and love. Perichoresis, my dear!
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Introduction

Approaching T.F. Torrance and the Theme of Theosis

'What is badly needed in evangelical theology today is a deep rethinking and reshaping of our fundamental grasp and account of all the doctrines of the faith, as well as of all evangelical worship and all evangelistic activity, from their ultimate ground in the doctrine of the triune God.'
- Thomas F. Torrance

'Now the purpose of our life is blessedness... not only to behold the Trinity, supreme in Kingship, but also to receive an influx of the divine, as it were, to suffer deification.'
- The Theoretikon

'Although we have written at length about stillness... we have never dared to write about deification. But now, since there is need to speak, we will speak, reverently, with the Lord's grace, though to describe it is beyond our skill. For even when spoken of, deification remains unutterable: as the Fathers say, it can be identified only by those who have been blessed with it.'
- Gregory Palamas

§1 Introduction

This study addresses the theology of theosis as it is presented in the work of The Very Reverend Professor Thomas Forsyth (T.F.) Torrance (1913-), one of the leading English-language theologians of the twentieth century. Throughout his career T.F. Torrance has presented a doctrine of theosis and an understanding of this illuminates his incarnational view of the atonement. In his espousal of theosis Torrance has advocated a distinctively Eastern model of salvation and yet has managed to do so without jettisoning his own Reformed theological models, usually associated with an emphasis upon humanity's being in union with Christ. Certainly, for Torrance, the two concepts or models of reconciliation - theosis and union with Christ - are not incompatible but are, rather,

complementary. While utilizing the concept of theosis Torrance recognises that for much of the Western tradition this language may appear strange. This leads him to state: ‘let us not quarrel about the word theosis, offensive though it may be to us, but follow its intention’. He explains that intention thus:

Theosis is an attempt to express the staggering significance of Pentecost as the coming from on high, from outside of us and beyond us, of divine power, or rather as the coming of Almighty God, the Maker of heaven and earth, to dwell with sinful mortal man, and therefore as the emancipation of man from imprisonment in himself and the lifting of him up to partake of the living presence and saving acts of God the Creator and Redeemer.

Due to the reluctance of much Western theology to accept notions of theosis Torrance rarely uses the technical vocabulary of theosis and nowhere does he explicitly deal with the issues as such at any length. His theology is, however, profoundly compatible with, and shaped by, the central themes associated with doctrines of theosis. While the formal exposition of theosis may be absent, a strong case can be made that Torrance’s entire theology is significantly influenced by the conceptuality of creaturely salvation as a process of theosis. The questions this study seeks to address are these: What is theosis as used by Torrance? How does he utilise this idea in his theology? At what points is his theology of theosis open to critique? In answering these questions we shall have recourse to consider Eastern traditions of theosis, Western and Reformed models of atonement, Torrance’s immediate antecedents and mentors, and those who have sought to interact critically with his proposals.

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4 While union with God and theosis are not identical they are closely related. In her study of the patristic use of theosis, The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 32, Anna Williams concludes:

There is a firm core that distinguishes this doctrine from some other models of sanctification. First, we can safely say that where we find references to human participation in divine life, there we assuredly have a claim specifically of theosis. This kind of claim regarding participation in divine life is carefully to be distinguished, however, from the idea of divine indwelling in the human person...A second infallible marker of the doctrine, then, is the union of God and humanity, when this union is conceived as humanity’s incorporation into God, rather than God’s into humanity.

5 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 243.

6 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 244.
Echoing the thoughts of the American commentator of Torrance, Elmer Colyer, we may ask the question: How can we gain an integrated view of Torrance’s theology from the discussions of various aspects of his position found in his diverse publications? Colyer’s suggested answer is instructive:

Adopting...Torrance’s perspective, we ‘indwell’ the corpus of Torrance’s writings until we gain an insight into the intrinsic structure, the internal relations of his theology, which we then test and refine through our continued research. This entails an irreducible element of creative imagination, but an imagination controlled from beyond by the field under investigation – Torrance’s theology in his publications.7

The following study represents an attempt to ‘indwell’ Torrance’s work, and to deploy creative imagination in a manner that is tested and controlled by Torrance’s own concerns.

A full biography of Torrance is not in order here. Allister McGrath has done an admirable job in providing the interested reader with a comprehensive intellectual biography.8 Nevertheless, given Torrance’s conviction that to know God we must know his being in his act, it is perhaps appropriate to apply the same methodology to our exploration of Torrance himself. To know his theology is to know him, and vice versa. To this end we shall introduce Torrance the theologian, his theological influences, and the basic orientation of his theological method out of which he develops his scientific Christian dogmatics.

Torrance is variously described as ‘an outstanding churchman and theologian,’9 ‘one of the greatest Protestant theologians of our day,’10

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7 E.M. Colyer, How To Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding his Trinitarian and Scientific Theology (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 337.
undoubtedly one of the most significant Christian theologians of the twentieth century,' or in the words with which Alister McGrath opens his biography, 'Thomas Forsyth Torrance is widely regarded, particularly outside Great Britain, as the most significant British academic theologian of the twentieth century.' Donald Macleod, in a critical assessment of Torrance's work, refers to him as 'among the immortals of Scottish theology, his work on the Trinity an enduring and priceless legacy.' It is perhaps more appropriate to say, with Elmer Colyer, that 'there is a growing consensus that Thomas F. Torrance is one of the premier theologians in the second half of the twentieth century.' Torrance is a theologian's theologian and for that reason alone he rewards his commentators with stimulating and fruitful study.

Given the immense volume of Torrance's writings (over six hundred published works) it is somewhat surprising to find that apart from a number of unpublished doctoral theses there has to date been no comprehensive critique of his theology as a whole. Furthermore, it does not appear that any sustained critique of Torrance's soteriology in particular has ever been attempted. In the words of Colin Gunton, 'it

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12 A. E. McGrath, T.F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), xi.
13 D. Macleod, 'Dr T. F. Torrance and Scottish Theology: A Review Article [Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell, 1999], Evangelical Quarterly 72 (2000), 72.
15 This point was noted especially by D. F. Ford, 'Review of Thomas F. Torrance, Reality and Scientific Theology,' in Scottish Journal of Theology 41 (1988), 276. In order to address this gap in 2003 the 'Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship' was formed, meeting as a sub-group of the AAR, the mission of which is described on their website http://www.tftorrance.org/ as:

The Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship is a distinctively Christian research organization devoted to the exploration, development, and dissemination of the theology of Thomas F. Torrance and other theologians contributing to this endeavor. The society exists to promote and sustain fellowship and truth-seeking (fides quaerens intellectum) in theological reflection upon the Christian faith, within the mainstream of the Christian Church and tradition in light of the theological legacy of Thomas F. Torrance. We are a Christian fellowship serving the Christian faith and the renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ.

16 McGrath has indicated his intention to write detailed studies on Torrance's theology, specifically focussing on issues such as the regulative and foundational function of the homoousion, and the concept of 'kataphysic' theology, A. E. McGrath, T.F. Torrance; An Intellectual Biography (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), xiv. McGrath has since published material on this throughout his
appears remarkable, scandalous even, that there is so little detailed secondary discussion of [Torrance's] work.\textsuperscript{17} Presently there are only two book-length treatments of Torrance's theology: an intellectual biography by Alister McGrath,\textsuperscript{18} and a theological guide by Elmer Colyer.\textsuperscript{19} Book-length critiques of specific aspects of his work are also conspicuous by their absence; those that do exist are confined to a few monographs and a number of unpublished theses, mostly associated with Torrance's 'scientific theology' and epistemology as it relates to the knowledge of God. While Torrance is clearly a major force on the contemporary theological landscape\textsuperscript{20} his work is relatively unexamined in terms of its potential for both development and critique. With this in mind, a study of \textit{theōsis} in Torrance's work could have important implications for Western models of soteriology in contemporary discussion.\textsuperscript{21}

Torrance is a Presbyterian minister, a distinguished Professor of Christian Dogmatics, a patristic scholar, a major translator and interpreter of Barth in the English-speaking world, a faithful husband, devoted father, Christian scientist, and ecumenical leader.\textsuperscript{22} Perhaps the greatest accolade one might pay Torrance, and one that he himself would certainly welcome, is that he is at heart a \textit{Christian}, a figure who is

\textsuperscript{17} C. Gunton, "Foreword," in J.H-K. Yeung, \textit{Being and Knowing: An Examination of T.F. Torrance's Christological Science} (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996), xvii.

\textsuperscript{18} A.E. McGrath, \textit{T.F. Torrance; An Intellectual Biography} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999).


\textsuperscript{20} As one example of this point we could note that in an unpublished letter dated October 6\textsuperscript{th} 1986, Jürgen Moltmann, on receipt of his \textit{Festschrift}, wrote to Torrance: 'You are encouraging me to study more Newton and Einstein in order to overcome the remnants of my theological forefathers' dualism. Thank you very much. You have done me a greater favour than you may probably expect,' in A.G. Marley, \textit{T.F. Torrance: The Rejection of Dualism} (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1992), 19.


\textsuperscript{22} I. Mackenzie describes Torrance as 'a wild preacher, whose heart and voice sang with a love for a wild Chris,' I. Mackenzie, 'Let the Brain Take the Strain (or: The Hail in this Tale Falls Mainly on the Gael),' in \textit{St Andrews Rock}, ed. S. Lamont (London: Bells Publishing, 1992), 82. Interestingly, Mackenzie was referring as much to Torrance's lectures as his preaching.
utterly persuaded by the truth of the gospel and seeks to persuade others of that same truth.

Throughout Torrance’s life and career a constant refrain has been the interaction and integration between theology and science. In theology his main influences have been Athanasius, Calvin, and Barth.23

Torrance writes theology from within the Protestant Reformed tradition. Throughout his writings he shows an admiration for and reliance upon the theology of John Calvin especially. Many concepts employed by Calvin are adopted in his own trinitarian theology. However, while accepting much of Calvin’s theological thought Torrance is scathing of the way in which he believes Calvin was systematised in later Calvinism, particularly by the seventeenth-century Protestant scholastics.24 Out of such scholasticism (and Enlightenment science) have arisen a number of dualisms that, according to Torrance, threaten to derail or at least sidetrack much contemporary theological (and scientific) endeavour. In Torrance’s own work he has set himself the task of removing all a priori dualisms that have creep into contemporary theology.25

23 Torrance wrote in his little work Christ’s Words (Jedburgh: The Unity Press, 1980), 4, that Athanasius is ‘my favourite theologian.’ There is scarcely a single publication of Torrance’s in which the insights of Athanasius are not brought out either implicitly or more often than not, explicitly. Other theological influences would include Hilary of Poitiers, Gregory Nazianzus, Anselm of Canterbury, Richard of St Victor, John Duns Scotus, John Major, and H.R. Mackintosh. In terms of his patristic influences Del Colle correctly speaks of Torrance plotting ‘his own course through the Greek Fathers, a Nicene-Athanasian-Nazianzen-Epiphanius-Cyrilline axis to be exact,’ R. Del Colle, ‘Person’ and ‘Being’ in John Zizioulas’ Trinitarian Theology: Conversations with Thomas F. Torrance and Thomas Aquinas,’ Scottish Journal of Theology 54 (2001), 77.


His former lecturer at Edinburgh University, Hugh Ross Mackintosh, introduced Torrance to the work of Karl Barth, an acquaintance his mother had enhanced when she gave her son a copy of Barth’s *Credo* when he entered the Faculty of Divinity at New College. It was this interest and admiration for Barth that prompted Torrance to study under Barth at Basel in 1937-38. Torrance’s love for and respect of Barth’s theology has never waned. In one sense his entire writing career has been an attempt to critically explicate the central concerns of Barth’s theological method.

Barth’s theology has been one of the most influential on Torrance’s own exposition of the Christian doctrine of God. Like Barth, Torrance believes that nothing is or can be known of God but that which comes by his active self-revelation. Torrance takes up and consistently develops Barth’s claim that what God is in his revelation, he is antecedently and eternally in himself. It is for this reason that Torrance is above all a theologian of the doctrine of the knowledge of God. This knowledge of God is available in a ‘scientific manner’.

From another of his New College lecturers, Daniel Lamont, Torrance acquired an interest in Christianity and science as Lamont introduced him

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27 Torrance was a member of Barth’s small theology group the *Sozietät* which met in his own house once a week. In a letter to his friend Eduard Thurneysen, Barth expressed his approval of ‘der Schotlander,’ D.W. Torrance, ‘Thomas Forsyth Torrance: Minister of the Gospel, Pastor, and Evangelical Theologian,’ in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance*, ed. E.M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 9. Incidentally, Thomas Torrance’s brothers, James and David, were also part of the *Sozietät* in their respective years spent studying with Karl Barth.


to the work of the Tübingen scientist, Karl Heim. Torrance has consistently sought to work out a ‘scientific theology’, a methodology he professes to have learned from several key influences, most notably John Philoponos, Albert Einstein, and Michael Polanyi. He also claims that this methodology is modelled in the theology of Anselm of Canterbury and Karl Barth. Given Torrance’s theological epistemology of divine self-revelation, he argues it is only natural that this be termed a ‘scientific theology’. Theology for Torrance is always a posteriori: first we encounter the active self-presentation of reality that is before us, then we press further in order to understand the order and connectedness of deeper structures of reality. In theological terms this is a consistent and considered outworking of the Augustinian-Anselmic fides quaerens intellectum tradition of theological enquiry, a methodology that Torrance argues is proper to all scientific investigation, not simply to theology alone. What distinguishes the various disciplines of science is the Torrancean axiom that the nature of the object prescribes the mode of rationality proper to its investigation.

According to the ‘scientific’ nature of Christian theology, a certain form and method must be adhered to if Christian theology is to be faithful to its object of study, God himself. Torrance constructs his epistemology in a way that he describes as ‘true science’, something we shall consider more below. From Barth, Torrance takes his trinitarian ‘ground and grammar’: the self-revelation of God and the crucial role of the incarnation in this self-revelation of the triune God. These became essential for his ‘system’ or architectonic structure. In discussing what

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30 Other philosophical and scientific mentors include Søren Kierkegaard (a relatively unexamined influence behind Torrance’s thought), Karl Heim, and James Clerk Maxwell. Torrance once commented that in his study he has hung on the wall ‘a line portrait of Einstein...looking across to the desk where I work, but I also have in my study portraits of Michael Polanyi and James Clerk Maxwell, from whom I have learned so much,’ ‘T.F. Torrance Responds,’ in The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance, ed. E.M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 333.

31 This methodology is worked out in numerous publications but most comprehensively throughout T.F. Torrance, Theological Science (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). What Torrance considers to be different about theological science is that the fides quaerens intellectum refers to faith in God as the unique object determining thought. While scientists follow a kataphysic inquiry, they do so by looking away from God toward the world. Theologians, however, look away from the world toward God. I am grateful to Paul Molnar for making this clear to me in private correspondence.
Barth meant to him, Torrance makes it clear that the development of a clear, scientific structure is a goal that he has pursued right from his earliest days as an undergraduate in Edinburgh, through a year in Basel with Barth, and then in his long scholarly career. Torrance describes his quest as seeking to explore and articulate 'the scientific substructure of Christian dogmatics'.

Torrance has worked out his theological writing in five main areas: epistemology and method; the interaction between theology and natural science; the triunity of God; christology; and soteriology. Importantly, though less exhaustively, Torrance also deals considerably with ecumenical interests and the missionary task. While each of these themes is distinct for Torrance, they are never completely separate. Like the identity and mission of Jesus Christ the various loci of Torrance's theology are interdependent and mutually constitutive. It is worth looking at some of the key features of his theological approach but it will not be necessary to canvass all five areas mentioned above.

§2.1 Scientific Theology

Torrance's published works indicate a central concern to explicate the deep interrelation between Christian theology and the natural sciences.

34 See J.D. Morrison, Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 24. In addition to theological and scientific influences Torrance has also had an enduring relationship with the churches of the East. In the early 1980s he proposed that the Reformed and Eastern Orthodox communions should enter into dialogue, seeking theological consensus on the doctrine of the Trinity, for agreement there would influence all further discussions. The Ecumenical Patriarch and other Patriarchs of the Greek Orthodox Church responded favourably and by 1983 all fourteen Orthodox Churches were involved. Between 1986 and 1990 discussions took place resulting in the 'Agreed Statement on the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity,' reached at Geneva on 13 March 1991. See T.F. Torrance, ed., Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches. Vols. 1 & 2 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985, 1993). For the agreed statement see vol. 2.219-226. Cf. T.F. Torrance, Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994). Torrance considers this one of his most important contributions to the life of the global church.
35 In 1978 Torrance was awarded the prestigious Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion on account of his contributions to the discussion of the interaction of Christian theology and the natural sciences. Among his major writings to deal with this theme, the following are widely regarded as being of particular significance: T.F. Torrance, Theological Science (London:
For Torrance, all theological exploration is a scientific endeavour, and so it is bound by a common scientific methodology. What Torrance is most concerned with in this regard is to expound the right methodology and epistemology by which a truly Christian scientific theology operates. Clearly, it is not necessary for present purposes to offer a comprehensive analysis and critique of Torrance’s interaction with the natural sciences, a task that has in any event been attempted numerous times elsewhere. Here we shall simply observe the essential features of his method.

Alongside the five areas in which Torrance has worked out his theological writing we may add five central concerns of Torrance’s approach to a specifically scientific theology. The first is that the natural sciences and theology share common points in their view of the universe, the most fundamental of which is that the universe is ordered. The second major point for Torrance is that all sciences share one common methodological dictum, and that is the kata physic nature of scientific enquiry. Third, Torrance has reformulated an epistemology of ‘critical realism’, which he holds in common with many natural scientists, and has sought to work out his own theological enterprise consistently in accord with this philosophy. This is not an a priori philosophy imposed on science or science.

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In an appreciative article Palma presents four areas in which he believes Torrance has made the most significant contributions to theology: 1) theological discipline through obedient listening; 2) theological integrity through real integration; 3) theological advance through scientific understanding; and 4) theological relevance through real relations. R.J. Palma, ‘Thomas F. Torrance’s Reformed Theology,’ Reformed Review 38 (1984), 2-46. The five point outline we have focussed on is more specifically targeted at Torrance’s scientific theology than Palma’s broader perspective.
theology but rather one that recognises the *a posteriori* nature of all knowledge. As a consequence of this critical realism a fourth feature of Torrance’s work is evident, namely his relation to various philosophers of science most notably, Michael Polanyi. Finally, Torrance articulates a distinctive natural theology in conscious development of the stance of his mentor Karl Barth.

§2.1.1 The Kataphysic Nature of Science and Theology

Like Barth, Torrance holds that the distinctive nature of theology is determined by its object, which is defined as God revealed in Jesus Christ. Like every other true science, theology is under an intrinsic obligation to give an account of reality according to its distinct nature, that is, *kata physin*. The fundamental axiom that Torrance proposes in this connection is that ‘We know things in accordance with their natures, or what they are in themselves; and so we let the nature of what we know determine for us the content and form of our knowledge.’ This principle is expounded in the following way: ‘In each field of inquiry, then, we must be faithful to the reality we seek to know and must act and think always in a relation of relentless fidelity to that reality.’ In this way Torrance has expressed a fundamental and unifying method for all scientific investigation, not the least of which is scientific theology.

God has given himself in Jesus Christ and so our theology necessarily is an *a posteriori* matter. In and through Jesus Christ, God has made

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himself to be known and has enabled humanity to respond in a certain way. We are thus under an obligation to respond in faith in accordance with God's self-revelation. Torrance's ultimate concern is to provide a scientific explanation for the knowledge of God. This cannot be achieved logically or directly by way of a straightforward move from the phenomenological to the noumenal but rather more in accordance with the nature of the object being studied – in this case God. God must reveal himself if knowledge of him is to be achieved. This knowledge of God is given, according to Torrance (and the Christian tradition), in diverse ways, but it is ultimately through the Person of God the Son incarnate, Jesus Christ.

The essential formulation of this was expressed in the great ecumenical creeds of Christendom at Nicaea and Constantinople, formalised in what Torrance describes as the 'linchpin of this theology' - the homoousion, the confession that Jesus Christ the incarnate Son is of one being or of one substance with God the Father; this is crucial to a truly scientific Christian theology because it provides a realist basis for knowledge of God. Nicene theology thus gave basic shape to the doctrine of the Trinity that was found to belong to the essential structure of faith in God and to the intrinsic grammar of Christian thought.

In this manner Torrance moves from a treatment of method or epistemology to his more doctrinal material specifically relating to the nature of the triune God. This is the way in which Torrance's soteriology

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41 Torrance's commitment to the 'doing' of theology as a science was ingrained very early as can be seen in his response to the invitation extended to Torrance by Princeton University in 1939 to teach theology on an 'objective basis' and in a 'dispassionate way.' Torrance responded by declaring that he could only teach theology as a science. When asked to elaborate on this statement he explained that in science 'you don't think in a detached way; you think as you are compelled to think by the evidential grounds upon which you work. It's a much more rigorous way of thinking, but it is a much more objective way of thinking because all your thinking is controlled by the realities you are inquiring into.' I.J. Hesselink, 'A Pilgrimage in the School of Christ – An Interview with T.F. Torrance,' in Reformed Review 38 (1984), 54. Torrance was, to his surprise, appointed to the position. He subsequently turned it down due to the impending outbreak of World War Two. See A.E. McGrath, T.F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 57-58.


and indeed his doctrine of theosis will be seen to function in such a system. In Jesus Christ is revealed very God of very God. God is in his own being what he is as God’s revealing Word and saving Act toward us. Through Christ and the Spirit we are given access to God as he is in himself. This access to God is, in part, in the form of knowledge of God as he is in himself, in his internal relations as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The epistemological strength of the homoousion works here with full force for it represents the consubstantial relation between Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, and God himself. As the image of God, identical with his reality, knowledge of the Incarnate Son through the Holy Spirit has a unique and controlling finality in knowledge of God.

§2.1.2 Critical Realism

According to McGrath, ‘Torrance is widely credited with having formulated “the most highly developed version of realism” available in modern theology.’ Torrance develops his critical realism first from natural science and second from theology. Theology and the sciences share a common commitment to a realist epistemology in view of their shared assumption of an ordered universe, with each responding appropriately to its respective object of study (kata physin). Each of these disciplines recognises:

The impossibility of separating out the way in which knowledge arises from the actual knowledge that it attains. Thus in theology the canons of inquiry that are discerned in the process of knowing are not separable from the body of actual knowledge out of which they arise. In the nature of the case a true and adequate account of theological epistemology cannot be gained apart from substantial exposition of

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the content of the knowledge of God, and of the knowledge of man and the world as creatures of God... this means that all through theological inquiry we must operate with an open epistemology in which we allow the way of our knowing to be clarified and modified pari passu with advance in deeper and fuller knowledge of the object, and that we will be unable to set forth an account of that way of knowing in advance but only by looking back from what has been established as knowledge.46

Torrance is a realist as opposed to a positivist. He does not advocate a direct correspondence between concepts and experience.47 This also accounts for why he is a critical realist.48 Torrance also rejects a 'naive realism' in which there is a direct correspondence between knowledge and reality.49 After giving a brief history of the use of critical realism within the science and religion community McGrath, in his Scientific Theology draws upon the work of Torrance to further clarify what this epistemology entails.50

If there exists a reality independent of us – so that its existence is prior to our recognition or acceptance of that reality – then we are obliged to respond to that reality, offering as best an account of it as we can. While fully conceding that theological formulations are incapable of capturing the fullness of the divine realities, such an approach to theology will insist that there are such divine realities, and that a scientific theology represents a principled attempt to describe and comprehend them under the limiting conditions that are imposed upon humanity by virtue of our created character and fallen nature.51

49 In a discussion of Torrance's 'ana-logic and critical realism' Spjuth clearly distinguishes Torrance's critical realism from a 'representational position' (naive realism), see R. Spjuth, Creation, Contingency and Divine Presence: In the Thealogies of Thomas F. Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel (Lund: Lund University Press, 1995), 94-101. With a phrase borrowed from Nancy Murphy, Spjuth characterizes Torrance's as a 'chastened modern,' 98.
The specific form of critical realism advocated by Torrance connects the knower and the known together in personal union, thus putting the knower (theologian) under a certain obligation to offer a rational account of that which exists independently of the knower (theology). When applied to theology, objective reality, which in this case is God in his self-givenness, has ontological priority over all of our human referencing. Theological thinking, as with all scientific thinking, must be properly realist. It is out of this ‘theological realism’ that Torrance sees the homoousion as a faithful expression and model of the oneness in being in the relation of the incarnate Son with the Father. Ultimately, Torrance’s theological realism is grounded in God and calls the church back to a truly ‘rational worship of God’ (logike latreia). From the basis of such a scientific theology Torrance constructs a doctrine of theōsis.

§3 Theōsis as a Theological Motif

What exactly is theōsis? This section briefly examines a definition of the term in its biblical and historical perspectives. In this way a context will be established for discussing Torrance’s use and development of theōsis in his own theological construction.

§3.1 The Semantics of Theōsis

In order to assess theōsis we need to pursue two complementary lines of enquiry, the first etymological, the second historical. Only the broad brushstrokes of both themes will be presented here as the history and

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This point is made clear in T.F. Torrance, ‘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), 193:

It is as our communion with God the Father through Christ and in the Spirit is founded in and shares in the inner Trinitarian consubstantial or homoousial communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that the subjectively-given pole of conceptuality is constantly purified and refined under the searching light and quickening power of the objectively-given pole in divine revelation. Within that polarity Christian theology becomes what it essentially is and ought always to be, logike latreia, rational worship of God.
use of the concept of *theōsis* have been rehearsed many times in scholarly literature.\textsuperscript{53}

*Theōsis* is largely synonymous with another term *theopoiēsis*. Literally, *theōsis* means ‘becoming god,’ and *theopoiēsis*; ‘making divine’ or ‘making into a god.’\textsuperscript{54} In English *theōsis* is typically translated as ‘divinization’ or ‘deification,’ although both of these English renderings are seen by many scholars, both Western and Eastern, as inadequate and even misleading.\textsuperscript{55} Pelikan argues for the retention of the transliterated form *theōsis* on account of the ‘grave handicaps’ both English terms pose to Western readers.\textsuperscript{56} The argument against the use of ‘divinisation’ and ‘deification’ is that the Greek term *theōsis* means something far deeper than these English words can express. We shall follow the advice of Pelikan and others and simply transliterate the Greek term in most instances.\textsuperscript{57} As Torrance himself puts it: ‘let us not quarrel about the word *theosis*, offensive though it may be to us [in the West], but follow its intention...’\textsuperscript{58} The question becomes, however, what is its intention? The answer depends, in large part, on who is using the term.


\textsuperscript{57} This also explains the consistent use of italics for *theōsis*, except for when citing another’s work in which italics have not been used. At times the English terms ‘deification,’ ‘divinization’ in quotation marks will be employed for reasons of ease and style.

\textsuperscript{58} T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 243. By referring to *theōsis* as being ‘offensive’ Torrance is acknowledging the fact that for many Westerners, especially of the Reformed tradition, the idea or concept of *theōsis* is familiar and orthodox but the technical term is somewhat foreign. This in part explains Torrance’s own reluctance to use the technical term *theōsis* more often in his work, especially in those places where he is describing this very theology, and also, conversely, highlights how seriously and consciously he did adopt a doctrine of *theōsis* into his theology, as he did not hesitate using the technical term at central junctures of his theology. So while used sparingly, when the technical language of *theōsis* does appear in Torrance’s work it is deliberate and fundamental to his theology.
§3.2 A Brief History of Theōsis

The use of the concept of theōsis has a rich pedigree extending back through the early church to Scripture itself. While mostly associated with the Greek patristic theologians and the Eastern Orthodox Church, the doctrine also has a developed use in the West, something often overlooked by its contemporary detractors and Eastern advocates alike. In order to understand the contribution of Torrance we must appreciate the theological background against which he makes his own particular contribution.

In the Old Testament, the teaching of the creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God and the call of the chosen people through the covenant to a closer communion with God prepared for the development of the theme in the New Testament. The New Testament teaching that God's Son becomes man so that man (humanity) may participate in God through the adoption of the Spirit is elaborated on

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While the specific antecedents are limited to a few texts, chiefly Jn 10.34 (Ps 82.6); Jn 17.20-23; Acts 17.28; and 2 Pet 1.4, 'In fact,' B. Studer comments, '[T]he biblical foundation is much more solid than it seems, as long as we know how to use the Scriptural evidence without forcing it. Texts concerning man as God’s image (Gen 1.26f), divine sonship (Gal 4.5ff.; Rom 8.15), imitation of God (Mt 5.4-48) and of Christ (Phil 2.5-11), as well as texts presenting the new life of Christians as a pledge and anticipation of future glory (1 Cor 13.12; 2 Cor 3.18; 1 Jn 3.1-3), must all be considered in this light.

A doctrine of theōsis was one of the fundamental themes of the Fathers. The Fathers took the idea from Scripture and began to reinterpret theōsis in their own cultural and philosophical environments, not least that of Platonism. Not only are the actual words theōsis and theopoioēsis relevant but also the reality of those terms as expressed by many other words, both Greek and Latin, such as aptharsia, methexis, koinonia, henosis, glorificatio, profectus ad Deum and others. With each development of the idea certain philosophical premises found their way into the particular expression of the doctrine of theōsis, the extent of

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64 The idea of theōsis predated the patristic era and can be found in the works of Plato and Plotinus. See A.N. Williams, The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27.

65 N. Russell, The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-2, identifies three usages of the term deification; the nominal, analogical, and metaphorical. Nominally the word ‘gods’ describes human beings as a term of honour. Analogically the term asserts that humans can become ‘sons or gods “by grace” in relation to Christ who is Son and God “by nature”’. The metaphorical use of the term is applied in one of two ways, the ethical and realistic. In the ethical, humans attempt likeness to God by moral imitation. In the realistic, humans participate in God’s being. However, even in participationist conceptions of deification the relationship is ‘asymmetrical’, the bringing together of beings of ‘diverse ontological type’.

66 For a summary of the various word usage see S. Finlan and V. Kharlamov, ‘Introduction,’ in Theōsis: Deification in Christian Theology, eds. S. Finlan and V. Kharlamov (OR.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 1-8. A.N. Williams reminds us of the Fathers’ ‘quasi-technical vocabulary’ for theōsis in terms of three ‘virtual synonyms’: participation, union, and adoption, in addition to a number of related but secondary phrases such as: grace, virtue, knowledge, light, contemplation, glory, and vision, see ‘Deification in the Summa Theologiae: A Structural Interpretation of the Prima Pars,’ Thomist 61 (1997), 222. Many of these Patristic and Scholastic themes are also found in Torrance’s work and will be highlighted throughout in the present study.
which forms a large part of historical interest and comment on the doctrine.  

Against the novelty of Gnostic notions of theōsis, Irenaeus worked out the first Christian response and in doing so the first authentically Christian synthesis of human theōsis. According to his doctrine, theōsis is the goal of the human person. For Irenaeus, 'If the Word is made man it is that men might become gods.' Irenaeus connected Christ's incarnation with human redemption, the Holy Spirit, immortality and communion with God. We find in Irenaeus that the imago Dei is connected specifically to theōsis, a theme that will dominate the later tradition. Irenaeus also led the way in holding together the 'two poles' of theōsis, as Williams describes them: the fundamental ontological divide between created and Uncreated, and the creature's likening to the Utterly

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67 See in this regard the brief work of M.D. Nispel, 'Christian Deification and the Early Testimonia,' Vigiliae Christianae 53 (1999), 289-304, who seeks the origins of 'deification' concepts in the early church arguing that they are derived from the church's christological use of Psalm 82 in the East and West, not, as J. Gross, La divinisation du chrétien d'après les pères grecs: Contribution historique à la doctrine de la grâce (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1938), 1-69, and others have argued, simply from the Hellenistic milieu in which the early fathers dwelt. See the useful discussion of S. Finlan, 'Second Peter's Notion of Divine Participation,' Theosia: Deification in Christian Theology, eds. S. Finan and V. Kharlamov (Or.: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 32-50, who examines the Middle Platonic Stoic, Hellenistic Jewish, and Pauline origins of the concept.

68 Gnosticism was not the only context in which ideas of theōsis were developed. In this regard we could refer to the Gospel of Thomas and its presentation of individual deification as a final step in one's quest for wisdom, understood within the wider context of Syriac sapiential writings. According to this 'gospel,' deification applies equally to Christ as it does for the rest of humanity. See A. Siverstev, 'The Gospel of Thomas and Early Stages in the Development of the Christian Wisdom Literature,' Journal of Early Christian Studies 8 (2000), 319-340. Siverstev concludes: 'The idea of Jesus as personified wisdom could exist in parallel with, or be an early attempt at taming, personal deification theology. It is important, however, to see that originally the two of them were clearly different if not directly opposed to each other,' 340.


72 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 3.10.2 (ANF, 1.424).

73 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 6.1.1. (ANF, 1.527).
other. For Irenaeus this was ultimately an eschatological reality that is merely initiated in this life.

Irenaeus is generally credited as the originator of the common patristic distinction, based on Gen 1.26, between the image of God and the likeness of God. Irenaeus described the image of God most often as our rationality, moral freedom, and responsibility, which we retain after the fall and the likeness is typically the 'robe of sanctity' that the Holy Spirit had bestowed on Adam which, to use the words of Aquinas, enabled the first human to use reason to control his 'lower powers' (emotions). Adam lost the divine likeness in the fall, but retained the divine image. In redemption the divine likeness is restored to us. This divine likeness was only revealed and made possible through the incarnation of the eternal Son and hence, for Irenaeus, the imago Dei is inherently soteriological. Fantino, Gross, and Quasten believe that the


75 See D. Minns, Irenaeus (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 59-62. For Irenaeus humanity is destined to be conformed to the image and likeness of the Son – towards its divine perfection. Augustine would accept the distinction and develop it. See E. Te Selle, Augustine the Theologian (London: Burns and Oats, 1970), 115.

76 T. Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, (Westminster, MD.: Christian Classics, 1911, rev. 1920, rpt. 1980), 1.95 1

77 This is not to imply that Irenaeus was totally consistent in his use or definition of 'image' and 'likeness.' As Minns states, 'a distinction is sometimes drawn between image and likeness, but not always the same distinction,' D. Minns, Irenaeus (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 59. See the survey of this distinction between 'image' and 'likeness' in J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 4th edn. (London: A&C Black, 1968), 170-174; and J. Fantino, L'homme image de Dieu chez saint Irénée de Lyon (Paris: Cerf, 1986). For a comprehensive treatment of the imago Dei of Irenaeus within the broader context of the Antiochene tradition see the study of F.G. McLeod, The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition (Washington, DC.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 52-58.

78 A similar line of thinking was developed by Emil Brunner when he posited a distinction between the 'formal' and the 'material' aspects of the imago Dei. According to Brunner the formal aspect has to do with human identity; it is this that distinguishes humanity from other creatures of God's creation. The material aspect is concerned with human relationality towards God and is found only within the redeemed. E. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption (London: Lutterworth, 1952), 57-58.


80 This is true particularly because of Irenaeus' physical conception of the imago Dei. Adam was a typos of Christ, not one who simply prefigured Christ but one who bears in his own body the lineaments of the incarnate Son of God. According to Irenaeus, when God formed Adam he did
soteriological anthropology of Irenaeus implies a doctrine of theosis, although Irenaeus never uses the precise word theopoiesis.\textsuperscript{81} Theosis does not extinguish the boundary between Creator and creature but is, according to Irenaeus, the raising of a person to a level where he or she becomes a child of God.\textsuperscript{82}

Clement of Alexandria is credited with being the first thinker to 'christianize' the term theopoiesis.\textsuperscript{83} With Clement of Alexandria\textsuperscript{84} the technical language of deification (theopoieō) was, for the first time, applied to the imitation of the Logos through a participation in the divine attributes of immortality and incorruption through a mastering of the passions.\textsuperscript{85} Human assimilation to God, according to Clement, is not an absorption into the essence of God but rather a 'promotion to glory' or growth into a 'perfect humanity.'\textsuperscript{86} Clement believes that while extremely difficult, theosis is achievable in this life, not simply, as Irenaeus held, in the next. Central to Clement's doctrine of theosis is its achievement by way of 'Christian' gnosis. Not all Christians arrive at this gnosis and thus not all achieve the end of theosis. In human history the only individual to have achieved complete deification is Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{87}
Gross concludes his survey of Clement's doctrine of theosis with the following:

We can say that for Clement of Alexandria, Christianity is “a mystery similar to those of the pagans, but more truthful and certain.” For simple believers it is a mystery of worship in which they find their salvation. On the contrary, for perfect Christians, the gnostics, it is a literary mystery which divinizes them. \(^{88}\)

According to Origen, when believers transcend the material realm the contemplation of God is brought to ‘its proper fulfilment’. He defined this fulfilment as the human spirit being ‘deified by that which it contemplates’. \(^{89}\) The frequency of the terminology of theopoïēsis and becoming theoi is much greater in Origen’s work than it is in Clement of Alexandria’s. Origen presents a doctrine of theosis as an integral part of his theological synthesis. In his Commentary on John he distinguishes between ho theos, that is, God the Father, from the Son as Wisdom or Logos who is only theos, God, by participation. The Logos is the one through whom rational creatures participate in the divine (theosis). \(^{90}\) It is with Origen that the idea of human nature becoming absorbed into the divine is first articulated. This misconception of the doctrine of theosis - what has most often been termed divinization - is what many today initially think of when the term theosis is used. Torrance, and many others, wish to counter that ‘faulty’ connection and argue in favour of a more biblical definition of the doctrine.

\[\text{§3.2.1} \quad \text{Theosis in the Fourth Century}\]

It was only in the fourth century, however, that theosis came in for more expansive treatment. Athanasius stands out as one of its main architects. \(^{91}\) He reasons that when God assumed humanity and became

\(^{88}\) J. Gross, La divinisation du chrétien d’après les pères grecs: Contribution historique à la doctrine de la grace (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1938), 174.


\(^{91}\) For an exhaustive list of his uses of theopoieō (51x); theopoïēsis (3x); koinōnia (69x); and other cognates for theosis see G. Müller, Lexicon Athanasianum (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co,
incarnate, he opened the way for people to ascend to him, assume divinity, and become ‘in-godded.’ In one of his letters to Adelphus Athanasius makes his famous statement that the Son of God became man ‘that he might deify us in himself’. Elsewhere he writes that Christ ‘was made man that we might be made God.’ When understood within the broader theological logic of Athanasius it is clear that by this language he intends to say that theosis is the means of salvation whereby the human person is incorporated, not into the divine essence as such, but into the person of Christ who, by virtue of the hypostatic union, is the mediator of divinity. In a summary statement of the Athanasian conception of theosis we read simply that ‘He deified that which He put on, and more than that, ‘gave’ it graciously to the race of man.’ By this time theosis was a firmly established christological doctrine and was most often used to demonstrate, against the Arians, the full humanity and full deity of the Incarnate Christ (and the deity of the Holy Spirit). With Athanasius the doctrine of theosis has become, to use


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94 Athanasius, Defence of the Nicene Definition, 14 (NPNF, 2nd series, 4.516) writes:

...that the Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all, and that we partaking of His Spirit, might be deified a gift which we could not otherwise have gained than by His clothing Himself in our created body, for hence we derive our name of "men of God" and "men in Christ." But as we, by receiving the Spirit, do not lose our own proper substance, so the Lord, when made man for us, and bearing a body, was no less God; for He was not lessened by the envelopment of the body, but rather deified it and rendered it immortal.


96 Another Alexandrian is important here, Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril modified the physicalist anthropology developed by Athanasius into a more ontological and spiritualized sense of deification. For Cyril deification is participation through the incarnation in the life of the Triune God as his sons (and daughters) through baptism and the eucharist. See N. Russell, ‘Partakers of the Divine nature in the Byzantine Tradition,’ in Kathegetria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey on Her 80th Birthday, ed. J. Chrysostimides (Porphyrogenitus, 1988), 51-67; and J. Gross, La divinisation du chrétien d’après les pères grecs: Contribution historique à la doctrine de la grace (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1938), 277-297. Torrance’s sacramental theology has a great deal in common
the words of Dalmais, an 'uncontested truth'. In a helpful and concise summary of Athanasian theōsis Hughes writes:

When Athanasius said that the Word of God became incarnate in order that we might be deified he was speaking of the redemptive purpose of the Son’s coming, which was not only to set us free from the guilt and power of sin and to reconcile us to the Father but also to exalt us in himself to the glorious perfection of God’s everlasting kingdom and to that imperishable life that swallows up our mortality; he was speaking of our transposition from this present frail and fleeting existence to that full and unclouded existence which is bestowed on us by God; he was speaking, in short, of the attainment of that resplendent destiny of harmony with our Creator that was from the beginning intended for us. To enter into the ‘inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us’ is to ‘become partakers of the divine nature’ (1 Pet 1.4; 2 Pet 1.4). It is not the obliteration of the ontological distinction between Creator and creature but the establishment at last of intimate and uninterrupted personal communion between them.98

‘The Cappadocians,’ according to the study of Emil Bartos, ‘took the doctrine of deification from the Alexandrians and adapted it to a Platonizing understanding of Christianity as the attainment of likeness to God as far as is possible for human nature.’99 For Basil (who used the terminology of theōsis / apotheosis sparingly), the goal of our calling is to become like God.100 This experience he attributes to the Holy Spirit, who


98 P.E. Hughes, The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 286. In the study by K.E. Norman, ‘Deification: The Content of Athanasian Soteriology,’ PhD Thesis, Duke University, 1980, chapter 4, he notes that for Athanasius eight aspects contribute to an understanding of deification: 1) the renewal of humanity in the imago Dei; 2) the transcendence of human nature; 3) the resurrection of the flesh and immortality of the body; 4) incorruptibility, impassibility and unchangeableness; 5) participation in the divine nature and qualities of godliness; 6) the knowledge of God; 7) the inheritance of divine glory; and 8) the heavenly kingdom.


100 While the Cappadocians impact on the development of the concept of theōsis was indeed limited the position of Williams that discussion of theōsis/divinization in the Cappadocians is ‘so nebulous as scarcely to qualify’ fails to stand up to examination. A.N. Williams, The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 185, fn.189. While Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa exhibit a fully developed doctrine of theōsis as salvation Gross has shown conclusively that ‘unlike these two, with whom this doctrine opens up into an extensive syntheses, the others speak of deification in explicit terms, but only in an occasional way and without utilizing the physical theory,’ J. Gross, La divinisation du chrétien d’après les pères grecs: Contribution historique à la doctrine de la grace (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1938), 239.
'deified by grace those who still belong to a nature subject to change.'

For Gregory of Nyssa, 'God united himself to our nature in order that our nature might be made divine through union with God.'

Gregory of Nazianzus echoes the Athanasian epigram almost word for word: as God became incarnate, man became 'endivinized', and to the extent that Christ became a real man, so we humans become real gods.

Gregory of Nazianzus, unlike Basil, speaks without reservation of human divinisation, and he is the first to use the term *theosis* in this context. Summarising the contribution made by Gregory Nazianzus, Studer writes:

in single points, this doctrine could easily be deepened with texts of Basil and Cyril of Alexandria on the role of the Holy Spirit, of Theodore of Mopsuestia on baptism or of John Chrysostom and Cyril on the Eucharist. But as a whole, Gregory's remains the most considerable synthesis before the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus Confessor.

§3.2.2  *Theosis* in the East

Eastern Orthodoxy has consistently asserted the doctrine of 'deification', further developing the distinction between the *image* and *likeness* of God mentioned earlier. With Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicholas Cabasilas, and finally Gregory Palamas, the Eastern Orthodox understanding of

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106 A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 105, contends that the closest Palmas comes to a definition proper of *theosis* is actually in this quotation from Maximus:

> Deification is an enhypostatic and direct illumination which has no beginning but appears in those worthy as something exceeding their comprehension. It is indeed a mystical union with God beyond intellect and reason, in the age when creatures will no longer know
theōsis came to mature expression. In a summary of the Palamite doctrine of theōsis and the various steps which the human person must employ to achieve it, Mantzaridis concludes an important study thus:

According to Palamas, the deification of human nature was accomplished for the first time in the person of Christ. His human nature was united with the Logos of God and assumed the fullness of the divinising energy which proceeds from the divine essence, and which Christ revealed to His disciples at His transfiguration on Mount Tabor. In this way, Christ's human nature became the vessel for uncreated divine energy, and henceforth communicates this grace in the Holy Spirit to all believers. Man is reborn through the sacrament of baptism, becomes one flesh with Christ through communion in His deified body, and so participates in His new life and becomes a citizen of the heavenly Kingdom. By reason of his unbreakable bond with the source of all true life, he no longer fears death nor directs his life under the shadow of its threat. Christ's uncreated life and energy become the property of the man who is united with Him, and in whose person Christ Himself lives and operates. The needs and temptations of life do not lead such a man to fall, or into any compromise with sin, but into ascetic practice and ascent towards God. His main concern during earthly life is to preserve perpetual communion with God through prayer and sacramental life. His only rest lies in his mystical union with God, by which he gains full assurance of his journey's end. The vision of uncreated light gives him experience of the ultimate glory towards which he is proceeding, and provides him with the pledge that he will see God 'face to face' in the age to come.\textsuperscript{107}

According to Palamas, the image in humans is an indistinct image of God and not, like the Son, an exact image. For Palamas, as in Irenaeus before him, the image applies to the whole person, body and soul. As God contains and infuses life into the world through his Spirit, so human intellect, through its spirit, contains and vitalizes the body attached to it. The human soul, according to both Palamas and the Orthodox tradition, is not held captive within the body so that it strives for release, as the Platonists taught. Mantzaridis explains that, 'From the moment of his
corruption. Thanks to this union, the saints, observing the light of the hidden and more-than-ineffable glory become themselves able to receive the blessed purity, in company with celestial powers. Deification is also the invocation of the great God and Father, the symbol of the authentic and real adoption, according to the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit, thanks to the bestowal of which grace the saints become and will remain the sons of God.

Williams shows that Palamas developed a doctrine of theōsis around ten related cognates which formed the 'steps' to communion with God: virtue, knowledge, vision, contemplation, light, grace, glory, adoption, participation, and union, 106-125.

creation, man strives to approach his archetype, God, and so to be
defied. This movement of man from ‘image’ to archetype is generally
expressed in the fathers by the phrase from Scripture ‘after His
likeness’. 106

While Palamas recognises that ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ in the Genesis
narrative cannot be completely distinguished, he does acknowledge that
in the Septuagint the term ‘likeness’ expresses something dynamic and
not yet realised, and so it is legitimate to posit at least some nuance
between these two words. For Palamas ‘image’ refers to what all humans
have simply as created beings. ‘Likeness’ is something that is to be
achieved; it is the goal of human existence, not imposed upon men and
women but left to their own free will. Free will plays an important part
in the Palamite doctrine of theósis. Already considered by Basil the Great,
Gregory of Nyssa, John of Damascus and other church fathers, Palamas
sees free will as crucial to the ‘image’ of God that human beings
possess. 109

A contemporary Orthodox theologian, Chrestou, also recognises a
distinction between image and likeness:

The image does not possess everything perfectly, as we have seen,
but has a propensity towards perfection; the defect is amended by
the faculty of likeness. The image and likeness of God are intimately
united, like two aspects of the same faculty; to such a degree that
image may be characterized as potential likeness, and likeness as
realized image. But even so, there is a difference which exists
between them. 110

Here image refers to nature, while likeness refers to person. 111

106 G.I. Mantzardis, The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition, trans.

109 G.I. Mantzardis, The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition, trans.
Vladimir's Press, 2001), 70-72. According to Grenz, because the will is also a part of the original
imago Dei then the will is free. This will is, for Irenaeus, given a type of pre-eminence over
reason, as illustrated in Against Heresies 4.37.1 and 4 (ANF, 1:518-519), S.J. Grenz, The Social
God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei (Louisville: Westminster


Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir's Press, 2001), 119-137.
'For St Paul the "image of the invisible God" is Christ. And man, as we shall see, is the image of the Image.'\textsuperscript{112} The goal of humanity is to realise true and full human personhood, or to express the image of God fully. If that image is Christ then the goal of human existence is to achieve the image of Christ, or what in Orthodox language is termed 'Christification.'\textsuperscript{113} In this way men and women are the 'image of the Image.' Nellas remarks, ‘...man, having been created “in the image” of the infinite God, is called by his own nature – and this is precisely the sense of ‘in the image’ from this point of view – to transcend the limited boundaries of creation and to become infinite.'\textsuperscript{114}

Nellas emphasises a consistent Eastern Orthodox theme: ‘that the greatness of man lies in his destiny, in his appointed end. The destiny or end is to achieve complete humanity which is, paradoxically, to be Christified or to become the complete image of the Image. In this context Basil the Great declares, man has “received the command to become a god”.\textsuperscript{115} Using the words of Nicolas Kavasilas, Nellas explains that:

> It was for the new man that human nature was originally created; it was for Him that intellect and desire were prepared. We received rationality that we might know Christ, desire that we might run towards Him. We possessed memory that we might bear Him in us, since He was the archetype for those who have been created. For the old Adam is not a model for the new, but the new a model for the old.\textsuperscript{116}

Distilling this principle to its fundamental point, Nellas states 'Man’s archetype is therefore not simply the Logos but the incarnate Logos.'\textsuperscript{117} This familiar Orthodox theme is adopted by Torrance in a rigorous way and applied to his own doctrine of the\textsuperscript{thesis}.  

Theosis in the West

Doctrines of theosis are clearly deeply established within Eastern Christianity and to this day they remain a central thread in Greek and Russian theology. But what of the Latin West? The West has historically given far more attention than the East to forensic conceptions of holiness and has thus focused on the elimination of sin as culpa rather than on salvation as liberation from moral corruption. While the theme of theosis is not a dominant one in the West it is certainly not without its supporters.

In company with the Greek theologians we have already discussed Augustine speaks of the essential link between the incarnation of the Son and the divinization of the human. Lampe maintains that,

Augustine repeats more often, perhaps, than any of the Greek theologians, the theme of the 'interchange of places.' 'The Word,' he says, became what we are that we might attain what we are not. For we are not God; but we can see God with the mind and interior eye of the heart;'...'God hates you as you are, in order to make you what you are not yet. You will be what he is,' but Augustine hastens to add that this means that we shall be God's image in the sense in which a man's reflection in a mirror is his image inasmuch as it is like him, not in the sense in which a man's son is his image inasmuch as he is actually what his father is 'according to substance.'

In Augustine's discussions on theosis it is clear that we are made partakers of the divine nature by grace, not by nature. For Augustine this means by adoption – sonship by grace. This is a direct consequence of human nature being assumed by God in the incarnation.

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119 This is clearly brought out in the newly discovered sermons of Augustine, especially the so-called Dolbeau 6 or Mainz 13, where Augustine supplies an extended meditation on deification amongst an exposition of Ps 81. See F. Dolbeau, 'Nouveaux sermons de saint Augustin pour la conversion des païens et des donnatistes (V)', Revue des Études Augustiniennes 39 (1993), 57-108; and The Works of Saint Augustine: Newly Discovered Sermons, trans. E. Hill (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City, 1990).

Thomas Aquinas makes significant use of the doctrine of *theōsis* in his voluminous theological works. One commentator concludes her study of the *Summa Theologiae* with these words: 'In view of this particular structure of Thomas's doctrine of God, theological anthropology, Christology, and the connection between them, it is no exaggeration to say the *Summa* lacks a question on deification because the subject of its every part is deification.' To cite just one example, where Aquinas seeks to establish that God alone is the cause of grace he writes: 'It is... necessary that God alone should deify, bestowing a partaking of the divine nature.' Aquinas's use of *theōsis* provides a metaphysical bridge between the Uncreated and created by appealing to the idea that nature can be ascribed to a subject in two ways: essentially, and by participation. Arguably *theōsis* functions in view in the second use of the term 'nature'.

Not only did the early church, the Fathers, and the scholastics adopt a doctrine of *theōsis*, so too did the Protestant Reformers. Since the mid-1970s a new interpretation of Luther known as the 'Finnish School' or 'Helsinki Circle' has arisen under the influence of Tuomo Mannermaa. The central thesis of this school is that for the so-called 'later' Luther, salvation is conceived as union with Christ, based around Luther's phrase

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121 See the comprehensive treatment of this theme in A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), and the literature that looks at Thomas' idea of participation as a philosophical concept such as F.J. Klauder, *A Philosophy Rooted in Love: The Dominant Themes in the Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1994).

122 A.N. Williams, 'Deification in the *Summa Theologiae*: A Structural Interpretation of the Prima Pars,' *Thomist* 61 (1997), 255.

123 T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q.112, a.1, (Westminster, MD.: Christian Classics, 1911, rev. 1920, rpt. 1980). Other examples include I-II, q.3, a.1 ad 2; I-II, q.50, a.6; II-II, q.2, obj.1; III, q.1, a.2; III, q.2, a.1, ad 3; III, q.16, a.7, ad 3; and in one of his *opscula* on the Feast of Corpus Christi: 'The only-begotten Son of God, wishing to make us sharers in his divine nature, assumed our nature...that made man he might make men gods' (*opscula* 57).


'in ipsa fide Christus adest,' ('in faith itself Christ is really present'). The Finnish School argues that for Luther faith is a real participation in Christ, that in faith a believer receives the righteousness of God in Christ, not only in a nominal and external way, but genuinely and inwardly. This insight radically challenges traditional Luther scholarship. If the forensic model of justification argues that through faith we are declared righteous, while in actuality we are not made righteous, this new reading of Luther argues that through faith we participate in the whole Christ, who in his divine person actually communicates the righteousness of God. If such an interpretation is correct (and there is considerable debate), then therein lies, arguably, a sufficient bridge from Reformation thought to the Orthodox idea of salvation, understood as theōsis.

A concept of theōsis is arguably present in the theology of Calvin, albeit in quite what way scholars dispute. For Calvin, the concept of theōsis comes closest to what is more commonly in the West termed 'union with Christ'. It has been argued that the unio mystica is central to Calvin's theology. If this is true, and there is good evidence to believe that it is,

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127 F.W. Norris 'Deification: Consensual and Cogent,' Scottish Journal of Theology 49 (1996), 420 believes it is not present at all. Others argue it is clearly there, for example J.T. Billings, 'United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification,' Harvard Theological Review 98 (2005), 315-334, and C. Mosser, 'The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification,' in Scottish Journal of Theology 55 (2002), 36-57. Cf. J. Slater, 'Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator in Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion: A Reply to Carl Mosser,' Scottish Journal of Theology 58 (2005), 39-58. According to Slater, Mosser has misread Calvin at almost every stage by making the communicatio idiomatum the central aspect of how theōsis is achieved in Christ, according to Calvin. Slater argues that for Calvin, believers share in what is Christ's according to his human nature, rather than his divine nature (41). Slater's critique, while deserving a more detailed interaction, revolves around the argument that it is not divine nature which the believer participates in but Christ's human nature. But Slater misses Mosser's point that the believer participates in the divine nature only through or in the human nature of Christ. This is why Torrance's theology is so insistent on the fact that believers participate in Christ's vicarious humanity and through that humanity alone they experience deification. Thus, the substitution of Christ that is so central in Calvin is rigorously upheld by Torrance.


then logically the doctrine of *theòsis* is also of importance to Calvin's theology. In one of his rare uses of the word 'deification', Calvin writes, in reference to 2 Pt 1.4: 'We should notice that it is the purpose of the Gospel to make us sooner or later like God; indeed it is, so to speak, a kind of deification.' Echoing the same thought as Eastern Orthodox writers, Calvin, when writing about the thought of humans partaking of the divine 'nature,' makes it plain that this does not mean we partake of the divine *essence* but the divine *likeness*. 'The apostles,' writes Calvin, 'were simply concerned to say that when we have put off all the vices of the flesh we shall be partakers of divine immortality and the glory of blessedness, and thus we shall be in a way with God so far as our capacity allows.'

For Calvin, the process of partaking of the divine nature is initiated in our election for salvation, effected in our union with Christ, and made possible in two interrelated ways. The first is by the incarnation of the Son, which represents a divinizing of humanity through the humanizing of divinity. In his 1559 *Institutes* Calvin speaks of partaking of the divine nature in terms of the *mirifica commutatio* whereby,

Having become with us the Son of Man, he [Christ] has made us with himself sons of God. By his own descent to the earth he has prepared our ascent to heaven. Having received our mortality, he has bestowed on us his immortality. Having undertaken our weakness, he has made us strong in his strength. Having submitted to our poverty, he has transferred to us his riches. Having taken upon himself the burden of unrighteousness with which we were oppressed, he has clothed us with his righteousness.

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The second way in which union with Christ is effected is through the work of the Holy Spirit. This partaking of the divine nature, or more specifically of Christ, is then experienced and further developed through the sacraments and the life of piety lived out in the Spirit’s power.

In Calvin’s treatment of theosis the doctrine of the Trinity provides the foundation and the context within which the ‘deification’ of humans is set. Calvin’s doctrine of theosis, like its classical antecedents, is built around the hypostatic union. Theosis is only possible because human nature has been deified in the theandric person of the Mediator. As men and women are united to Christ, his divinity deifies them. Our divinization is only made possible by the unique work of the incarnate Son who unites us to himself so that through the Holy Spirit we may know and worship the Father. Mosser puts it thus: ‘The believer’s union with Christ and the Father, the indwelling presence of the Spirit in our hearts, restoration of the divine image, being made like Jesus and our eventual glorification are each important themes in Calvin’s soteriology and eschatology. They are all pervaded by the language of theosis.’

Later Protestant thought also adopted theosis as a theme. This is evident in Anglican theology, for example. Arthur Allchin looks at the doctrine of theosis as it is to be found in representative Anglican theologians during the last four centuries and in the process uncovers a surprisingly rich heritage in theologians as diverse as Richard Hooker, John Henry Newman, Edward B. Pusey, and C.S. Lewis. Most notable in this regard is the so-called Oxford Movement (1833-1845). Within this group such

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figures as John Keble, E.B. Pusey, J.H. Newman, and William P. DuBose reasserted many patristic themes including *theōsis*. Louth has shown the extent to which the appeal to the Fathers was present in these Anglican writers precisely in their appropriation of a doctrine of 'deification'. As one example, Louth cites a familiar verse from J.H. Newman’s hymn, *Praise to the Holiest in the Height*, contained in the Anglican hymnbook:

And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
God’s presence and his very Self,  
And Essence all-divine.

And then comments:

How could there be a higher gift than grace? one might ask: and the answer is obvious, if grace is created grace, if grace is God’s mere acceptance of us. For He could give us Himself, His 'presence and His very Self, and Essence all-divine.' And it is this realisation that God gives us not just His gifts, but Himself, that is the deepest conviction of the Fathers of the Oxford movement.

The leaders of the Oxford Movement recovered a patristic doctrine of *theōsis* which speaks of a real participation between God and humanity in the work of redemption and sanctification. What Keble, Newman, Pusey, and DuBose all asserted was the radical nature of this union and the disciplined life of holiness that it called forth from the faithful. As with the patristic authors the architects of the Oxford Movement emphasized an immediacy of contact with God which, in their opinion, was most clearly formulated by articulating a notion of *theōsis*.

Methodism, under the teaching of the Wesley brothers, also evinces the effects of a doctrine of *theōsis*. Various studies have identified in both

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137 For a brief overview see E.C. Miller, Jr., *Toward a Fuller Vision* (Wilton: Morehouse-Barlow, 1984).


140 J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 165, has pointed out Wesley's adoption of *theōsis* and provides original and secondary sources. See also R. Maddox, 'John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences and Divergences,' *Asbury Theological Journal* 45 (1990), 29-53. The link made between Wesley’s theology and the subsequent Holiness tradition and Pentecostalism is crucial to note in that
John and Charles Wesley a significant influence of Eastern mysticism alongside their Western distinctives. According to McCormick:

The eastern tradition maintains that *theosis*, the 'way' into this deifying union or restoration of the *imago dei*, comes by way of the mysterious coinciding of a gift of divine energy and human freedom... It is just such an understanding of *theosis* which Wesley seems to employ as the organizing principle of his *ordo salutis*. And, as Wesley wrote his *ordo salutis* to the tune of *theosis*, it is probably better to understand it as a *via salutis*: that is to say, we are becoming 'like' God by the energy of love (coinciding with our freedom) as He was becoming what we are in descending love.

It may well be argued that historically a doctrine of *theosis* has not been neglected in the Western tradition at all; it has been there all along, albeit often in an underdeveloped form. With the republication of many contemporary Eastern Orthodox texts on *theosis* into English, and the recent calls from a number of contemporary Western theologians to reintroduce *theosis* onto the Western soteriological agenda, the Pentecostalism is open to a doctrine of *theosis* and is currently exploring the theme, most notably in relation to Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue. See in V-M. Kärkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue* (1972-1989), Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 42 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1998), and idem., *Ad ultimum terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue 1990-1997* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999).


doctrine of *theōsis* is one of a number of patristic themes to which appeal is currently made both to recall the church to its theological sources and to aid it in confronting the challenges of a postmodern era. It is also being used by a number of theologians as a possible way of ecumenical advancement.\(^{145}\)

### §4 Conclusion

Direct references to *theōsis* within Torrance’s work are relatively few and yet his work is significantly influenced by the conceptuality of it,\(^{146}\) a feature often misunderstood or ignored in critical studies on his theology. In an address delivered to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, in Frankfurt, 5\(^{th}\) August, 1964, Torrance pleaded for:

[A] reconsideration by the Reformed Churches of what the Greek fathers called *theosis*. This is usually unfortunately translated *deification*, but it has nothing to do with the *divinization* of man any more than the Incarnation has to do with the humanization of God. *Theosis* was the term the Fathers used to emphasize the fact that through the Spirit we have to do with God in his utter sublimity, his sheer Godness or holiness; creatures though we are, men on earth, in the Spirit we are made to participate in saving acts that are abruptly and absolutely divine, election, adoption, regeneration or sanctification and we participate in them by grace alone. *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 Holy God, where he lives and moves and has his being in the uncreated but creative energy of the Holy Spirit. By *theosis* the Greek fathers wished to express the fact that in the new coming of the Holy Spirit we are up against *God* in the most absolute sense, God in his ultimate holiness or Godness.\(^{147}\)

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145 At the forefront of this is the work of V-M. Kärikäinen, *One With God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, Mn.: Liturgical Press, 2004).


Within this quotation we have Torrance’s doctrine of theosis in summation.

When we examine the direct references to theosis in Torrance’s work, such as the above quotation, and then consider the context in which Torrance speaks of theosis, we shall see that while Torrance uses the technical vocabulary of theosis sparingly, when he does employ it he does so in contexts which are central to his entire theological programme, thus making this doctrine one of considerable importance within his overall theological corpus. In place of the technical vocabulary of theosis Torrance deals with this theme under a series of other conceptual equivalents including: union, communion, participation, transcendental determination, reordering, humanising, personalising, and atoning exchange. This study examines these themes in their theological contexts and what emerges is a complex but coherent Torrancean doctrine of theosis. However, it is not one that is without critical questions, deficiencies, and indications for further study.

In what follows, the method is systematic-analytical, and the aim is a descriptive and critical exposition of theosis in Torrance’s theology. It will be shown that the concept of theosis is of fundamental importance to Torrance’s soteriology. Under patristic, Reformation, and modern influences, Torrance’s doctrine of theosis becomes an integral consequence of his scientific dogmatics, especially as it relates to the homoousion and to the ground and grammar of his entire theological enterprise, the doctrine of the Trinity. As an essential part of his Christian dogmatics, the concept of theosis in Torrance’s approach unifies the various loci of theology, from creation through to ecclesiology. While not the central point of his dogmatics, it is a necessarily crucial integrating theme within his overall theological oeuvre.

148 It is important to note that Eastern Orthodoxy also uses a number of synonyms, analogies, and cognates for theosis which D.B. Clendenin, ‘Partakers of Divinity: The Orthodox Doctrine of Theosis,’ Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 37 (1994), 374, has listed as: transformation, union, participation, partaking, intermingling, elevation, interpenetration, transmutation, commingling, assimilation, reintegration, adoption, recreation.
Chapter One investigates Torrance’s doctrines of creation and theological anthropology, emphasising his relational-teleological reading of the *imago Dei* and of his account of the way in which creation is proleptically conditioned by redemption. Because Jesus Christ is the true human being, theological anthropology is actually a correlate to christology. As a result, the essential aspects of the reordering of creation to conform to the nature of the Incarnate Son are compatible with a doctrine of *theōsis*. But more than mere compatibility is in view. Torrance’s doctrines of creation and anthropology provide the necessary backdrop against which his doctrine of *theōsis* is developed. On account of the contingent and proleptic nature of creation Torrance’s use of *theōsis* takes on a universal range, with consequences extending to the cosmos itself, which will one day be redeemed and perfected.

The second chapter assesses Torrance’s christology and highlights a central theme of his entire theology: that is, that the Incarnation is redemptive and thus Christ’s entire life is an act of ‘divinisation’. Through the Word incarnate, revelation of God is given and received by means of Christ’s vicarious humanity, and union with God in Christ is made a reality. In the life of Christ we have the ontological divinisation of humanity.

Building upon the doctrine of Christ’s vicarious humanity, Chapter Three forms the heart of the study. It examines Torrance’s soteriology directly, exploring the actual dynamics of how the believer is brought into relationship with the True Man, Jesus Christ, and through him into a relationship with the Triune God. Drawing upon a reading of Calvin which makes union with Christ central to Calvin’s theology, Torrance highlights how this union brings the believer into the gift of all the benefits of Christ, and seeks to show that justification as a forensic declaration and ‘deification’ as an actual participation in the divine life are ultimately compatible within his Reformed theology.

In Chapter Four the crucial role of community and communion is analysed, since it is by the Spirit that union and communion with Christ
become a reality in the life of the believer in the context of the church. The role of pneumatology, often said to be a somewhat underdeveloped area in Western theology, is developed by Torrance as the Holy Spirit brings revelation, reconciliation, and transformation to the believer in Christ and in the Spirit. While this work is within the believer as a person, it is always within a communal context, the church, and thus Torrance develops his ecclesiology as the locus of theōsis. The sacraments, priesthood, prayer, ministry, and worship are seen as central ecclesial acts through which believers are progressively 'deified'. While Torrance incorporates the Holy Spirit and the church into his theology this is perhaps the weakest area of his theology when examined in relation to an account of theōsis. While the foundations are clearly laid by Torrance there is no real development of these themes in this context.

The conclusion draws together the various threads of the present study and points towards further areas where Torrance’s theology holds promise for future reflection. While Torrance’s vision of theōsis is robust and pervasive, it is often implicit, undeveloped, and very rarely interacts with critical scholarship. Through a presentation of how Torrance’s theology is more than compatible with doctrines of theōsis and through a critical engagement with contemporary scholarship, the rudiments of a doctrine of theōsis compatible with Reformed theology are presented, but it is argued that this doctrine requires further development and refinement beyond that which Torrance provides.

The significance of this thesis is thus threefold: first, it delineates an aspect of Torrance’s theology which has not been studied; second, it aspires to contribute some insights to the ongoing discussion concerning the doctrine of theōsis in both Eastern and Western contexts; and third, it holds out ecumenical potential for East-West theological relations, as well
as other inter-denominational discussions that are presently being conducted.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Specifically, the discussions between the Reformed–Eastern Orthodox, Orthodox-Anglican, Orthodox-Lutheran, and Protestant-Roman Catholic Churches. There is perhaps also, to a more limited extent, potential for inter-faith dialogue (Mormonism immediately comes to mind).
Chapter One

Creation and Theological Anthropology

'The chief good of man is nothing else but union with God; this is attained when we are formed according to him as our exemplar.'
• John Calvin

'After the fall, human history is a long shipwreck awaiting resolve: but the port of salvation is not the goal; it is the possibility of the shipwrecked to resume his journey whose sole goal is union with God.'
• Vladimir Lossky

'O marvellous device of divine wisdom and love, uniting things lowest with the highest, human with the divine, through our nature, the least and last and sunken lower still, raising up the whole universe into union with himself, encircling and enfolding all with his love, and knitting all in one; and that, through us!'
• Edward Bouverie Pusey

§5 Creation: God and the World

According to Torrance, theösis is initially accomplished in the work of the Incarnate Son Jesus Christ, then, by extension, in the experience of particular human persons. However, as in the patristic tradition and the theologies of Eastern Orthodoxy, the entire creation is somehow involved or caught up in the ‘deification’ of humanity. While Torrance never speaks of the ‘divinization’ of creation in general, his doctrine of creation does provide an essential foundation for what he will say about theösis in his theological anthropology. It is not that creation experiences theösis as such, but rather that there is a cosmic scope to theösis which Torrance, no less than his Eastern colleagues, emphasises.

2 V. Lossky, Orthodox Theology: An Introduction (Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 84.
3 E.B. Pusey, A Course of Sermons on Solemn Subjects Chiefly Bearing on Repentance and Amendment of Life, Preached in S. Saviour’s Church, Leeds, During the Week After its Consecration on the Feast of S. Simon and S. Jude, 1845 (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1845), 294.
4 See E. Bartos, Deification in Eastern Orthodoxy: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru St丘iiboe (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 95. Bartos points out that within Staniloae’s dogmatics theösis plays an important part not only in salvation but in all of creation, ‘deification in this sense precedes redemption.’ 95. Cf. V. Lossky, Orthodox Theology: An Introduction (Crestwood, New York.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 84.
This chapter presents the anthropological aspect of *theōsis* within Torrance's thinking. In order to study this in detail we shall first have to understand how Torrance deals with the God-world relationship, then *theōsis* in its cosmic dimensions, then finally and more specifically, the God-human relationship in Torrance's thought will be explored.

Fundamental to Torrance's doctrines of creation and anthropology is an assumption that finds expression thus: 'it is distinctive of Christian theology that it treats of God in his relation to the world and of God in his relation to himself, not of one without the other.'

So began the Payton Lectures delivered in April 1981 at Fuller Theological Seminary, subsequently published under the title *Reality and Evangelical Theology*. In these lectures Torrance makes it clear that Creator and creation must be thought of in vital relation to each other. More specifically, 'Our evangelical commitment to Jesus Christ "through whom and for whom the whole universe has been created," as Paul expressed it, will not allow us to divorce redemption from creation, but compels us to give the empirical reality of the created order its full and proper place in theological interpretation of divine revelation, especially in the incarnate form and reality in Jesus Christ.'

The nature of the specific form of this relationship between creation and redemption is the all-important issue at hand.

Torrance envisages a realist theology as operating within a triadic structure. The specific form this 'complex of relations' takes for Torrance is that of God-humanity-world, not simply God-humanity as has so often

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5 T.F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 21. R. Letham, 'Book Review: C.W. Suh, The Creation-Mediatorship of Jesus Christ: A Study in the Relation of the Incarnation and the Creation (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982), 'Westminster Theological Journal 46 (1984), 213-216, notes that 'One would have wished for a discussion of the thought of T.F. Torrance, who has produced epochal work on precisely these kinds of questions, but there is not a word either in text or bibliography.' He also adds that 'Further development of the theme will require extensive interaction with the theology of the Eastern Church, especially with the Greek Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, for its prolonged reflection on incarnation, creation, and theōsis cannot be ignored' (215). The present study seeks to address these lacunae in Suh's work by looking expressly at the theology of Torrance and his doctrine of theōsis in relation to creation and redemption.

6 T.F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 11. Torrance explains this is the 'inescapable realism of evangelical theology.' He later adds, 'a theology that is restricted to the relation between man and God is deficient and primitive, for it has not advanced from *mythos* to *logos*, from thinking out of a center in the human subject to thinking out of a center in objective reality....' 27.
been the case in formal, especially evangelical theology, nor is it so often apparent in some contemporary ecological approaches.\footnote{T.F. Torrance, \textit{Reality and Evangelical Theology} (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 25. Within Reformed theology there has always been an attempt to relate God, humanity, and the world together. One example is clearly evident in discussions over the re-creation or renewing of the earth at the eschaton which Jürgen Moltmann has taken up with such vigour. See \textit{The Trinity and the Kingdom}, trans. M. Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); and \textit{The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation}, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).} We cannot speak of God except within the world in which he has placed us, and the world of which humanity is, by divine creation, a primary constituent element. Hence anthropology and creation are not two independent \textit{loci} of theology; rather, a doctrine of creation is the \textit{locus} of anthropological reflection, or put another way, anthropology is a \textit{focus} of the doctrine of creation. As a concise summary we read: 'Theologically speaking, man and the universe belong together and together constitute what we mean by "world", the world in its relation to God.'\footnote{T.F. Torrance, \textit{Reality and Evangelical Theology} (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 25. Following similar lines of enquiry Wolfhart Pannenberg states in the opening of his second volume of the \textit{Systematic Theology} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 1:} This approach becomes all the more evident when humanity is considered in light of the eternal Word of God who became incarnate and is identified as the one through whom creation exists. In this way Jesus Christ becomes central to Torrance's doctrines of creation and anthropology, and hence central for an understanding of \textit{theōsis}. Given this triadic relation we must interpret \textit{theōsis} through the specific sort of relations that exist between God, the world, and humanity.\footnote{Torrance develops this triadic relation specifically in terms of scientific enquiry, natural theology, and a realist epistemology through his work \textit{Reality and Evangelical Theology} (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999).} While we shall examine christology in a later section, we must anticipate the general direction it will take in this chapter.

Torrance's doctrine of creation, while a distinct \textit{locus}, is not a separate one in that each doctrine, to be truly 'scientific', must adhere to the
doctrines that both precede and succeed it. Torrance would agree wholeheartedly with Pannenberg when he writes, 'Creating is simply the first step in an economy of divine action that includes and expresses God’s relation to the world in all its aspects.' Pannenberg is thinking specifically of creation as it relates to reconciliation, redemption, and consummation; so too Torrance’s doctrine of creation cannot simply be studied in isolation from the concerns of theosis, which for him also encompass reconciliation, redemption, and consummation.

Two interrelated tasks are accomplished within Torrance’s doctrine of creation: one is to clarify that creation is not necessary to God but is purely contingent on the divine will; the other is to stress that participation in the divine nature is grounded in the creature’s very existence. In presenting theosis as integral to the very creation of humanity Torrance is drawing upon specific notions of theosis held by some of the Fathers, although much of their usage limited the doctrine to the sanctifying work of the hypostatic union in the Son or the graced renewal of the human by the Spirit. Torrance presents both ideas but insists upon the creational aspect as integral to the whole doctrine, something only a few Eastern Orthodox theologians do explicitly.

In order to understand Torrance’s doctrine of theosis we must start with his doctrine of creation and specifically ask how it is that Creator and creation are related to one another. From this relation we investigate his

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11. Aquinas’ doctrine of creation achieves the same objectives although he makes use of the category of emanationism in a way that Torrance would definitely object to on grounds of its Neoplatonic basis. See T. Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I, q.33, 1, (Westminster, MD.: Christian Classics, 1911, rev. 1920, rpt. 1980).

account of theological anthropology, especially the important doctrine of the *imago Dei* in its trinitarian and teleological dimensions. For Torrance, *theōsis* is initiated in the present but only finally made complete in the eschaton. *Theōsis* occurs in space-time within the church, the body of Christ, in the world; hence both creation and ecclesiology form the *physical locus* of *theōsis* for human persons at present while Christ himself is the *spiritual topos* or place of *theōsis* in both the present and the future.

§5.1 **Trinitarian Creation**

Torrance consistently maintains that creation is a work of the Triune God in which all three Persons have a distinctive part to play. It will help to analyse this trinitarian basis of creation in order to clarify creation's purpose. Torrance accepts and seeks to expound the formula derived from Basil which states that creation is *from* the Father, *through* the Son, in the Holy Spirit.\(^{13}\)

According to Torrance, 'the fact that God is always Father, not always Creator, but became Creator, means that it is precisely as Father that he is Creator...\(^{14}\) From this axiom Torrance derives certain corollaries of a trinitarian kind. As Father he is Father of the Son and sender of the Spirit, and a trinitarian stamp is found within creation. As Torrance phrases it, 'it is then of this one God in his intrinsically homoousial and perichoretic relations as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that we are to think

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\(^{14}\) T.F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 209. Torrance's conception of the relations that exist between God–God and God-world has certain affinities to Pannenberg. Like Pannenberg Torrance works out a thoroughly trinitarian framework for the creation and finds the basis of the creation not in any external act of God confined to the economy, but in the perichoretic being of God in the immanent Trinity. W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 20-35. This is why, as Torrance insists, God did not become Father because he was Creator but is the Creator precisely because he is the eternal Father of the Son.
of him as Sovereign Creator." From this basis Torrance works out the relative distinctions in God’s threefold activity, appropriate to the Persons of the Father, Son, and Spirit in relation to the Pauline doxology of 2 Corinthians 13.14: ‘May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.’

The activity of God the Father is one of love that is ecstatic both in the intra-trinitarian relations and in God’s external acts in the economy of creation. The reason for creation is traced back to the love of God. According to Torrance, it is of the nature of God to will to exist for others and it is out of this divine love that the rational order of the creation is to be understood. ‘It is this Holy Lawful Divine Love that constitutes the ultimate invariant ground of all rational and moral order in the created universe, and it is under its constraint that all physical and moral laws functioning within the universe operate and are in the last resort to be recognised and formulated.’ The very order inherent in creation is a result, according to Torrance, of the prior love of God. Love therefore is a constituent element of contingent creation universally, not just of human creation specifically.

From this basis in the divine love of the Father comes the purpose of the created realm, most vividly epitomised in the ability of human beings to return the love of God for them in a fitting response of love for him. ‘It belongs in particular to the role of man and woman whom God has created after his own image, and made the crown of his creation, to bear witness to that Glory and serve the purpose of God’s wonderful Love.’ It is important to note however, that men and women are to gather up the

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16 According to Torrance there is no doubt about an ordered universe. Order is an intuitive belief for which we cannot give any logical demonstration. This contingent order points beyond itself to a transcendent centre and source of order, Almighty God. See T.F. Torrance, The Christian Frame of Mind: Order and Openness in Theology and Natural Science (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 41.


praises of all creation, not simply their own. There is something in or about the universe that must be fulfilled, completed, or perfected, and this perfection or maturity can come about in no other way than by glorifying the Creator God as Father. To acknowledge a Creator is one step, but it is not the highest step. To acknowledge the Creator specifically as the Father is central to Torrance's conception of theosis: it is creational maturity. Properly speaking, however, the Father is only the Father of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. For men and women to know and call God Father is, therefore, not simply to know him as Creator, but to know him through the intimate relationship which only properly exists with the Son. But this is to anticipate the future development of theosis as a participation in the Father-Son relationship by the Spirit which Torrance develops as a consequence of his doctrine of creation.

The economic activity of God the Son proceeds in tandem with that of God the Father, albeit in a distinctive way. The Son incarnate in Jesus Christ is the Word and Wisdom of God, the one through whom all that is has come to be and who sustains the creation itself, the one who has imparted to the universe its rational order and has come to restore it to the law of his divine love. Torrance paints a grand picture of the re-ordering of a fallen world in or through the incarnate Son as omnipotent grace. This re-ordering of creation is a consequence of theosis. In the identity and mission of Jesus Christ the purposes of God for creation, humanity especially, are realised. Through his cross and resurrection the incarnate Saviour penetrated into the ontological depths of creation where in death created being borders upon non-being, and set it upon an altogether new basis, that of Grace in the triumph of God's Holy Love in what the Bible speaks of as a new heaven and a new earth. Theosis is thus central to Torrance's vision of creation, from Protos to Eschatos, the origin and goal of creation.

21 This is confirmed when he writes of the goal of creation as communion with the Triune God. T.F. Torrance, 'The Atoning Obedience of Christ,' Moravian Theological Seminary Bulletin (1959), 65-66.
By this means Torrance develops the interrelation between christology and soteriology on the one hand, and eschatology and cosmology on the other. A new, redeemed humanity necessitates a new, redeemed cosmology and both are inherent to the creation of God and to the process of *theōsis*. Not only are men and women to commune with God, to become one with God in an appropriate relationship; so too is the inanimate creation – the cosmos as a whole is drawn into a relationship with God, albeit in a distinctive way. In the first creation account in Genesis the earth and all that is in it is described as ‘good’ (Gen 1.25), good because it is able to perform the function for which it was created. However, it is only after the creation of man – female and male – that creation is said to be ‘very good’ (Gen 1.31).

The incarnation of the Word as the Son of Man provides the reason for the creation of men and women in the *imago Dei*. The confession that the Son is the principle or rationale of creation means that he exemplifies the proper relation of creation to the Creator. The response that creatures owe to the Creator is based in the response of the Son to the Father. And once again, this response has its foundation in the intra-trinitarian relationship, which in turn is exemplified in the incarnate Word, Jesus of Nazareth.

The activity of the Holy Spirit as Creator in union with the Father and Son also takes on a distinctive cast - that of transcendent and unlimited freedom as the *Spiritus Creator*. With a subtle allusion to 2 Corinthians 13.14, Torrance envisions the work of the Spirit as creating communion when he writes that ‘in his outgoing Love and ungrudging Grace God irreversibly binds the created universe to his own Existence and his own Existence to the universe.’ This is not to imply a pantheistic or panentheistic vision of the relation between God and the world. The creature is always contingent on Creator as appropriate to creaturely reality. The Holy Spirit binds creation and creatures to God through a


holy communion (*koinōnia*), upholding and sustaining its existence beyond its own power in an open-ended relation toward God in whom its true end and purpose as creature is lodged. In Nicene fashion Torrance asserts the Holy Spirit is 'the Lord and Giver of Life' and it is through the presence of the Spirit that we live and move and have our being in God.

As a way of summarizing the distinctive ways in which the Triune God creates, Torrance alludes to a doctrine of *theōsis* thus:

The supreme end for which God has designed his creation and which he activates and rules throughout all his relations with it is the purpose of his Holy Love not to live for himself alone but to bring into being a creaturely realm of heaven and earth which will reflect his glory and within which he may share with others the Communion of Love which constitutes his inner Life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is in the incarnation of God’s beloved Son in Jesus Christ, and in our sharing in that relation of the Son to the Father through the Holy Spirit, that the secret of the creation, hidden from the ages, has become disclosed to us.  

Here *theōsis* is a sharing in the Divine Life in a creaturely way as a direct result of the creation from the Love of the Father through the omnipotent grace of the Son and realised by the life giving work of the Holy Spirit.  

In a summary of the triune creation, Stanley Grenz concurs:

> The creation of the world comes as the outflowing of the eternal love relationship within the triune God. More specifically, the Father who eternally loves the Son creates the world in order that it might share in his existence and with the intent that the world reciprocate his love after the pattern of the Son’s love for the Father.

This is in full accord with Torrance’s theological vision. Along with more recent trends in theology Torrance is able, in this trinitarian construct, to

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25 E. Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodoxy: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 104, sums up the position of Staniloae and Eastern Orthodoxy in general on this point in the following way which is no less true of the theology of Torrance:

> [C]reation is out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. The Father is the 'Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible,' the Son is He ‘through whom all things were made,' and the Holy Spirit is the ‘life-giver’ (*zoopoion*). As a trinitarian act, the world was created by God’s will and by His consubstantial Word and Spirit. Staniloae likewise affirms that the creative word was a reflection of God’s eternal conversation within the Holy Trinity. The Triune God wanted to bring other beings into communion with Him in order that these could experience the divine life already present in the Holy Trinity and share full communion with their Creator. Consequently, creation implies *theōsis*, a real participation in the life of God.

give space to the Spirit as the one who brings creation to its destined end or telos. This implies that the Spirit is the Spiritus Vivificans who works not only in the church but throughout the entire world, bringing order out of chaos as in the first creation account, and bringing all things to their providential end – communion (theosis) with God.

§5.2 Cosmic Consequences of Theosis
Moving beyond the trinitarian how of creation to an investigation of the purpose of creation, the cosmic consequences of theosis need to be further articulated. This may be done through an examination of the concept of order and re-order in Torrance’s creational account and an exploration of his axiom that ‘creation is conditioned by redemption’ in profound ways. Out of this discussion Torrance asserts the cosmic consequences of theosis and builds a foundation from which to articulate his dynamic and relational doctrine of the imago Dei and explain how the incarnate Christ is central, even if in a proleptic way, to both creation and the imago, thus making Christ central to his doctrine of theosis.

§5.2.1 The ‘Reordering’ of Creation
Within Torrance’s work there is a direct and explicit link between God the Father as Creator and the person and work of the Son in the economy. Here creation and redemption are brought together in an insightful synthesis. ‘Quite clearly, Christology and Soteriology have and must have critical significance for our understanding of God as almighty and of his distinctive activity in creation and redemption.’ This is not to be understood simply as a trinitarian conception of creation, that is, the how of creation (from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit), as has

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already been shown, but rather it is raised to the level of purpose. Christology actually conditions the creation in the first place, proleptically influencing its very reality. Torrance's vision of creation is here, as elsewhere in his theology, a christocentric one. Creation is not only through Christ, but for Christ. In the incarnation redemption intersects and overlaps with creation in such a way that all of history is encompassed by Christ and his Kingdom. Purpose is deliberately built into creation from the beginning and, as with the theōsis of human beings so with creation itself, perfection is anticipated from the very creation, yet this perfection will not come about mechanistically or 'naturally,' but rather through divine grace.

In harmony with Torrance's 'scientific' approach to theology he considers redemption in terms of the relationship between theology and the natural sciences and the mutuality of their commitment to 'order'. Torrance argues that atonement can be seen in terms of a 'reordering' of creation. This applies not only to the human person but to the entire creation itself. It is a cosmic consequence of the theōsis, similar to but not

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30 A.E. McGrath, A Scientific Theology. Vol. 1. Nature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 193, identifies a point we must note within the history of Christian thought and especially the works of Torrance: 'The Christian understanding of creation leads directly to the conclusion that there is a correspondence - the degree of which requires clarification - between the works of God and the being of God. Creation and redemption are not merely interconnected within the economy of salvation; they can each be argued to embody the character of God.'

31 This same theme echoes within the theology of Athanasius who repeatedly emphasised the connection between creation and redemption. According to Athanasius the purpose of the incarnation was not only the restoration of humanity but of the whole created order. According to Athanasius, On the Incarnation 1.4 (NPNF, 2nd series, 4.273), 'It is, then, proper for us to begin the treatment of this subject by speaking of the creation of the universe, and of God its Artificer, that so it may be duly perceived that the renewal of creation has been the work of the self-same Word that made it at the beginning. For it will appear not inconsonant for the Father to have wrought its salvation in Him by Whose means He made it.'


34 In his study of Torrance's and Jüngel's theologies of creation, contingency, and divine presence, Spjuth speaks critically of Torrance's 'divinization' of the world as implying an exchange from contingency to one all-embracing rationality. See R. Spjuth, Creation, Contingency and Divine Presence: In the Theologies of Thomas F. Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel (Lund: Lund University Press, 1995), 173-174. However, this is to miss the point and the force of Torrance's argument.
identical with certain Greek patristic emphases. Torrance notes how the universe requires 'redemption from disorder':

In Christian theology that redemption is precisely the bearing of the cross upon the way things actually are in our universe of space and time. It represents the refusal of God to remain aloof from the disintegration of order in what he has made, or merely to act upon it 'at a distance.' It is his decisive personal intervention in the world through the incarnation of his Word and love in Jesus Christ. In his life and passion he who is the ultimate source and power of all order has penetrated into the untouchable core of our contingent existence in such a way as to deal with the twisted force of evil entrenched in it, and thereby to bring about an atoning reordering of creation.

In a 1959 Church Quarterly Review article on the doctrine of order Torrance writes:

In other words, in the whole human life of Jesus the order of creation has been restored; in the midst of our disordered, sin-disrupted existence, there has been lived a human life in perfect order and proportion to the Will of God...This is the order of redemption which reaches back to the original order of creation and far transcends it in the amazing purpose of the divine love, as the order of the new creation.

By means of the life of Christ, and especially his resurrection, reorder was achieved out of disorder. In a similar way to Irenaeus, Torrance considers redemption to entail the restoration of the God-given order in which the cosmos came into being. Against this backdrop salvation by means of theōsis can be seen as the humanising of the person not their 'divinization' per se. It is a making perfect in Christ, not a making into another. 'Redemption is thus the restoration of humanity, in order that humanity may play its defined role...in the restoration of the universe as

Nowhere in Torrance's writings does he advocate the total independence of creation from Creator or suggest that the creation will ever be anything but contingent. In fact, according to Torrance, it is in this very contingency that the freedom of creation is to be found.

An interesting account of the original ordering of creation can be found in V. Lossky, Orthodox Theology: An Introduction, trans. I and I Kasarcodi-Watson (1978. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir's Press, 200'), 63-70, in which men and women are described as the 'summit' and 'principle' of creation, the beings to whom is entrusted the ordering of creation. Lossky can also speak of men and women as the 'priests' of creation, as does Torrance (69).


a whole."³⁹ This universal restoration of which Torrance speaks refers to the cosmic consequences of *theōsis* which we see him begin to develop throughout his doctrine of creation.

Because creation is purposive it, no less than human beings, has a *telos*. Somehow it is not just man who has fallen but the whole created order along with him, so that we may not isolate our understanding of human evil from natural evil, or moral evil from material evil, the pain and suffering of human being from the suffering and misery, the pain and travail of the whole creation."⁴⁰ From this truth Torrance draws the conclusion 'that real redemption from the power of human sin and guilt involves a radical change in the material world and calls for the complete redemption of the created order'.⁴¹ As the human being is created for *theōsis*, for union and communion with God, so too the physical creation is created for a *telos*, the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21.1-5; 22.1-5).⁴² Torrance's principle is that 'God does not abandon his creation when he has saved man, for all creation, together with man, will be renewed when Christ comes again.'⁴³

What will this redemption applied to nature look like, beyond merely saying 'new heaven' and 'new earth'? One can only speculate at this point based upon the scant biblical references. The outcome, if we accept Torrance's grandiose vision of the cosmic consequences of *theōsis*, is that harmony, freedom, and contingency will reach its ultimate fulfilment. Alongside these familiar themes we could go beyond what Torrance has stated to a picture he might also agree with - the perfection of the beauty, artistry, and fecundity of the very creation itself. John of Patmos could speak of golden streets, foundations of precious stones, and walls

⁴² See T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 155, where this point is made and we are pointed to Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, III/3, §49, in which the doctrine of creation and its continuous preservation under the Lordship of Christ is discussed.
of costly jewels (Rev 21.19). The natural scientist could perhaps speak of balanced eco-systems, the extinction of extinction itself, and the ordered-yet-free, harmonious-yet-new, ordering of the natural order itself. Clearly, we have left behind Newton’s mechanistic world or Thomas Moore’s Utopia and have entered the land of biblical eschatology. It is a place where God walks with his creation in perfect harmony, where the sun has no need to shine, and where all of creation finds its fulfilment and ‘rest’ (Heb 41-11; 1 Jn 3.19). In Torrance’s words:

God made the creation for such a communion that it might sing His praises and reflect in gladness and joy His loving kindness and glory. Hence the restoration of creation involves the restoration of creation to communion and fellowship with Him in which the peace of God reigns over all, the joy and gladness in God the Father fills the whole of creation. Thus in reconciliation of atonement it is not only with obedience and justice that we have to do, but with the worship and adoration of creation, in which it faithfully reflects the Father’s glory and love.45

From this principle of reordering Torrance affirms a cosmic extension of redemption, with special emphasis on the redemption of the natural order. The order of redemption ‘reaches back to the original order of creation and far transcends it in the amazing purpose of the divine love, as the order, of the new creation.’46 Redemption is not an interference or interruption with the created order but is a healing or restoration of a damaged creation.47


Creation is thus, in Calvin’s famous words, the theatre for God’s glory, a theatre, to extend the metaphor, upon which the drama of redemption is being played out, one day to reach its final act under divine grace. This *theatrum Dei* serves the twofold purpose of glorifying God the Creator and leading God’s creatures to glorify God. ‘The whole of creation is a mirror, a theatre, a world of signs, which God uses in fulfilment of His Covenant relations with men, as the tools and instruments of His Word.’

Creation and redemption share a mutual history and Torrance’s doctrine of *theosis* brings both together in a creative synthesis. This presupposes a central axiom, that ‘creation is conditioned by redemption’.

### §5.2.2 Creation Conditioned by Redemption

What Torrance constructs is a view of creation ‘proleptically’ conditioned by redemption. Torrance specifically speaks of the proleptic nature of creation when he writes, ‘With the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Christ in space and time a portentous change has taken place in the universe affecting the way in which we are to understand divine creation as proleptically conditioned by redemption.’ Elsewhere Torrance maintains that, ‘the incarnation is to be understood as completing the work of creation and of consummating its contingent relation to God. Thus in a certain sense the creation is to be thought of as

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51 Torrance no doubt inherited this idea from many of the Fathers, most especially Athanasius in whose work the essential connection between creation and redemption is repeatedly emphasised. See Athanasius *On the Incarnation* 1, 2 (NPNF, 2nd series, 4.272); and P.E. Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 276-280, for a concise overview. We also read that Torrance heard of the idea from H.R. Mackintosh, see T.F. Torrance, ‘Introduction,’ *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church*, trans. and ed. T.F. Torrance (London: James Clarke and Co, 1959), ciii.

52 T.F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 204. Torrance then cites in fn.1 from H.R. Mackintosh’s, *Doctrine of the Person*: ‘Christ is conceived as Creator of the world *qua* the person in whom the universe was in due time to find its organic centre in virtue of his work of reconciliation; he was the initial cause of all things, as being destined to be their final end. His function as Creator is proleptically conditioned by his achievement as Saviour.’
proleptically conditioned by redemption.\textsuperscript{53} Torrance makes this statement amidst a discussion of the contingent nature of creation. Colyer helpfully attempts to summarise his thought on the proleptic nature of creation in the following way:

What Torrance intends, I believe, is that God's ultimate telos for creation from the beginning is revealed and actualised 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 realized in redemption after the Fall, and it is a telos that proleptically conditions the creation.\textsuperscript{54}

This reading of Torrance is both well acknowledged and accurate, as Spjuth's analysis confirms. Spjuth notes Torrance's application of the hypostatic analogy to creation, such that 'the whole universe of creaturely existence' is brought into relationship to the redemption of Christ (the Covenant) and thus is appointed to reflect God's glory. Citing Torrance, Spjuth comments, 'Here there is a covenanted correspondence between the creation and the Creator.'\textsuperscript{55} According to Torrance, the whole of creation lives by this hypostatic relation to the Covenant in a form of created correspondence (analogy).\textsuperscript{56}

Redemption and creation thus imply one another with redemption conditioning creation. After the Fall the world is in such a precarious state that God the Son unites itscreatureliness to himself in order to save it. Without the incarnation neither humanity nor creation more generally


\textsuperscript{54} E.M. Colyer, \textit{How To Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding his Trinitarian and Scientific Theology} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 164, fn.34. This conforms to what Torrance wrote in 1959: 'In that situation God's creative purpose became a redemptive purpose; the image of God unto which man had been created became an eschatological goal,' T.F. Torrance, 'The Atoning Obedience of Christ,' \textit{Moravian Theological Seminary Bulletin} (1959), 67.


\textsuperscript{56} W. Pannenberg echoes remarkably similar themes to Torrance: 'the incarnation cannot be an external appendix to creation nor a mere reaction of the Creator to Adam's sin. From the very first it is the crown of God's world order, the supreme concretion of the active presence of the Logos in creation,' \textit{Systematic Theology}, vol. 2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 64. While Pannenberg comes at this from eschatological premises drastically different from those of Torrance, they do share, at this point at least, a remarkable correspondence. See W. Pannenberg, \textit{Theology and the Kingdom of God}, ed. R.J. Neuhaus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 67.
could reach its intended created telos.\textsuperscript{57} In Torrance’s work on the resurrection under the subtitle ‘the cosmic range of eschatology’ we read:

the range of Christ’s mighty acts in incarnation, reconciliation and resurrection apply to the whole universe of things, visible and invisible. The whole creation falls within the range of his Lordship, as he works out his purpose by bringing redemption together with creation, and actualizing the holy will of the Father in everything.\textsuperscript{58} Christ is central to creation as a whole, not simply to humanity.

While specifically applicable to humanity we see another explicit expression of the idea of creation as a whole being proleptically conditioned by redemption and its implications for a doctrine of theōsis:

By taking our frail, contingent nature upon himself who is the one source and origin of all creaturely being, he transferred our origin into himself, in order to secure our being from final dissolution into nothingness, but at the same time he took upon himself our alienated and corrupt nature...in order to redeem us and renew our being in himself.\textsuperscript{59}

This, Torrance argues, is the end for which creation has been designed by its Creator. Here we see a familiar tenet of Torrance’s theology, the vicarious work of the incarnate Christ doing for us (creation) what we could not do for ourselves, taking what is ours and making it his own in order to give what is his to make our own. We shall see that Torrance uses other words for this in other contexts, such as ‘atonning reconciliation’, and ‘atoning exchange’, but each time the basic idea is the same. Through the incarnation of the Son of God, in his taking to himself of human nature, God himself transfers our creaturely contingent existence into his own experience, so that Jesus Christ secures the origin and end of creation in his own eternal being.\textsuperscript{60} For Torrance, such logic is central to theōsis - the union of divinity and humanity in the person of the incarnate Word and the participation of men and women in him, along with the summing up of all things (ta panta) in Christ: ‘For by Him

\textsuperscript{57} This has certain implications for a doctrine of election, implications of which Torrance is aware. See later in the study when Torrance’s doctrine of election is dealt with briefly in Chapter Three, 171-198; 215-217.


\textsuperscript{60} T.F. Torrance, The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 102.
all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together’ (Col 1.16-17). With ‘all things’ Torrance includes animate and inanimate creation.\(^{61}\)

Like Torrance, Pannenberg also works out the cosmic consequences of \textit{theōsis} and builds this around the centrality of Christ whose incarnation conditions creation. It will be useful to compare his articulation of this theme with that of Torrance. In a simple but profound statement Pannenberg summarises the relation between God and the world: ‘From the standpoint of Christian theology the participation of creatures in the trinitarian fellowship of the Son with the Father is the goal of creation.’\(^{62}\)

In his own way Pannenberg echoes a doctrine of \textit{theōsis} and does so in total agreement with what we have seen in Torrance’s theology so far. Pannenberg ‘proves’ his point above by applying the christological test – ‘we see this plainly in the incarnation of the divine Logos in Jesus of Nazareth. For the goal of the event was that all might be reconciled in him (Col 1.20; cf. Eph 1.10).’\(^{63}\) However, Pannenberg does not restrict \textit{theōsis} to the realm of human creatures but to the whole creation itself. In a theological exposition of Romans 8.19ff Pannenberg relates the \textit{theōsis} of the human person to that of the very creation itself, a creation that waits for the manifestation of divine sonship in the human race. ‘If, however,’ Pannenberg concludes, ‘this suffering [the result of the Fall] is overcome by the adoption of humans into the filial relation of Jesus to the Father, the relation of nonhuman creatures to their Creator thereby also comes to fulfilment.’\(^{64}\)


\(^{62}\) W. Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology}, vol. 2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 73, 137-138. Pannenberg applies this principle not only to humans but to all other creatures as well. What separates humans from other creatures is the fact that ‘only at the human stage in the sequence of creaturely forms did express distinction come to be seen between God and all creaturely reality,’ 138.


\(^{64}\) W. Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology}, vol. 2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 73. At this point Pannenberg enters into a discussion with the natural sciences in a similar way to Torrance.
In a complex but important discussion of the trinitarian origin and act of creation Pannenberg advances a thesis for the contingent but free existence of human persons as predicated on the self-distinction of the Son from the Father. His argument brings together many of the emphases Torrance highlights but also enables us to go further than perhaps Torrance does.

On the Christian view creation can be thought of as God's free act because it does not derive from a necessity that flows one-sidedly from the Father, nor from a mistake of the Pneuma, but from the free agreement of the Son with the Father through the Spirit in the act of the Son's self-distinction from the Father, insofar as we have here the transition from the self-distinction of the Son from the Father within the unity of deity to self-distinction from the Father as the one God, and thus to the otherness of a creaturely existence, which is the form of the existence of the Son only in the man Jesus. Thus the Son is the origin of creaturely existence not only as the principle of distinction and self-distinction but also as the link with that which is thus distinct. As in the intratrinitarian life of God the self-distinction of the Son from the Father is the condition of his unity with the Father through the Spirit, so creatures are related to their Creator by their distinction from God and to one another by their distinctions from one another. Pannenberg continues to apply this logic to the idea of theosis, although he does not use the term, when he writes that:

In his linkage with the Spirit the Son acts in creation as the principle not merely of the distinction of the creatures but also of their interrelation in the order of creation. In this sense, too, he is the Logos of creation. He gathers the creatures into the order that is posited by their distinctions and relations and brings them together through himself...for participation in his fellowship with the Father. But this takes place only through the Spirit, for the creative work of the Son is linked at every point to that of the Spirit.

Pannenberg is presenting, in clearer terms than Torrance at this point, exactly the point of Torrance’s discussion on the relations between Creator-creation and God-world. What Pannenberg is speaking about in terms of the self-distinction of the eternal Son has affinities with Torrance’s discussion on the unfolding of creation and the close connection between creation and redemption and creation being proleptically conditioned by redemption.


We may now further understand how it is that Torrance can utilise a concept of *theōsis* later in his work without the fear of importing any pantheistic notions into his theology: the relations between the Father, Son, and Spirit are *homoousial*, eternal, and ontological; the relations between the Creator and the creature are contingent, initiated *ex nihilo*, and are by grace not nature.

Throughout Torrance's doctrine of creation we can see the influence of classical Greek, in contrast to Latin, theology at work. According to classical Greek theology the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ revealed the final cosmic range of God's redeeming purpose. We see this within Athanasius' *De Incarnatione* and the *Capita Gnostica* of Maximus, for instance.67 This theology, according to Torrance's reading, is essentially world-affirming in character whereas the Latin theology of Tertullian and Augustine, for example, is essentially world-denying. Torrance finds much the same contrast between Luther's eschatological outlook, which he believes is basically Augustinian, and Calvin's, which is said to be basically Athanasian.68 He characterises Luther's as an eschatology of faith and Calvin's as an eschatology of hope.69 It is highly unlikely that Torrance's reading of the tradition is convincing at this point. However, with this considerable reconstruction of the thought of Athanasius and Calvin, Torrance's doctrine of creation is one filled with christological hope.

Torrance's doctrine of creation is an essential ingredient of the account of *theōsis* he goes on to build in his anthropology, and later in his theology. The 'deification' of men and women occurs in space and time, in the

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68 In response to claims such as these by Torrance and G. Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 202, Paul Helm, in his recent work *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50-52, draws upon the work of A.N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), ch.3, to refute such notions, arguing that the influence of Athanasius and the Cappadocians on Calvin must remain speculative since there is no hard evidence that Calvin had access to their writings. It does appear this is an overstatement given Calvin's citation of Greek theologians however his point is certainly a strong caution against Torrance's reading.

69 This is developed in T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1956), 139-140.
world, a contingent world that is utterly dependent upon God, and a world that, like men and women, also awaits a final redemption. This worldly redemption is inextricably bound to the 'deification' of believers. While Torrance makes this general point he offers little by way of development or discussion of it, electing to deal more fully with the human dimensions of theosis and more specifically its christological properties.

§6 Anthropology: God and Humanity

Having examined Torrance’s account of the relation existing between God and the world, we must now assess the God-human relation and explore the way in which Torrance develops his theological anthropology in harmony with his cosmology. If the incarnation proleptically conditions creation, Jesus Christ becomes the central figure, and a theological anthropology has to account for that. In order to do this Torrance develops a dynamic and relational account of the imago Dei that actually amounts to an articulation of an imago Christi. In presenting Christ as the imago Dei Torrance develops central emphases of Eastern Orthodox anthropology, along with some explicitly Calvinistic themes. The result of his theological anthropology is an affirmation of the supremacy of the incarnate Christ, the creation of men and women in his image, and a concept of human development that is consonant with certain themes innate to a doctrine of theosis.70

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70 Because a doctrine of theosis concerns the goal or telos of humanity, the incarnate Christ as the imago Dei, and the purposive nature of creation, the issue of the 'Primacy of Christ' is important and a topic which Torrance deals with to some degree. However, the specifics of this topic fall outside the scope of the present study. We simply note that Torrance develops a thoroughly Scotistic position when in T.F. Torrance, The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 210, he writes, 'While clapping our hands on our mouth, without knowing what we say, we may nevertheless feel urged to say that in his eternal purpose the immeasurable Love of God overflowing freely beyond himself who brought the creation into existence would have become incarnate within the creation even if we and our world were not in need of his redeeming grace.' Torrance is committed to a Scotistic view of the Primacy of Christ; that is, a view that is committed to the predestination of Christ before that of the fall of humanity and without regard to sin in the first place, for at least four reasons. First, Torrance affirms the ontological necessity of the atonement given the Creator-creature distinction. In order for this ontological barrier to be broached God himself had to become human without ceasing to be divine in order to raise humanity up to the divine level and allow men and women to participate in the Triune communion. This was only possible in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Hence communion with God through the incarnation was a requirement simply because of the Creator-creature distinction. This distinction has nothing to do with sin in the first instance. To be sure, once Adam and Eve did sin, however original sin is conceived, the rest of their progeny was
Writing in the late 1940s in a *Festschrift* for Karl Barth, Torrance argued that the doctrine of humanity (theological anthropology) was one of the most relevant discussions of the day.\(^{71}\) The republication of that article nearly twenty years later, in the mid-1960s, reflected its abiding relevance for Torrance. While Torrance has written extensively on creation in general he has not devoted nearly as much time to thinking through a theological anthropology. As with other aspects of Torrance's doctrine, theological anthropology is not a subject developed separately but one that stands within the nexus of his scientific trinitarian theology.\(^{72}\) Anthropology comes within the broad contours of creation and

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so it too is contingent, and thus subject to what has already been said about creation more generally.73 As with his overall christocentric treatment of the doctrine of creation, Torrance's anthropology is formed in light of the humanity of Christ and his redemptive mission.74 With the incarnation, the coming of God as man, profound implications for the understanding of humanity and their relation to God occurred. There arose a distinctively Christian anthropology in which 'man is given a unique place in the creative and providential purpose of God for the universe, as the creature who exists as a spiritual and physical being on the boundary between heaven and earth, eternity and time, grace and nature.'75

Torrance develops his doctrine of humanity through the interconnection between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self (Calvin76), which constitutes the very life of humanity. Human persons are created to know God — that is their chief end (telos) and so one is not truly a person unless one knows God.77 What this knowing consists of is our present theme.
§6.1  The Imago Dei & The Proleptic Self

While the concept of the *imago Dei* is clearly central to a theological anthropology, what this *imago* consists of offers no easy definition within the history of Christian thought. Two views have dominated the discussion: the structural or substantial position, and the relational one. The first view argues that there is a constitutive and thus substantial aspect of the human creature which qualifies the *imago Dei*, most notably the possession of a rational nature. The second view argues that human persons are created with the capacity to enter into full loving relationships with God and with others and it is this which qualifies the *imago Dei*. As Grenz reminds us, ‘the standard description looks to the Reformation as marking the transition from the predominance of the first to heightened interest in the second.’ More recently a third view has come to prominence, also drawing on patristic support: the teleological view of the *imago*. While Torrance does not develop such a taxonomy, a short survey of the three interpretations of the *imago Dei* will lead us into a more concentrated study of Torrance’s distinctive position, akin to the teleological view, with a focus on the central role that a doctrine of *theōsis* plays within this discussion. The model of anthropology developed by Torrance is in harmony with his theology of *theōsis* - the participation of the human being in the life of God as the intended goal or *telos* of human persons, based upon the centrality of Jesus Christ.

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* except in a motion of thankful acknowledgment of the sheer grace of God as Creator and Father in whose Word men's life is deposited, and in the continuous communication of which alone may life be possessed,' T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 102.

* I have borrowed the term the 'proleptic self' from S.J. Grenz, 'The *Imago Dei* and the Dissipation of the Self,' *Dialog* 38 (Summer 1999), 187. While an obvious phrase to use in the context of Torrance's anthropology it is not one he uses.


§6.1.1 **Imago Dei as Substantive**

The dominant theological position on the *imago Dei* has been the substantive view.\(^\text{81}\) According to Ramsey, this view holds that the divine image refers to 'something within the substantial form of human nature, some faculty or capacity man possesses.'\(^\text{82}\) According to the substantive position (also termed the 'structural' view), the image of God in humans consists of the properties that constitute us as human beings, especially our rationality (sometimes 'will'),\(^\text{83}\) together with our moral nature which allows us to know God in a uniquely relational way.\(^\text{84}\) When the consequences of the Fall were considered in light of the substantive view by its early proponents, a distinction was posited between the 'image' and 'likeness' of God mentioned in Gen 1.26, especially within Eastern Orthodoxy.\(^\text{85}\) While Torrance does not equate *image* with *nature* and *likeness* with *person* he does accept a clear distinction *theologically* between 'nature' and 'person'. A human can partake of human *nature* without actually being a *person* in the theological sense. *Person* is reserved for those in relationship with the triune God. For Torrance, as we shall see, *theosis* consists in the progression from mere *nature* to *personhood*.


\(^{83}\) Typical of this position is Augustine who writes: 'For a great thing truly is man, made after the image and similitude of God, not as respects the mortal body in which he is clothed, but as respects the rational soul by which he is exalted in honor above the beasts,' *On Christian Doctrine* 1.22 (NPEN, 1st series 2:527).


While not often emphasized there is an explicit movement within the structural definition of the *imago Dei* toward the future when the image will be completed or matured. There is an eschatological orientation inherent in the human being created in the *imago Dei* which is tied up with the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, a theme Torrance makes much of in his anthropology. This leads into the second way in which the *imago Dei* has been interpreted in the tradition.

§6.1.2 *Imago Dei* as Relational

The second major way to approach the *imago Dei* has been a relational one. The Reformers rejected as exegetically unwarranted any distinction between *image* and *likeness* and offered in its place a unitary and relational view of the divine image and thus forged a ‘new trajectory in theological anthropology’. According to the Reformers the *imago Dei* was lost through Adam’s Fall but is restored by and in Christ. The *imago* is not a faculty humans possess but is an action performed, in this case, relational action. Calvin does not derive his understanding of the

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86 See the discussion in the Introduction, 19-20; 24-26 for an overview of the patristic and Reformation use of the distinction between ‘image’ and ‘likeness’.


89 In Torrance's interpretation of Calvin, he opposes the view that Calvin saw the *imago Dei* as a natural heritage or a static possession; instead he argues that for Calvin the image is dynamic and eschatological. T.F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 61-72. He writes, 'imago dei is thus man's destiny in God's gracious intention. It is the original truth of his being which is also the future,' 61. While each person has a vestige of the image the real reflection of the image can only be realized in faith when creation lives in a thankful response to God's grace. The image is not resident in the substantial makeup of the human person but is a response that happens as we mirror the divine purpose. This reading of Calvin has not gone unchallenged. Milner claims that Calvin's use of the *imago Dei* follows the humanistic and classical ideals and so it is seen as a natural quality or as an order of the rational soul. B.C. Milner, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 23-25. This should not imply a rejection on the part of the Reformers of any form of structural component in the *imago*. They all clearly acknowledged some inherent capacity was essential to the *imago Dei*. See for instance J.
completed *imago Dei* from the fallen state of humankind but from the restoration given in Christ, the last Adam and the true Image of God.\(^{90}\)

The relational understanding of the *imago Dei* is most typically illustrated by means of humanity being a *mirror* of the Divine, Calvin’s favourite metaphor,\(^ {91}\) and a favourite also of Torrance.\(^ {92}\) The force of the metaphor is that only when the mirror reflects an object does it have the image of that object. On this basis, in reality it is God who images himself in men and women, and that means he embraces men and women as his children in Christ the express Image of his glory.\(^ {93}\) The *imago Dei* is no longer conceived as a static possession of the person but is a dynamic concept by which men and women mirror the glory of God back to himself. The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from even this limited and introductory material is that, as Torrance states: ‘the image of God is really more in Christ than in men; more therefore in the favour and grace of God than in the being of man.’\(^ {94}\) Torrance summarises the relational force of Calvin’s understanding of the *imago Dei* as having to do with ‘man’s unique relation to God in his self-communication and His glory, not just through the bare Word of command but through a *familiar* Word which brings man into a friendly relation with the Father.’\(^ {95}\)

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\(^{92}\) According to Torrance ‘There is no doubt that Calvin always thinks of the *imago* in terms of a mirror,’ T.F. Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 36. Grenz believes Torrance has ‘perhaps overdrawn’ this conclusion, S.J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 166. Grenz has in mind, no doubt, Calvin’s use of the metaphors of ‘engraved’ and ‘sculptured.’ Torrance avers that these other terms are only ever used by Calvin when the thought of the mirroring of God is present.


\(^{95}\) T.F. Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 45.
Within a Reformed tradition shaped by such influences Karl Barth sought to reinterpret and represent his intensely relational view of the *imago Dei* and in so doing, sent theological anthropology on yet another trajectory.\(^95\) According to Barth, to understand what being human is we cannot start with ourselves.\(^97\) The Fall of humanity spelt the end to any natural knowledge of God. While the praise of God is the relational purpose of humanity, humanity is unable to do this. For Barth the command to praise and the inability to do so were reconciled in a point of correspondence between humanity and God, by virtue of which we are able to know God. This point of correspondence is not ours by virtue of our nature, that is, ontologically. It is *given* to us in faith. It is in Christ Jesus alone that we are shown the *truly* human.\(^98\) Hence all anthropology is also christology.\(^99\) This involves Barth’s rejection of an *analogia entis* in favour of an *analogia relationis* to which we shall turn our attention shortly when Torrance takes up this same discussion and seeks to advance it.

\(^95\) As G. A. Jönsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26–28 in a Century of Old Testament Research* (Lund: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1988) 203, comments, ‘After the Second World War, there is hardly a single scholar who has been cited as often in the *imago Dei* debate as the systematic theologian Karl Barth.’


\(^98\) As F. Shults, ‘Constitutive Relationality in Anthropology and Trinity: The Shaping of the *Imago Dei* Doctrine in Barth and Pannenberg,’ in *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 39 (1997), 306, puts superbly, ‘In some ways, anthropology served as a lightening rod (especially in the debates with Brunner) for all of Barth’s polemic against the *analogia entis* which he viewed as trying to provide true theological knowledge apart from and without relying upon revelation.’

\(^99\) Behind Barth’s programmatic statement in his *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), III/2, 132: ‘The ontological determination of humanity is grounded in the fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus,’ lies Barth’s idiosyncratic doctrine of election, that in the person of Jesus Christ we find God’s ‘No’ and ‘Yes.’ As B. McCormack brings out so clearly in his survey, Barth’s doctrine of election occasioned a radical re-envisioning of divine ontology. See B. McCormack, ‘Grace and Being,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. J. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92-110.

§6.2 Imago Dei as Telos

A third view of the image of God, and one that is in fact embedded within Irenaeus' doctrine of recapitulation, the Eastern Orthodox quest for 'divinization', the Reformers' relational view, and Barth's christological imago - is that of human destiny, goal, or telos. This third alternative offers a way beyond the static category of substance and the rather 'slippery' category of relation, in favour of a more robust definition that is at once biblical, traditional, and contemporary. Torrance's theological anthropology fits naturally into this category as he takes seriously the teleological orientation of creation; humanity included, and finds this model most conducive to a doctrine of theōsis.

According to Luther, although humankind lost the image of God through sin, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God can restore it. This restoration is ultimately eschatological, initiated in time and space, but, importantly for our study, is of an even higher order than the condition that was lost in the Fall. The perfection of the divine image is the eternal life for which Adam was 'fitted'. Consequently, even more is gained in Christ than was lost in Adam. The imago Dei is thus inherently teleological, or, as

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101 This 'third view' is being explored by: P.E. Hughes, The True Image; The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); W. Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 3 vols., trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, 1994, 1998); S.J. Grenz, The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); and T.A. Smail, 'In the Image of the Triune God,' International Journal of Systematic Theology 5 (2003), 22-32. In quite different ways and diametrically opposed to the present study a developmental view is also found in the works of process, panentheistic, and openness anthropologies. The theme has also been picked up by the evolutionary interpretation of anthropology.


104 According to Calvin what is restored to humanity in redemption far exceeds a return to the supposed perfection of Adam and Eve before the fall. Unlike Irenaeus, Calvin believed that from the beginning the 'end' for which God created humans was completely present. J. Calvin, Commentary on Genesis, vol. 1 of Calvin's Commentaries, trans. J. King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 296. This eschatological destiny of humanity has been most ably propounded in contemporary theology by W. Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, vol. 2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 218-231 and E. Jüngel, 'Humanity in Correspondence to God: Remarks on the Image of God as a Basic Concept in Theological Anthropology,' in Theological Essays (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 124-153.
Gunton reminds us, it is more appropriately described as *eschatological.* Here we reach a main feature of Torrance’s soteriology, a feature he shares with the East.

The Eastern teaching on salvation is based on the patristic teaching about the creation of the world *ex nihilo,* and of man ‘in the image of God’, having as final purpose the achievement of *theosis,* as well as on the teaching of the frustration of the divine economy by man’s fall...Salvation for them is essentially the palingenesis, the restoration of man and the world to their original state.106

Like many in the early church Torrance believes the *imago* is an inherent rationality within men and women – a rationality that enables them to perceive the order of the creation and to praise and worship the one from whom this order came – the Creator. In this regard Torrance affirms a substantive definition of the *imago.* However, this is only a partial description of the *imago Dei* according to Torrance. With Karl Barth in the foreground (and Calvin in the background), Torrance vigorously defends a relational interpretation of the *imago.* Humans are created to ‘correspond’ with (Barth), or be a ‘mirror’ to (Calvin) God. Torrance develops this relational view beyond that of Barth along lines similar to Pannenberg, that of human destiny. Men and women are persons-in-becoming. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, is the complete person, the *Imago Dei* in perfection and the one into whom men and women are being transformed, from glory to glory (2 Cor 3.18; Rom 8.29; 1 Jn 3.2 etc).108


108 In a recent article Thomas Smail sums this up well when in another context he writes: ‘thus the Genesis passage [Gen 1.27] stands at the protological and the Pauline passages [2 Cor 3.18f etc] at the eschatological horizon of the way the biblical witnesses think if the *imago Dei,* and the Christological centre gives meaning to them both, because Christ is the Alpha and Omega of all the ways of God with his creation. Through him our humanity is constituted at the beginning and through him it is consummated at the end.’ T.A. Smail, ‘In the Image of the Triune God,’ *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5 (2003), 23.
Torrance rejects the static categories of nature and grace in his discussion of the human person in the *imago Dei*. He argues that Reformed theology in general, not to be confused with what he deems ‘federal Calvinism’, rejects any notion of the *imago Dei* that sees it as purely a natural possession of the human person.\footnote{For Torrance within the logic of Calvin's own theology total depravity is necessitated by the fact of the corollary of total grace. Because the Gospel speaks of salvation in total terms we must speak of depravity in total terms as well. This applies also to the *imago Dei*. When Calvin speaks of total depravity he does so under the title of total perversity, the *imago Dei* has been totally perverted then, according to Calvin. T.F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 83.} For Torrance, *theosis* consists in the knowledge of God. Here Torrance departs from certain features of Latin theology that posits the beatific vision as the supreme goal of *theosis*. From Calvin, Barth, and the East Torrance argues that knowledge of God, while not isolated from beatific vision (light) is the supreme *teios*.\footnote{This ‘knowing’ is, of course, a ‘personal knowing’ and so not one that is devoid of relationship, experience, and what we would normally term subjectivity. This corresponds to Torrance's general epistemology (critical realism) and scientific theology as a whole.} \footnote{T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 101.} ‘We do not know God unless we know that our knowing is due to God alone’, writes Torrance, ‘otherwise the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not.’\footnote{T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 105-106. Along with Barth Torrance calls the Augustinian doctrine the discovery of antichrist that says ‘in the mind itself, even before it is a partaker of God, his image is found.’ 105. For Barth's position see E. Brunner and K. Barth, *Natural Theology*, trans. P. Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946), 87-90.} Within this Reformed context of the grace of God and the note of unbounded thanksgiving as the true life-answer of created humanity to the Father, Torrance constructs his theological anthropology and in turn contributes towards constructing a doctrine of *theosis*.

If humanity is created to know God and to revel in the joy this knowledge brings (worship), then *theosis* is the attainment of that knowledge and the joyous communion it creates. The problem with this is, of course, the fact that humanity has fallen. Any discussion of humanity created in the *imago Dei* must deal with the fact of the Fall and its consequences. For Torrance, the Fall resulted in total depravity, as Calvin first articulated it.\footnote{For Torrance within the logic of Calvin's own theology total depravity is necessitated by the fact of the corollary of total grace. Because the Gospel speaks of salvation in total terms we must speak of depravity in total terms as well. This applies also to the *imago Dei*. When Calvin speaks of total depravity he does so under the title of total perversity, the *imago Dei* has been totally perverted then, according to Calvin. T.F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 83.} Total depravity does not entail, according to Torrance's reading of Reformed theology, a thorough ontological break in humanity's relation
with God, but it does mean the essential relation in which true human nature is grounded has been utterly perverted and turned into its opposite, something which only makes sense in a relational and teleological understanding of the *imago Dei*. Sin is properly of the mind and drags humanity into an active rebellion against God. It is only due to the grace of God that human beings still exist at all. The *imago Dei* is not destroyed by the Fall but 'continues to hang over man as a destiny which he can realise no longer, and as a judgment upon his actual state of perversity'.

Within creation, the theatre of God’s glory, all creation is purposely brought into existence in order to glorify God, and it is in this context that men and women are spoken of by Torrance as the 'priests of creation', a theme that will be considered in more detail later in the study. Their task is to represent creation to the Creator in a worshipful and joyous response. But nature fails in its realisation of such a human vocation. We humans have failed in our duties as the priests of creation; we refuse to sing the praises of all creation to God. It is precisely at this point that Torrance introduces the astounding claim that God in Christ does for us what we could not do for ourselves. Torrance’s anthropology is christological, soteriological, and eschatological. These three features inform his theological anthropology at every point.

Within Torrance’s theology *theōsis* consists in being recreated in Christ Jesus who alone is the Image of God. Until men and women are renewed and brough: face to face with God in Christ, we cannot know what it means either to know God or to know ourselves as persons.

...the coming of God in Christ, and his self-communication to man, have taken such a form in the Incarnation, that it is there only that we may see human nature set forth in its truth as creature made to be the child of the heavenly Father. Thus there can be no question of trying to understand man out of himself, or from his relation to the world, he must be understood primarily from the Word made flesh.

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115 T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 102. Torrance continues to distance himself from the form of 'Calvinism' that transferred to nature what belongs to grace. Torrance argues that after Calvin there came into being a strange amalgamation of
In the incarnation the eternal Son of God assumes fallen human nature and redeems it thus restoring and fulfilling the divine telos for humanity of union and communion with God (theosis).\textsuperscript{116} With Athanasius, Torrance speaks of Jesus as 'the Dominical Man' and 'the principle of ways' which God has provided for us. By this he means that the incarnate Christ has an archetypal significance for human beings.\textsuperscript{117} He even suggests that: 'every human being is ontologically bound to him. It is in Jesus Christ the incarnate Creator, then, that the being of all men, whether they believe or not, is creatively grounded and is unceasingly sustained.'\textsuperscript{118}

The chief end and true felicity of humanity involves, according to Torrance, knowledge of oneself as a creature utterly dependent on the grace of God.

[Man] has been created an intelligent being in order to know God in such a way that in the act of knowing man is brought to re-live consciously, and in a qualitatively different fashion, the very movement of grace in which he is created and maintained in being, so as to be carried beyond himself in responsible union with God in whom he finds his true life and felicity.\textsuperscript{119}

Herein lies one of the main components of theosis within Torrance's anthropology. The imago Dei lies ahead of each human person and can only be realised in the person of the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. The imago Dei is our destiny and true telos, not something inherent within

\textsuperscript{116} This is a reversal of the fall which resulted in sin which Torrance defines as shattered communion, T.F. Torrance, 'The Atoning Obedience of Christ,' Moravian Theological Seminary Bulletin (1959), 65-66.


\textsuperscript{118} T.F. 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. N.M de S. Cameron (Carlisle: Paternoster/Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 244. Torrance is not implying that all people, by right of this ontological bond, are saved. Quite the opposite! The article in question is one in which Torrance is arguing for the singularity of Christ in an otherwise pluralistic world. His point is that because Jesus Christ is the Creator Incarnate, then all creation, men and women especially, are ontologically related to him. Torrance is clearly advocating a universal view of the atonement. His logic goes as follows: if Christ in his incarnation represents all humanity, then in his atonement he must represent to the same extent all humanity. Any other view is to separate atonement from incarnation and revert back to an old dualist notion, a 'schizoid notion of the incarnation,' 246. How is it then that Christ died for all and yet not all are saved? Torrance has no answer other than to claim (and claim Calvin in support), that sin is irrational and inexplicable. Torrance thus forcefully rejects universalism and limited atonement as twin heresies, 248.

\textsuperscript{119} T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 101.
each human person, waiting to be realised through some self-effort, self-examination, process of spiritual awakening, or mysticism. The realising of the imago Dei is theosis within Torrance’s anthropology and as with the rest of his thought, is actioned entirely by grace, that is, in the incarnate Son of God. ‘In other words, the fall of man means that the imago dei can be interpreted only in eschatological terms.’ These eschatological terms are entwined with christological action.

Torrance’s doctrine of creation is self-consciously built upon Barth’s christocentric theology. For Torrance, a christocentric understanding of creation is formed around the ontological claim that Christ is the meaning and purpose of creation. This soteriological objectivism within Barth sees everything that takes place in creation as being subordinated to and proleptically conditioned by the incarnation of the Son of God and the redemption he brings. Torrance develops this theme in his own

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121 In place of ‘mysticism’ Torrance prefers to speak of ‘intuitive’, non-logical knowing that arises under the constraint of reality upon the mind. See his ‘Intuitive and Abstractive Knowledge: From Duns Scotus to Calvin,’ in De Doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti. Congressus Scotisticus Internationalis, ed. C. Balic (Rome: Societas Internationalis Scotistica, 1968), 291-305.

122 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 108. Torrance refers the reader to Calvin’s Commentaries on Romans (5.12), and 1 Corinthians (15.45); and his Sermons on Job (14.1-2; 33.1-2; and 39.8-9).


124 Of course Torrance is not a ‘Barthian’ who simply restates and defends Barth’s own views, contra the view of R.A. Muller, ‘The Barth Legacy: New Athanasius or Origen Redivivus? A Response to T.F. Torrance,’ Thomist 54 (1990), 673-704.


distinctive but no less christocentric way. Jesus Christ himself is the true Image of God to which all creation will one day be conformed. In The Christian Doctrine of God Torrance wrote concerning Christ:

We can also say in the light of the incarnation that as the Word made flesh, the Word by whom all things that are made were made, Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of God’s eternal purpose for his creation, that it is in Jesus Christ himself that all things in heaven and earth are reconciled, and that the whole created universe consists in him as its Head.

From this fulfilment of all things in Christ, Torrance contends that we can read this back into the very beginning of creation itself. ‘As the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Lord Jesus Christ gathers up all things from the beginning in himself as the Head of the created universe in the consummation of God’s eternal purpose of Love...’ In an explicit reference to what a doctrine of theōsis within Torrance’s anthropology represents we read that the omnipotence of God evidenced in the incarnation represents his:

Becoming what we are in our lost and damned condition in order to save us and reconcile us to himself in the undoing of all disorder and in the triumph of divine Love and Light over all darkness and evil. In the resurrection of Jesus God has manifested the measureless extent of his power to share with us to the uttermost our perdition and condemnation in order to lift us up to share with him his divine Life and Light, delivering us from the power of darkness and translating us into his Kingdom.

Torrance goes on to provide a concise summary of theōsis in these terms: ‘In other words, the sovereignty of God is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might become rich.’ Here we find a direct echo...

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127 For a definition of what christocentric means within his theology see T.F. Torrance, ‘The Place of Christology in Biblical and Dogmatic Theology,’ in Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 128-149, originally a 1956 article written in honour of Karl Barth which acknowledged his indebtedness to the second half-volume of his prolegomena to the Kirchliche Dogmatik.
of the patristic framing of the doctrine of theosis. Given Torrance's expertise as a patristic scholar, this allusion can hardly be accidental.

Torrance is clear that in the self-humiliation of God in Jesus Christ, his kenōsis, there is no abandonment of divine power or attributes, no ceasing to be God, but rather an exercise of his 'omnipotent Grace' within the limitations of our contingent existence in space and time. Thus the Son became human without ceasing to be divine in order to make creatures participate in the divine communion without ceasing to be creatures. For Torrance the incarnation of the Son of God is:

The fact that he who freely created the universe has once and for all become incarnate within it, means that as the Creator God wills freely to coexist with his creaturely children, and therefore that the continuing existence of the universe is ontologically bound to the crucified and risen Jesus and destined to partake in the consummation of God's eternal purpose in him.

What does this mean for the man or woman who is not in Christ? Torrance argues that we do not know all that this means for these people. What we do know is that for the believer in Christ their 'human nature as body of [their] mind and mind of [their] body is affirmed with a spiritual wholeness and a new ontological interrelation with others that transcends [their] original creation, for now [they] exist not just alongside of the Creator, but in such a way that [their] human being is anchored in the very Being of God.'

§6.2.1 From Soul, Through Body, to Spirit

When pressed further, Torrance argues, as we have just seen, that a human person is a 'body of his soul and soul of his body'. In utilising

132 Torrance's views against the so-called 'kenotic-christology' were developed as early as his Auburn lectures, see T.F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1938-39 (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 108-130. According to Torrance 'there is no reference in the text to an act on the part of Christ emptying something or anything out of himself, but of his emptying 'himself' his whole self out of one form into another,' 109.


this language Torrance rejects a trichotomous view of the human person (as body, soul, and spirit) in favour of a dichotomous one of the human as body and soul, related to God 'through the power and presence of God's Spirit, and thereby endowed with the capacity to think and act in accordance with the nature (kataphysin) of what is other than himself'.136 The human spirit is actually an essential and dynamic correlate of the divine 'Spirit' - not a third object distinct from body and soul, but a 'transcendental determination'. This phrase, 'transcendental determination,' effectively functions within Torrance’s anthropology as another cognate for theōsis. The human person is created with a goal (telos) in view, to participate in the triune relationship of the Father for the Son in or by the Holy Spirit. What drives this motion towards this goal of theōsis is this transcendental determination of the Spirit.137

What drives the human being to personality and relatedness is the Holy Spirit who is the bond of union between the Father and the Son in the Triunity and now between Creator and creature in space-time. The S/spirit of men and women is not some 'spark of the divine' (Origen)138

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137 According to Pannenberg there is an 'ecological self-transcendence' inherent to living organisms which corresponds to the biblical idea of a spiritual origin of life. W. Pannenberg, Toward a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith, ed. T. Peters (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 133. This ecological self-transcendence' is wedded to a field of energy which in turn is wedded to a concept of spirit. The term 'spirit' refers to 'the power on which life depends and the broader context for the self-transcending dynamic of organic life,' in the words of C. Mostert, God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 165. While Pannenberg's idea of 'self-transcendence' sounds similar to Torrance's 'transcendental determination,' the fundamental difference lies in the identity of the spirit within each theologians development. For Torrance 'spirit' in this context is always the Holy Spirit while for Pannenberg 'spirit,' as with much philosophy, identifies an anthropological predicate as much as it does a divine Person.

but the 'ontological qualification of his soul' brought about and maintained by the Holy Spirit. In this way the human person is capable of thinking objectively of what is other than themselves – it is the very essence of their human rationality and relationality. As Torrance clarifies:

> It is not through any alleged participation in the essence of God, as Hellenic religion and philosophy maintained, but through the objective orientation of man in soul and body to God, the Source and Ground of all creaturely rationality and freedom, that man is constituted a rational subject and agent, i.e. a person.

Similar to Torrance's view is that of Gerald Bray who holds that 'the ancient distinction between body (or flesh) and soul is not valid, because the soul is no more than the life of the body, without which we are talking only about a corpse, not about a human being.' Torrance wants to raise this discussion even further. What makes men and women so distinctive is that as unitary beings, body of their soul and soul of the body, they span two 'worlds' - the physical and spiritual - and are thereby able to reach knowledge of the created contingent order and divulge the secrets of its vast intelligibility. As a result a correspondence (Barth) between God and humanity, Creator and creature is spanned by the human person in the *imago Dei*.

Torrance understands patristic anthropology to have recast current terms from Middle Platonism into a distinctively Christian anthropology, the two

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142 T.F. Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind: Order and Openness in Theology and Natural Science* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 33. For this reason Torrance terms humanity the 'mediator of order.'

most important being *soul* and *person*.\textsuperscript{144} Like the rest of creation, the soul and body are created *ex nihilo* and are contingent rather than immortal.\textsuperscript{145} The soul and body of human beings are 'continuously sustained by the creative presence of God and are given immortality through the grace of a relation with God who only has immortality.'\textsuperscript{146} Despite the absence of the technical vocabulary of *theōsis* here we find an implicit reference to the doctrine when Torrance speaks (in Orthodox terms) of the mortal gaining immortality. This graced relation to God is initiated in space-time but extends to the eschaton in which the resurrection of the whole being of the person as body and soul is realised. Resurrection is to a creaturely participation in the uncreated eternal Life of God, something which equates to a doctrine of *theōsis*. Here we see that Torrance has an eschatological vision of both personhood and *theōsis* in mind.\textsuperscript{147} As far as Torrance is concerned, 'it is in the resurrection that the full purpose of God in the creation of human being for communion with himself is brought to its fruition.'\textsuperscript{148} Torrance sees the resurrection not only as deliverance from corruption but also as

\textsuperscript{144} It is well recognised today that the Greek fathers used both biblical and Platonic material in their theology, not least of which in working out their theology of *theōsis*, but they transformed the Platonic language to stand under Christian revelation. As Frank commented in his study of Orthodox spirituality, 'A careful reading of the Fathers reveals that they did not uncritically accept the platonic premise of the soul's kinship with the divine. Too much in the tradition spoke against it,' G.L.C. Frank, 'The Spirituality of the Orthodox Tradition,' *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 18 (1992), 5. Cf. W.G. Rusch, 'How the Eastern Fathers Understood What the Western Church Meant by Justification.' In *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*, ed. H.G. Anderson, et al., (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 135-136.


an ontological act in which true creaturehood is restored through the intimate relation with the creative Source of all being.

Theōsis is the goal of all human existence and the goal of human creation originally; at the resurrection of body and soul human beings can fully participate in the eternal life of God. This participation always has one qualifier in Torrance's theology, however: it is a participation in the eternal life of God embodied in the incarnate Son.\(^{149}\) There is no life without the Source of Life, no resurrection without the resurrected One, and no theōsis outside of the Incarnate Son of God. Thus theōsis is not, strictly speaking, the 'divinization' of the human person as such but the personalizing of the human being in the Person of the incarnate Son. This is the meaning behind the words of Torrance, 'for man to live in union with God is to become fully and perfectly human'.\(^{150}\) Jesus alone is the personalizing Person while we are personalized persons. It is from Christ alone, the one through whom creation came and the one for whom humanity was created, that men and women are radically made persons in the divine image.\(^{151}\) Once again Torrance brings together the doctrines of creation and redemption, the one conditioning the other.

In light of Torrance's understanding of the vicarious humanity of Christ, it should come as no surprise that he views Jesus Christ himself as the true image of God in a unique and supreme sense, for he is both the image and reality of God in his incarnate Person.\(^{152}\) This of course means that: '[W]e human beings are held to be the image of God...not in virtue of our rational nature or of anything we are inherently in our own beings, but solely through a relation to God in grace into which he has brought us in


\(^{152}\) Not only is Jesus Christ the true image of God he is also the true Reality of God. T.F. Torrance, 'The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition,' Modern Theology 4 (1988), 317.
the wholeness and integrity of our human being." Because Jesus Christ is the image of God it is only when we are incorporated into Christ that we realise our true personhood and so the true image of God. This allows Torrance to affirm:

In the strictest sense God alone is Person, for he is fullness of personal Being, and as such is the creative Source of all other personal being. He is Personalizing Person whereas we are personalized persons. We are indebted to his creative activity and presence for our very existence, but we are also indebted to him for the personal mode of being which he unceasingly generates in us and among us through his Word and Spirit.

§6.2.2 From Being to Person

Evident in the discussion so far is the deliberate distinction Torrance posits between being and person, a distinction which applies both theologically and anthropologically. Theologically, the Being of God refers to ousia, while Person, when applied to God, is described by hypostasis. Torrance applies a similar distinction to his anthropology. The human creature is created in a special sense, as Genesis 1.27 makes clear, but because the imago Dei is ultimately christological, soteriological, and eschatological, the relational aspect of the imago is what makes human beings human persons, true men and women. Because Jesus Christ is the only true human, he is the true image of God, and so only in Christ can the human creature be fully a person. The movement within the salvation of men and women, is from human being, a biological fact, to human person, a moral, theological fact. Anything outside of Christ falls short of true personhood. This is important for Torrance’s articulation of theosis.

155 Torrance is reliant upon the seminal work of Barth who argued that in the strict sense it is God who is properly Person, and humans are persons in derivation from him. K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), II/1, 272. See T.F. Torrance, God and Rationality (1971. Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 141-142.
156 One could even say that anyone outside of Christ falls short of true human being. Barth himself appears to argue this in his reinterpretation of the doctrine of election in Jesus Christ. See B. McCormack, 'Grace and Being,' in The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth, ed. J. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92-110; C.E. Gunton, 'Karl Barth’s Doctrine of
When God creates humanity he creates man and woman as one. Torrance, clearly influenced by Barth, sees in the creation of men and women in the image of God an otherness and togetherness that is to be expressed in an inherent relatedness, which in turn is a creaturely reflection of a transcendent relatedness in the divine Being. Torrance understands that 'this is the personal or inter-personal structure of humanity in which there is imaged the ineffable personal relations of the Holy Trinity.' This means that when Torrance speaks of humanity, or his more customary appellation man, he does not mean an individual (even less a male!) but rather a person in ontological relation with other persons. This is what Torrance means by 'onto-relations' or


This also raises important ethical issues which are beyond our current interest. However, the distinction between human beings and human persons in this way is not unique to Torrance but has entered the bioethical literature and is now quite accepted. In moral philosophy personhood is often defined by sentience; in theology it is defined by relationship. See M. Tooley, Abortion and Infanticide (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). On the issue of abortion, Torrance is thoroughly pro-life. See T.F. Torrance, The Soul and Person of the Unborn Child (Edinburgh: Handsel Press for the Scottish Order of Christian Unity, 1999).

Torrance follows Barth's thesis only in so far as he agrees that an essential aspect of the imago Dei is gender. 'Difference in sex is not simply a feature of the body, merely adventitious or accidental to the soul, but is intrinsic to the human soul which, far from being neutral, is, either male or female...sexuality thus determines the innermost being of people, making them either male or female in themselves,' T.F. Torrance, 'The Soul and Person in Theological Perspective,' in Religion, Reason, and the Self: Essays in Honour of Hywel D. Lewis, ed. S.R. Sutherland and T.A. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), 108-109.

Barth commonly used the phrase co-humans or fellow humanity: 'Humanity which is not fellow humanity is inhumanity. For it cannot reflect but only contradict the determination of man to be God's covenant partner, nor can the God who is no Deus solitarius but Deus triunus, God in relationship, be mirrored in a homo solitarius,' K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), III/4, 117.

The ultimate expression of this relatedness is vertical, between God and humanity, but is also reflected horizontally in marriage and procreation, Church and other social constructions. T.F. Torrance, 'The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition,' Modern Theology 4 (1988), 311.


That is to say by “man” the biblical tradition means “man-and-woman”, for it is man and woman who constitute in their union the basic unit of humanity,' T.F. Torrance, 'The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition,' Modern Theology 4 (1988), 311.

The idea of person being equated with individual is attributed by Torrance, as it is by most scholars, to Boethius, De duabus naturis et una persona Christi, adversus Eutychen et Nestorium, 2.1-5, cf. T.F. Torrance, 'The Soul and Person in Theological Perspective,' in Religion, Reason, and the Self: Essays in Honour of Hywel D. Lewis, ed. S.R. Sutherland and T.A. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), 117, fn.12.
being-constituting-relations.  

While first applied to the intratrinitarian relations, 'onto-relations' are also applicable to intrahuman relations. This explains in many ways the creation of male and female. As the Genesis account makes clear, the creation of the woman is designed to deliver the man from his isolation. From this 'primal community' arises the family unit and in time social constructions - societies. As Grenz puts it: '[W]hat begins in the Garden of Eden finds its completion at the consummation of history, when God establishes the new creation, the realm in which humans enjoy perfect fellowship with each other, creation, and the Creator.'

Given Torrance's doctrine of onto-relations, the *imago Dei* is thus a dynamic and eschatological reflection that, while initiated and developed in time-space within creation, is ultimately only realised in the eschaton of which the church is currently a foretaste. The onto-relations work on two levels, vertically and horizontally. Vertically, one is justified and sanctified through a relationship with the triune God; horizontally, one is formed into communion with other believers in the Body of Christ, the church. But these two levels are one integrated whole, not two separate spheres. What is clear is that *theösis*, communion with God, is a 'personal' activity and persons are defined as humans-in-relationship. The ultimate person is Jesus Christ; hence mature men and women are those who have been perfected by grace as they are united to Christ in

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163 T.F. Torrance, 'The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition,' *Modem Theology* 4 (1988), 311. Torrance's view of 'person' is derived from the work of Richard St Victor as opposed to that of Boethius or Aquinas, both of which are described by Torrance in his *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), 174-176. Contrary to Torrance, C.E. Gunton argues that Richard's trinitarian theology only allowed the possibility of a relational view of person, see *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 93-94. Be that as it may, while Torrance interacts with the work of Richard St Victor he develops his theology of the person based upon the insights of Athanasius and the Nicene theology. See T.F. Torrance, 'Athanasius: A Study in the Foundations of Classical Theology,' in *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 215-266.

164 S.J. Grenz, 'The *Imago Dei* and the Dissipation of the Self,' in *Dialog* 38 (Summer 1999), 186.

the Holy Spirit. The church thus becomes the locus of theosis this side of the Parousia.\textsuperscript{166}

Because of sin and the fall the onto-relations that exist between all personal beings - God-humanity, humanity-God, and humanity-humanity - have been radically 'disrupted', resulting in the breakdown of personal relationships on both the horizontal and vertical levels.\textsuperscript{167} This disruption affects the 'transcendental determinism' of human beings as they refuse to listen to the Spirit (of God) in their alienated and sinful rebellion. The result is that only through the mediation of Christ can the Holy Spirit be poured out on human beings so that they can again come to more fully reflect the imago Dei as God intended.\textsuperscript{168}

Given this definition of the imago Dei, one that is restored through the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and mediated to us in the Spirit who unites us with Christ, we can see what Torrance means when he uses the language or concepts of theosis. Colyer helpfully summarises Torrance at this point:

\textsuperscript{166} Grenz presents it this way: 'Although present in other dimensions of social life, the focal point of this relationality in the present age can only be the community of Christ, which is to be the highest form of human fellowship this side of the eschaton,' S.J. Grenz, 'The Imago Dei and the Dissipation of the Self,' in Dialog 38 (Summer 1999), 187.

\textsuperscript{167} T.F. Torrance, 'The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition,' Modern Theology 4 (1988), 313-321. The idea of 'transcendental determinism' is an important one for Torrance and for a doctrine of theosis. The drive created within the human person for God is a theme that has been developed by a number of theologians. Rahner spoke of a 'transcendental christology' in which men and women are in a transcendental necessity or thirst for the absolute and the hope of a free self-communication on the part of God. This led Rahner to explicate his distinctive theology of the 'anonymous Christian' and anonymous theism. According to Rahner, whenever a person is open to the mystery that grounds human existence they are open to God himself. While the (Roman Catholic) Church is the visible sacrament of salvation, all sinners are in a sphere of grace. See K. Rahner, A New Christology (London: Burns & Oats, 1980). For a survey of Rahner's position and an interaction with the theology of Torrance see P.D. Molnar, Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: in Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 181-196.

\textsuperscript{168} Torrance's position is quite different from that of Rahner's. For Torrance, there is no independent knowledge of God outside of God himself; hence no logical bridge can be crossed from the experience of self-transcendence to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. This is in direct opposition to Rahner's basic methodology. A similar thought to that of Torrance's is found in the Eastern Orthodox theologian Staniloae's theology of the logos. For Staniloae, the human person is created with an inherent orientation toward the ontological pursuit of 'ultimate transcendence'. This ultimate transcendence is made known supremely in the person of Jesus Christ the logos and it is here that theosis, or delification takes place. There is a need for Christ written into the very existence of men and women. See D. Staniloae, Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1978), 2.47. See Staniloae's critique of Rahner's position in 2.14-16.
Theosis or theopoiesis is not the divinizing or deification of the human soul or creaturely being, Torrance contends, but rather is the Spirit of God humanizing and personalizing us by uniting us with Christ’s vicarious humanity in a way that both confirms us in our creaturely reality utterly different from God, and yet also adapts us in our contingent nature for knowledge of God, for communion with God and for fellowship with one another. Thus theosis is closely related to Torrance’s relational and teleological imago Dei, founded on an analogia relationis, for in his trinitarian perspective, the Spirit unites us to Christ and through Christ with the Father. Therefore:

The Spirit makes man’s being open for fellowship with God, and thereby brings his creaturely relations to their true end and fulfilment in God, He is essentially the living Spirit who, coming from the inner communion of the Holy Trinity, creates communion between man and God.

The introduction of the concept of the analogia relationis brings us to the final distinctive feature we shall note in Torrance’s anthropology. In identifying the spiritual element of human persons with the Holy Spirit, Torrance has to clarify the ‘point of contact’ that exists between God and humanity, something which requires him to distinguish between nature and grace.

§6.2.3 From Analogia Entis to Analogia Relationis

By distinguishing between grace and nature, Torrance and the Reformed tradition in general safeguard the distinction between God and creation. This becomes vital when considering a doctrine of theosis. There is no inherent relation between humanity and God in the first instance, only between God and humanity. From that ‘downward’ relation humanity comes to know itself as creature before the Creator.


‘These words “come down” [of Calvin, Institutes 1.1.2.] are important, for they indicate the essential direction and motion of all Christian thought...Thus, what Calvin would have us note at
This understanding of the relation between God and humanity is expounded by means of the covenant of grace. According to Torrance, the Covenant of Grace embraces not only humanity but the whole of creation and involves a 'covenanted correspondence' between the creation and the Creator that rests solely on the gracious decision of God to create a world utterly distinct from himself yet made to reflect his glory and be the appointed theatre of his revelation. In this way there is a repudiation of any confusion or reversibility on the one hand, and any separation or dichotomy on the other between God and creation.

This understanding of grace and nature is elaborated through Torrance’s adoption of the Barthian idea of the *analogia relationis*, in contradistinction to classical Western conceptions of an *analogia entis*.

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173 Torrance works out what this means in the realm of grace and in the realm of nature. In the realm of grace, grace has dominion where everything regarding the salvation of humanity is provided for by God alone (*sola gratia*). In the realm of nature humanity is, by grace, given dominion, primacy and precedence for all things are under our command. However, Torrance adds, 'both in the realm of Grace and in the realm of nature man is created and called to be a partner in covenant with God, to be a subject in communion with God,' T.F. Torrance, *Theological Language, Vestigiality and the Question of Continuity between the Human and Divine Realms,* (1969), 65-69. Given Torrance’s profound interest in natural science this work then traces how this new awareness of the realm of nature opened up new possibilities for such scientists as Francis Bacon who went on to replace ‘natural theology’ with ‘natural science’, ‘to the benefit of both sacred theology and of natural science,’ 74. This is more fully articulated in Torrance’s essay ‘The Influence of Reformed Theology on the Development of Scientific Method,’ in *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 62-75.

174 This is not to imply that Torrance accepts the tenets of Covenant (Federal) Theology, which would include the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace, and the Covenant of Redemption as developed by such Reformed figures as Zwingli; Oecolampadius; Bullinger; Ursinus; Olevianus; Rollock; Cocceius; and Witsius. Like Barth Torrance uses certain Reformed phrases in his own distinct ways, this being one example. Like Barth before him, Torrance stands within the Reformed tradition as a descendent, but a critical one, of the received theology. See T.F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1966), 111-122; and ‘Introduction,’ *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church*, trans. and ed. T.F. Torrance (London: James Clarke and Co, 1959), ixli-lxv. Like his brother, J.B. Torrance is also critical of scholastic Calvinism. See his ‘The Concept of Federal Theology – Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?’ in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. W.H. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 15-40. For a trenchant defence of reading traditional Calvinism as covenant theology see I.D. Campbell, ‘An Introduction to the Doctrine of the Covenant,’ at http://www.backfrechurch.co.uk/Studies/covenant_theology - an introduction.htm, (accessed 6.8.03).

Because of the contingent character of the created order there is no innate ‘point of contact’ between God and humanity. This includes the human soul and rationality, which are also created ex nihilo. Torrance believes the creation can know God personally, not through any inherent analogia entis but rather by a ‘created correspondence’ between the creature and the Creator.¹⁷⁶

God interacts with his creation in a dynamic way in which there is the possibility of real freedom of response on behalf of the creature to God. This is what Torrance means by an analogia relationis. It is the dynamic God being actively and personally present to the human being to initiate and sustain a true relationship. Torrance finds the analogia relationis compatible with the concept discussed earlier, of a ‘transcendental


Alan Torrance highlights that what Barth means by his analogia relationis is not incompatible with what was intended by an analogia entis in the first place. A.J. Torrance, Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 186:

...Barth falls foul of precisely the same confusion discussed earlier and which is found in those who interpret theological analogy as an analogy of proper proportionality believing, thereby, that they escape anthropomorphism. It is not clear why correspondence between relationships is relevantly different from correspondences between ‘beings’ or ‘attributes’ – especially if we are not to dichotomise between being and act or being and being-in-relation. Barth’s statement [CD III/2, 220] seems to commit him to precisely the same kind of error which he refuted in his critique of the analogia entis.

determination' within the human person which drives the human being to God. It is not to be inferred from this that it is a deterministic drive, but rather a humanizing and personalizing activity of the triune Creator God that respects the freedom of the human creature. In this way Torrance manages to maintain the 'free, dynamic, relational and personal character of God and the contingent, free, dynamic and relational character of creaturely reality, including human beings, where creaturely reality becomes personal in relation to God'. This personal relationship is expressed through Torrance's utilisation of the idea – the humanization of humanity.

§6.2.4 The Humanization of Humanity

Central to Torrance's anthropology and of importance to his doctrine of theosis is the humanizing and personalizing result of conforming to the divine image. In a 1963 essay written in honour of Professor Edmund Schlink of Heidelberg, Torrance reminds us that:

God does not override man but recreates, reaffirms him and stands him up before himself as his dear child, and man does not seek to use or manipulate knowledge of God for the fulfilment of his own


178 Torrance does not subscribe to the 'hard' determinism of traditional Calvinism. See J.H-K. Yeung, Being and Knowing: An Examination of T.F. Torrance's Christological Science (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996), 44. Torrance's thought is closer to that of V. Lossky when in Orthodox Theology: An Introduction, trans. I and I Kasarcodi-Watson (1978. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir's Press, 2001), 71-72 we read:

To be in the image of God, the Fathers affirmed, in the last analysis is to be a personal being, that is to say, a free responsible being. Why, one may ask, did God create man free and responsible? Precisely because He wanted to call him to a supreme vocation: deification; that is to say, to become by grace, in a movement boundless as God, that which God is by His nature. And this call demands a free response; God wishes that this movement be a movement of love. Union without love would be automatic, and love implies freedom, the possibility of choice and refusal.

We find a similar theme developed in Pannenberg's understanding of the self-transcendence of creation that challenges the determinism of some scientific thinking. See W. Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, vol. 2, trans. by G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 108-109. See the discussion in C. Mostert, God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 175-182, who, despite considerable opinion to the contrary, concludes that Pannenberg is a soft-determinist precisely because what God determines includes the contingency and freedom (note two of Torrance's key points) of created reality: 'it can be confidently concluded that the theological system Pannenberg has created is not deterministic' (180). The same is true for Torrance; he too could be accurately labelled as a soft-determinist.

ends in self-will and self-understanding, but loves him objectively for
his own sake and is so liberated from himself that he can love his
neighbour objectively also.\textsuperscript{180}

In order to speak accurately of \textit{theōsis} Torrance introduces the themes
\textit{objectivity} and \textit{subjectivity}. For Torrance \textit{theōsis}, or communion with
God, is achieving creaturely \textit{objectivity} as opposed to sinful \textit{subjectivity}.
True objectivity is secured only in the Spirit who unites the creature to
the humanity of the incarnate Son. This is important, as it guards
Torrance's doctrine of \textit{theōsis} from any false view of the 'divinization' of
humanity by any mechanical, naturalistic, evolutionary means.
Participation in God is achieved by \textit{grace}, by \textit{God alone}.\textsuperscript{181} As Torrance
maintains:

By coming \textit{into} man the Holy Spirit opens him \textit{out} for God. But at the
very heart of this movement is the act of God in which he became
man in order to take man's place, and give man a place within the
communion of the divine life. It is the act of the divine love taking the
way of \textit{substitution}, and opening up the way for a corresponding act
on the part of man in which he renounces himself for God's sake that
the divine love may have its way with him in self-less objectivity.\textsuperscript{182}

Torrance understands God's presence in creation as communion, a
communion in correspondence to the \textit{hypostatic union} between God and
humanity in Christ, and the onto-relations that exist in the \textit{perichoretic}
union of the three divine Persons in the one being of God. In idiosyncratic
language, a patristic doctrine of \textit{theōsis} is presented. Torrance posits an
immediate divine presence in creation and creation's real participation in
God; however, God and humanity are never confused or mixed into one
\textit{(methexis)}.\textsuperscript{183} This allows Torrance to distinguish between a Christian
disciple of \textit{theōsis} conceived in terms of \textit{koinōnia} from a Greek

\textsuperscript{180} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 237.
\textsuperscript{181} One view of deification that Torrance would also rule out is noted by P.E. Hughes, \textit{The True
Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 232:

The incarnation as it affects our humanity is not just one more stage in an incredibly long
sequence of stages from inanimate matter to biological organization, from animality to
intellectuality, and thence on to spirituality and divinization. It is the grace of God intervening
to lift man out of the pit which he has dug for himself and to restore him to the wholeness of
his creation, so that once again he may function freely in accordance with the purpose of his
being and his high calling under God...Through the saving work of the incarnate Son the
believer recovers both the integrity of his being and also the purpose and the power and the
ultimate glory that belong to his constitution in the image of God.

\textsuperscript{182} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 138.
\textsuperscript{183} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 184.
philosophical conception of 'divinization' in terms of methexis (mixture of being); he clearly affirms the first and rejects the second. Much of Torrance's thought on the doctrine of theosis revolves around making this distinction clear.\textsuperscript{184}

Torrance sees the idea of intimate communion developed masterfully in the theology of the Nicene Fathers and again in the Reformation. Torrance's positing of a dialogical relation between creation and God asserts a personal interaction which includes a clear distinction and close union in reciprocity. It was the Hellenistic notion of divine immutability, according to Torrance, that created a wedge between God and creation necessitating a realm of intermediation which was then conceptualised in the formation of causes. Torrance sees in the alternative Chalcedonian notion of participation an assertion of a direct communion without mediating causes. This same idea is presented or reclaimed by Calvin when he writes that 'all nature, and the gifts and endowments of man, depend for their being upon the immediate agency of God through His Spirit and His Word.'\textsuperscript{185}

Communion features primarily in Torrance's theology of the Trinity and the hypostatic union, secondly in the church's participation in the Triune communion, and thirdly in the doctrine of creation. This means communion in love must be understood in strictly personal terms. Torrance defines this personal relationship as follows:

By encountering us as personal Being God at once brings us into a personal relation with himself and prevents us from including him within our own subjectivity, for it is as the Thou, the transcendent Other, that he meets us and makes himself known. He both distinguishes himself from us as independent Reality over against us, and indeed as Lord God of our very being, and at the same time posits and upholds us before him as persons in relations of mutuality and freedom with God and with one another.\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{184} He does so at times in distinguishing between a Roman Catholic doctrine of the church and grace from that of a Reformed perspective. See T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 169-191. See the discussion later in Chapter Three, 198-202.

\textsuperscript{185} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Calvin's Doctrine of Man} (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 63.

What is clear is that Torrance does not confuse the distinction between God and creation. Rather, communion has the idea of encounter between two distinct but not separate entities. To maintain the strongly personalist force of this communion between God and human beings Torrance adopts Calvin’s stress on the importance of the Holy Spirit as ‘God’s creative personal presence’.187 What the Spirit creates is a real personal relation between the human person and God that ‘posits us as subjects over against the divine Subject’.188 Spjuth recounts Torrance’s communion theology with the declaration, ‘Communion as personal interaction means that God can be present as transcendent without being confused with creation; “union without mixture”.’189 For this reason Torrance lays the stress on the objectivity of God over and above the subjectivity of humanity.

On more than one occasion Torrance argues against the idea of human nature being ‘deified’, if by ‘deified’ one means ‘made divine’ in some non-human way. This is why he places so much stress on theósis understood through the Chalcedonian doctrine of the hypostatic union. Human nature is ‘reaffirmed and recreated in its essence as human nature, yet one in which the participant is really united to the Incarnate Son of God partaking in him in his own appropriate mode of the oneness of the Son and the Father and the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit.’190 This participation in the Divine life (theósis) is an eschatological mystery that Torrance is careful not to delve into inappropriately. Theósis begins now as we participate in the new creation through the Spirit; it is also ‘not yet’ as we wait for the parousia of the Lord when God in Christ will make all things new.

For Torrance the goal of theósis, then, is not to become ‘God’ or even, strictly speaking, to become ‘gods’. It is not the process of transcending the confines of human nature but the process and means by which the

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188 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 97.
190 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 186.
human can achieve true personhood. Theōsis does not do away with our creatureliness; it fulfils it. In a similar vein Staniloae suggests that theōsis cannot be taken literally. One cannot literally become God since that would be as absurd as if we were to state that God is a creature.¹⁹¹ The ‘transcendental determination’ inherent within each human person and realised by those united to Christ Jesus, means that men and women will be able to be and do what they were created to be and do – mirror God back to God, through Christ by the Holy Spirit. This is the goal of humanity summarised by the term theōsis with the Fathers, the Eastern Orthodox tradition, and Torrance’s own theology.¹⁹²

§6.3 Humanity as Priest of Creation

Fundamental to any doctrine of theōsis is the ability to articulate some vision of what ultimate redemption and ‘deification’ looks like. In using the phrase ‘priests of creation’ Torrance constructs a picture of theōsis which highlights the creational consequences theōsis brings. Being created in the imago Dei is not an end in itself but highlights the created and intended purpose of humanity.

¹⁹¹ See E. Bartos, Deification in Eastern Orthodoxy: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 145.

¹⁹² Through a close reading of Torrance it is evident he supports an evolutionary view of the cosmos, an expanding universe that resulted from some form of original Big Bang, along with a concomitant commitment to some form of theistic evolution, T.F. Torrance, Preaching Christ Today (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 24. When it comes to the human person, however, Torrance is ambiguous at best. Torrance advocates some form of theistic evolution and yet he never articulates quite what this might mean for the evolution of human persons or what its implications might be for their theological status. However, due to the proleptic nature of creation conditioned by the incarnation, the goal of the evolutionary process is to bring about human persons who are able to image or ‘mirror’ God as seen and revealed in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. This work, to continue, is not a ‘natural’ one but is, rather, a work of grace, a gift, and a work of God. Theōsis is not a natural development but a supernatural irruption of grace initiated on the part of God, achieved in the person of the incarnate Son, and applied to believers by the Holy Spirit. Because evolution is not used by Torrance in relation to a doctrine of theōsis we shall not pursue the question any further here. See T.F. Torrance, Divine and Contingent Order (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 80-81; The Christian Frame of Mind: Order and Openness In Theology and Natural Science (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 44; T.F. Torrance Responds,’ in The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance, ed. E.M. Colyer, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 332-335; The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1938-39 (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 79; and C.B. Kaiser, ‘Humanity in an Intelligible Cosmos,’ in The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance, ed. E.M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 239-267.
By means of the image 'priest of creation', Torrance brings together his cosmology and anthropology. Humanity is the 'crown of creation', even the purpose for the creation of the world. As the highest created beings humanity occupies a unique place on the boundary between the earthly and the spiritual. As 'priest of creation', humanity has the function and privilege to assist the creation as a whole to realise and evidence its rational order and beauty and thus to express God. According to Torrance, 'through human cultivation and development nature should bring forth forms of order and beauty of which it would not be capable otherwise.' It is necessary to creation that humanity realise its vocation as priest of creation, in order to bring forth the requisite praise that God requires. This is why humanity becomes an essential member of the creation. Men and women are the 'stewards' or 'keepers' of the Garden/creation, and by tending the earth are meant to bring praise to the Creator.

Within Torrance's perspective one specific way in which humanity exercises this priestly function is through natural science. It is through the natural sciences that the order and the beauty of creation can sing forth the praise of the Creator. At one point Torrance declares that: 'man the scientist is nature's midwife'. 'With this priestly function which humans exercise for the creation, scientific inquiry becomes a deeply religious duty in humanity's relation to God.' Torrance even declares

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193 To use Calvin's words, as Torrance himself does, The Ground and Grammar of Theology (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1980), 1; and Calvin's Doctrine of Man (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 23.


197 This priestly function is discussed further in Chapter Four, 326-329.


that 'science itself is part of man’s religious duty, for it is part of his faithful response to the Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos'.

In an essay on humanity in an intelligible cosmos, Kaiser notes that, ‘If I read him correctly, Torrance is suggesting that humanity plays a role in the universe analogous to that of light, only on a different level.’ He continues:

Light orders the cosmos in the special sense that the invariance of its speed is the basis of the equations governing space, time, and motion that Einstein discovered in 1905. In this special sense, Torrance argues, physical light is a created reflection of the uncreated Light of God. In a similar way, humanity is created in the image of God and plays a unique role in the universe, ordering it epistemically with pure science.

The association or identification of the role of humanity with the role of light is highly significant in a discussion of theōsis. One of the ten cognates for theōsis used by Gregory Palamas is light. Williams explains that for Palamas, 'light stands on the border of our hierarchy of images between the lesser and the greater and reflects this status by partaking of the characteristics of both groups. He identifies light with God, and deification’s source, as the agent of human sanctification, and as deification itself (ἀὐτοθέωσις).’ Light also plays an important part in Aquinas’s theology of the Beatific Vision. We shall examine Torrance’s use of light as a cognate of theōsis further in the next chapter.

Torrance’s view of humanity as the priest of creation bears a striking similarity to the Eastern Orthodox teaching that understands the human creature as creation’s master (archon). For instance, Staniloae prefers

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200 T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1978. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 179-180. It should be noted that theological inquiry is one of the sciences; hence his own theology is a self-styled ‘scientific theology.’


to describe men and women as creation's master, its created co-creator, co-worker, or continuator. On some occasions Staniloae uses the same expression as Torrance when he considers the world as God's gift to humanity in order that humanity may gift it back to God. In this way, argues Staniloae, the sacrifice offered to God by men and women is a eucharist, making every person a 'priest of God for the world'. From this relationship of Creator to creature human beings derive their significance and responsibility in the formation of the world towards its final consummation.

While Torrance's image of humanity acting as 'priests of creation' is compelling, it is not without its problems. By tying it so closely to natural science Torrance fails to engage adequately in the wider realm and riches of what this priestly ministry may entail. In addition, Spjuth notes that if taken to its logical end this separation between the realm of grace and the realm of nature within Torrance's theology could end up affirming the very dualism that Torrance wishes to expunge from all theology. If humanity is the priest of creation only through the field of natural science then there runs the risk of the realm of human activities becoming an autonomous reality. As Chapter Four will highlight,
Torrance does consider other ways in which humanity fulfils this priestly duty. However, he reserves the language of ‘priests of creation’ almost exclusively for human scientific activity and this has occasioned much misunderstanding.

§7 Conclusion

As Williams correctly points out in her survey of the patristic doctrine of theōsis: ‘[W]here we find the ideas of participation in divine life, union with God and humanity portrayed as human destiny, and a mode of articulating divine transcendence in this context, we can say we are dealing with a doctrine of deification.’ Torrance deals with each of these specific points and is thus engaging with a doctrine of theōsis in his account of creation, even if the technical vocabulary is used only sparingly.

Torrance’s doctrines of creation and anthropology highlight the starting point for our discussion of theōsis within Torrance’s wider theological programme. According to Torrance, theōsis is prescriptive of a relation between God and creation which consistently holds together two distinct aspects of this relationship: first, the complete distinction between Creator and creature; second, the dynamic relationship between God and humanity in which a real - even, according to Torrance, an ontological - participation of the creature in God is affirmed to be possible. In large part this is due to the creation of humanity in the imago Dei and then, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, the Incarnation.

In terms of creation and anthropology specifically, theōsis provides Torrance with a way of describing the reality of human participation in God through transformation into the image and likeness of the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. The more believers conform to this image the more they reflect the Triune relationship of love within their human communities, and the more they show it to cosmic constituencies as well.

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Believers in Christ are enabled to act as priests of creation, glorifying God through bringing harmony to creation as they mediate God’s presence. As they participate in the incarnate Son by the Spirit they become increasingly personalized and humanized, transformed into the image of the Son.

As Christ is so central for Torrance we must now examine more closely Torrance’s account of the Incarnation of the Son and how the life of Christ becomes both a vicarious substitute for ours and a model and paradigm into which we may enter.
Chapter Two

Incarnation: God Became Human.

'God pours out Christ his dear Son upon us and pours himself into us and
draws us into himself, so that he is entirely humanized and we are
entirely divinized...and all with one another are one reality —
God, Christ, and you.'
• Martin Luther¹

'The immersion of Christ the eternal Word into our mortal existence is
itself also the exaltation of our lowly existence into
union and communion with God.'
• Thomas F. Torrance²

'He deigns in flesh to appear,
Widest extremes to join;
To bring our vileness near,
And make us all divine:
And we the life of God shall know,
For God is manifest below.'
• John Wesley³

§8 Incarnation and Redemption

Torrance notes that his main theological work or interest is 'in the field of
Christology and Soteriology.'⁴ Many commentators affirm this as is
evident in this comment by Morrison:

One must begin from and ever work as fixed upon and within the
Word of God, Jesus Christ, if one is to follow Torrance's own
emphasis, and only within that place is the integrated 'co-inherence'
of these other crucial elements in the knowledge of God in the world
to be reckoned. Torrance is then first and always Christocentric in the
heart of theology and theological method, and therein ultimately
Trinitarian. Everything theologically, epistemologically,
soteriologically, doxologically, and methodologically falls out from the
'dictation' of the Word made flesh.⁵

² T.F. Torrance, Space, Time and Resurrection (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1976), 47.
⁵ J.D. Morrison, Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 158-159. Torrance is no doubt following his Doktorvater Karl Barth, at least in the way that he reads Barth as having the Word of God central to all dogmatic thinking. Torrance articulates this reading in T.F. Torrance, Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology 1910-1931 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 132.
Certainly Torrance's theology is rigorously christocentric. However, while Torrance has authored numerous books and lectures which discuss christology there is no single monograph where christology is fully and systematically expounded. This forces us to 'draw upon and systematize a huge range of material in which Torrance returns to basic themes and reworks them in an attempt to express ever more correspondingly and coherently his understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ.' In this section we shall see how the centrality of Christ relates to a doctrine of theosis and how, from this christological centre, Torrance's theology coheres.

The incarnation forms the central context within which Torrance works out the concept of theosis, and this is highlighted through his articulation of the homoousion, the hypostatic union, the vicarious humanity of Christ, and the assumption of humanity into the life of God in, through, or by Christ (ontological atonement). Further, we see that when Torrance formulates a soteriology proper, he does so on the basis of this incarnational christology. This is most vividly highlighted in Torrance's development of theosis and cognate terms, such as 'atoning exchange'. Just as Jesus Christ and his humanity are the key issue in anthropology, here it will be shown how Jesus is central to the process of theosis – the

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communion as human person with the divine Persons. Christology paves the way for soteriology, incarnation for reconciliation, and only in this order may Torrance's doctrine of *theōsis* be understood.

In his Auburn Lectures of 1938-39 Torrance writes:

Augustine called the Incarnation of the Word a sort of prototype of justifying Grace, for the Word of God relates itself (or rather himself) to human nature as Grace to sinful men. The Act of God in relating himself to men in Grace reflects on its level the kind of Divine action in the altogether unique hypostatic union of the two natures in the one Person of Christ. This principle can be traced throughout the whole of Christian theology!\(^8\)

This principle is certainly found in Torrance's theology, nowhere more so perhaps than in his doctrine of *theōsis*. The christological aspects of *theōsis* in Torrance's theology highlight the fact that God in Christ has achieved reconciliation and communion between God and humanity (*theōsis*), first in the person of the incarnate Son, and then through the Son (by the Holy Spirit) in the redeemed.

On the basis of his adoption and articulation of the *homoousios*, hypostatic union, and the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, it is clear that central to Torrance's soteriology is the articulation of Christ's incarnational redemption.\(^9\) He dismisses what he sees as the radical distinction between the person and work of Christ as a consequence of a dualism rejected first by the Fathers and then again at the time of the Reformation.\(^10\) This dualism allegedly led to a cleavage between incarnation and atonement in the theologies of Arius,\(^11\) Augustine,\(^12\) and

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\(^10\) Torrance claims Nicene theology refused to let dualist forms of thought determine the meaning of atonement. Instead, the incarnation was seen to be essentially redemptive and redemption was seen to be inherently incarnational or ontological. Union with God in and through Jesus Christ who is of one and the same being with God belongs to the inner heart of the atonement. T.F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 159.

the theology of Schleiermacher, Tillich, and Bultmann which was dominant immediately prior to Barth. This is what has led, in Torrance’s estimation, to the doctrine of redemption being ‘expounded in terms of external relations between Christ and sinful people’. Torrance seeks to avoid this dualism and its resultant external, transactional notion of redemption in his incarnational model of atonement.

Torrance adopts Barth’s methodology when, in his *Church Dogmatics*, he brought christology and soteriology together in the volume dedicated to reconciliation. Gunton’s remarks on Barth’s theology are applicable to Torrance’s: ‘The person of Christ is his saving work, so that an adequately articulated Christology will also be a theology of salvation.’

A consequence of Torrance’s basic Barthian axiom that God’s being is

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12 According to Torrance, Augustine was one of the main architects of the so-called ‘Latin Heresy,’ one feature of which is an ingrained disjunction between the two natures of Christ, and between the incarnation and the atonement which tended to be expounded in terms of external relations between Christ and sinful people, and so the juridical element assumes a role of predominant significance. See T.F. Torrance, ‘Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,’ *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 39 (1986), 461-482; and *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 392; 170-228. Nowhere does Torrance cite specific references from Augustine in support of his thesis although in T.F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 189, he refers to Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, 14.8 in rejecting the kind of thinking associated with the Latin Heresy. C.E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 27-28, 46, 49, 71, 211, is more specific when he cites specific dualisms which he believes Augustine exhibits.


See Barth’s dissatisfaction with the traditional distinction between christology and soteriology in K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), IV/1, 122-128. This dissatisfaction is what led, in part, to his construal of both categories as the doctrine of reconciliation which took up vols. IV/1-IV/4 of his *Church Dogmatics*. Torrance follows a similar procedure throughout his own theology and hence we speak of his doctrines of incarnation and reconciliation.


15 This complementary bond between christology and soteriology is evident within all of Torrance’s theology, beginning with *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1939-39* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 85, in which he writes:

> We cannot therefore properly think of the incarnation apart from the Atonement, or of the Atonement apart from the Incarnation. Nor may separate the work from the Person of Christ for they are one, and it is the work of the Person and the Person who does this work, that together make the whole life and work of Jesus of Nazareth significant as fraught with saving Power, as pregnant with Eternity.

known only through his act is the christological corollary of the doctrine that the person and work of Christ are inseparable. In Torrance’s own words, ‘Christ is what he does, and does what he is.’ As Kruger notes, ‘The humanity of Jesus Christ is the work.’ According to Torrance:

Christ is to be understood functionally and not metaphysically, dynamically rather than ontologically; his Person is one with his Act, his Act with his Person. It is his dynamic Being that is his supreme activity: all his saving acts are to be understood from his primary activity in the Incarnation when he the eternal Son of God became man in order to be the Saviour of the world.

This is not simply a piece of isolated theological prolegomena or abstract method, but an essential component of Torrance’s entire christology-soteriology. If the identity and mission of Jesus Christ form a coherent whole then the person no less than the work has redemptive significance. ‘The Redemption is the Person of Christ in action; not the action itself thought of in an objectivist impersonal way.’ Quoting Emil Brunner in support, Torrance goes so far as to say that Christ’s ‘being is itself Redemption.’ This means that for Torrance ‘Jesus’ whole life is his

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17 In T.F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1938-39 (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 150, we read:

But we know God not through any act, not for example through the act of Creation for there God does not communicate himself but creates a reality distinct from himself. God may really and actually be known in an act which is identical with his Person, that is, an act in which God himself is present in the Act which issues from his Being. That act we found to be Jesus Christ himself, the act in which the act of God and his Person were identical.


20 T.F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1938-39 (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 165. By setting up an either/or alternative between dynamic rather than ontological understanding of God Torrance is using such terms as ontological in a rather limited and specific sense. ‘Ontological’ as used in this context means metaphysical-philosophical (a priori) rather than dynamic by which he means economic (a posteriori).


vicarious Passion." Incarnation thus provides the sphere in which reconciliation is to be examined.

While many contemporary Protestant, especially Reformed, theologians criticise any hint of an incarnational atonement it can be shown that this has always been a vital part of the Great Tradition and of Reformed theology specifically. For Torrance, we see the basis for this in the theology of Calvin and worked out in such Reformed thinkers as John Owen, John McLeod Campbell, and Karl Barth, to name a few.

In his study of the relationship between incarnation and atonement in Torrance's theology Gunter Pratz writes:

Some have understood Torrance to connect the Incarnation with redemption in a way implying that atonement is achieved simply through the hypostatic union of divine Logos and 'decaying humanity.' However, to understand the Athanasian statement, 'He became man that we might be made divine' in such a way is a


24 This is not to be thought of as diminishing the importance or place of the cross within Torrance's theology or within Reformed theology more generally; quite the opposite as we shall highlight shortly. It is the cross which discloses to us the secret of the person of Christ, 'The Cross is, so to speak, a cross-section of the life and work of the Mediator at the most intense moment of his vicarious passion, in his death for us.' T.F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1938-39 (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 153.


    ...the righteousness which is made ours in justification is the acquired righteousness of Christ; i.e. that righteousness which the God-man acquired through the acts of obedience performed throughout his life in his divine-human unity...the crucial point to notice here is that it is the righteousness which the God-man acquired through his acts of obedience which provides the basis of our salvation. Not even in Christ himself is the righteousness which is proper to the Logos as God mixed with or infused into his human nature. Such a teaching would be a clear violation of the Chalcedonian formula...


serious misinterpretation for Torrance. In order to grasp his position better, it might prove beneficial to look at his understanding of the doctrine which Reformed theology has called the Active and Passive Obedience of Christ.\textsuperscript{27}

This is wise counsel, for Torrance follows the Reformed theology of the active and passive obedience of Christ and his incarnational assumption and sanctification of our human nature.

On the basis of the solidarity between the person and work of Christ (established on such biblical passages as Heb 1.3; 2.14-18; 4.14-5.10; 9.11-10.10), Torrance argues that the incarnation is inherently redemptive, and redemption is intrinsically incarnational.\textsuperscript{28} This makes the entire life of the incarnate Son a continuous vicarious sacrifice sanctifying all aspects of our life. This is the active obedience of Christ; the positive fulfilment of his Sonship in the whole life of Jesus.

Torrance has been accused of reducing soteriology to christology by collapsing the passive obedience of Christ into his active obedience,\textsuperscript{29} and is thereby charged with advocating a physical theory of redemption, something which will occupy our attention in more detail later in the chapter.\textsuperscript{30} But this is to misunderstand Torrance’s logic.\textsuperscript{31} Because Torrance does not advocate what is traditionally implied by a physical theory of redemption, he is able to distance his own theology of theōsis from various forms of delfication. Which notions, specifically? The answer is, any idea which posits a physical theory of the atonement in which humanity is literally ‘divinized’ or God is humanized. The two-natures doctrine of Chalcedon and the homoousios doctrine of Nicaea are too


strong in Torrance’s work for him to allow notions of ‘divinization’ such as these into his soteriology. But like Athanasius, Torrance fails to adequately construct a christology that explains the functional relation between the Word or divine nature and the humanity of Jesus.\textsuperscript{32}

Emphasising that both aspects are absolutely integral to an understanding of Christ’s work of reconciliation, Torrance makes clear the distinction between the active and the passive obedience of Christ in Reformed theology has not served to divide or separate the two perspectives but actually to unite them. As Louis Berkhof’s once-standard manual of Reformed theology states, ‘But in discriminating between the two, it should be distinctly understood that they cannot be separated. The two accompany each other at every point in the Saviour’s life...Christ’s active and passive obedience should be regarded as complementary parts of an organic whole.’\textsuperscript{33} As a consequence atonement cannot simply be limited to the passive obedience of Christ, the submission to death as the penalty for our sins. Torrance finds this insight is already evident within the theology of Calvin who pointed out that from birth Christ initiated the salvation of humanity.

Torrance appeals to Calvin, along with Irenaeus and Athanasius, as viewing the entire incarnation as the locus of atonement – that is, he sees the active and passive obedience of Christ as two stages of one

\textsuperscript{32} In this regard Torrance would have been better to have enquired further into the implications of his own theology and to work out in greater detail what this means, especially in regards to pneumatology, something his own Reformed tradition does very well, as Gunton, Spence, and others have more recently identified in the work of Calvin, John Owen, and Edward Irving in particular. See A. Spence, ‘Christ’s Humanity and Ours: John Owen,’ in Persons, Divine and Human, ed. C. Schwöbel, and C.E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 75-76. See his ‘Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology,’ Ph.D. Dissertation, Kings College, London, 1899; and ‘John Owen and Trinitarian Agency,’ Scottish Journal of Theology 43 (1990), 157-173. Also see G.W.P. McFarlane, Why Do You Believe What You Believe About The Holy Spirit? (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 94-110; and C.E. Gunton, ‘The Church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the Church,’ in Theology Through the Theologians: Selected Essays 1972-1995 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 187-205.

\textsuperscript{33} L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1949), 379-380. For a history and analysis of the work of Christ and its derivation into active and passive dimensions see G.C. Berkouwer, The Work of Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 314-327; and C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 3.142-150. Hodge reminds us that, ‘The distinction becomes important only when it is denied that his moral obedience is any part of the righteousness for which the believer is justified, or that his whole work in making satisfaction consisted in expiation or bearing the penalty of the law. This is contrary to Scripture, and vitiates the doctrine of justification as presented in the Bible,’ 150.
In Jesus Christ, Calvin says, all parts of our salvation are complete. Every aspect of the life that God intends for humanity is fully and finally fulfilled and made real in our humanity by Jesus Christ. Calvin uses language from a variety of models of atonement and places all of them in a radically substitutionary framework (*Institutes* 2.17). Jinkins reminds us that:

Calvin’s thought on the atonement actually transcends the rather limited approach of the ‘theories’ of atonement, pressing the various aspects of the atonement toward a more inclusive incarnational framework and grounding our understanding of the atonement in that adoration and worship of God that Christ now renders on our behalf. Jinkins argues that ‘a more helpful way of looking at the meaning of Christ’s life, death and resurrection would be to see the various aspects of atonement...in a more inclusive incarnational framework.’ This is exactly what Torrance sought to do throughout his christology and soteriology.

In stressing both the active and passive obedience of Christ as redemptive Torrance manages to emphasise, more forcefully than any other contemporary Reformed theologian, the twin emphases that reconciliation brings, that is, both imputed righteousness in justification and imparted righteousness through participation in his divine-human relationship.

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34 While Calvin did not use the terms ‘active’ and ‘passive obedience’ he did advocate what these later terms represent, see for example, reference to the whole course of his obedience in J. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.16.5. By not adopting the terms active and passive obedience, or any other alternatives, Calvin’s theology exhibits a more integrated or holistic approach than much post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics.


righteousness. Both were secured by Christ in his life, death, and resurrection. To be developed later in the study, for Torrance reconciliation means declaration and 'deification'. This accounts for Torrance's strong emphasis upon the active obedience of Christ and its application to believers. Present in Reformed theology is the very clear, if largely neglected, idea that the benefits of redemption go far beyond mere forgiveness of sins; they actually result in blessing and promises of future grace such as adoption.

§8.1 Two Aspects of Atonement

Along with the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ in Reformed theology generally Torrance appropriates a twofold perspective on the atonement derived from his own Scottish tradition. Specifically, he adopts the perspective of John McLeod Campbell, who, in The Nature of the Atonement, makes the terminological distinction between the 'retrospective' and the 'prospective' aspects of the atonement. While the terminology was McLeod Campbell's the substance of the distinction goes back to Calvin.

Because of the influence of Campbell on Torrance it will prove helpful to examine this relationship in a little more detail. In 1831 Campbell was deposed from parish ministry and condemned by the Church of Scotland as a heretic for teaching various doctrines thought to be at odds with the

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38 'Now we have to think of all this not only in terms of passive obedience but of active obedience, not only in terms of forensic and judicial righteousness and obedience, but in terms of positive communion and filial love, and of worship.' T.F. Torrance, 'The Atoning Obedience of Christ,' Moravian Theological Seminary Bulletin (1959), 66.

39 See Chapter Three, 202-211.

40 T.F. Torrance, 'Introduction,' The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church, trans. and ed. T.F. Torrance (London: James Clarke and Co, 1959), lxxvi, insists that through the active obedience of Christ we have a share in the positive righteousness of his obedient and loving life lived in perfect filial relation on earth to the heavenly Father. When the active obedience of Christ is diminished in theology, as it was, according to Torrance, in post-Reformation Reformed cognomastics, then it becomes difficult to understand justification as anything but a forensic non-imputation of sin.

41 The blessing of adoption is specifically appealed to by L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1949), 380.


Church's doctrinal standards. Specifically, Campbell was charged with
teaching a doctrine of universal atonement and pardon (but not
salvation\textsuperscript{44}), and arguing that assurance is of the essence of faith (based
upon the finished work of Christ). The chief charge, however, was his
rejection of penal substitution as it had been formulated by scholastic and
covenantal theologians and enshrined in the \textit{Westminster Confession of
Faith}, 'the Church of Scotland's chief subordinate standard of faith'.\textsuperscript{45}

Campbell sought to present the atonement in filial as opposed to judicial
terms, emphasising the love of God for all humanity.\textsuperscript{46} This drove him
back to the doctrine of the incarnation which, in his later theology he
sought to explicate as the twofold movement of God to humanity and
humanity to God in the one person of the incarnate Son, something he
labelled the \textit{retrospective} and \textit{prospective} aspects of atonement.\textsuperscript{47}

\textit{Retrospectively} God has dealt with every human being's guilty past by
penetrating the depths of human sin and guilt and pardoning them.
However, this can not be understood apart from seeing that God
\textit{prospectively} brings people to share in Christ's Sonship, lifting them from
imprisonment in their mortal existence into the new life of the risen
Jesus.\textsuperscript{48} In his delineation of the atonement Campbell argued that
traditional doctrines of atonement had limited themselves to the
\textit{retrospective} aspect only, resulting in a doctrine of strict penal

\textsuperscript{44} As Torrance is at pains to point out in his article, 'John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872),' in
\textit{Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996),
288.

\textsuperscript{45} For an account see D. Chambers, 'Doctrinal Attitudes in the Church of Scotland in the Pre­
History} 8 (1974), 159-182, M.C. Bell, \textit{Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance}
(Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 181; and J. Macquarrie, 'John McLeod Campbell, 1800-72;'
\textit{Expository Times} 83 (1972), 263-268. Also see J. McLeod Campbell, \textit{Reminiscences and
Reflections: Referring to his Early Ministry in the Parish of Row, 1825-31}, ed. D. Campbell

\textsuperscript{46} See the helpful overview of D.P. Thimell, 'Christ in Our Place in the Theology of John McLeod
Campbell,' in \textit{Christ in Our Place: The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the
World: Essays Presented to Professor James Torrance}, ed. T.A. Hart and D.P. Thimell (Exeter:

van Dyk, \textit{The Desire of Divine Love: John McLeod Campbell's Doctrine of the Atonement} (New
York: Peter Lang, 1995), chapters one and two for a history of this development, and T.F.
Torrance, 'John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872),' in \textit{Scottish Theology from John Knox to John
McLeod Campbell} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 301.

\textsuperscript{48} These themes were later developed and represented in his mature theology in J.M. Campbell,
substitution.\(^{49}\) When the *prospective* aspect is considered, not only are the necessary means of atonement taken into account but the goal of the incarnation is also set forth, namely, the Father's filial purposes for all humankind.\(^{50}\)

As Redding's exposition makes clear, 'At the heart of Campbell's thinking on this matter lies a concentrated focus on one's union with Christ - a union which is the fruit of the incarnation.'\(^{51}\) Christ in our humanity offers a perfect vicarious response to the love and judgment of God. Believers respond personally to this twofold movement through the Holy Spirit, who enables them to participate in Christ's own response made on their behalf. Christ's work is of no avail for believers apart from participation in his person. Hence, in the incarnation Christ unites himself with us by taking our humanity into union with himself. In our humanity he repented, believed, and died for us all. By the Spirit we are united with him to participate in his vicarious response ('perfect repentance') which, in turn, is a response offered in our humanity.

From this brief account of Campbell's theology we can discern some of the constituent features of Torrance's own theology. We see the twofold movement of God to humanity and humanity to God embodied in the

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\(^{50}\) This theme is defended in T.F. Torrance, 'Review of Leanne Van Dyk, The Desire of Divine Love. John McLeod Campbell's Doctrine of the Atonement,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49 (1996), 125-127; and T.F. Torrance, 'John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872),' in his *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 301-302, where Torrance likens McLeod's theology to that of Athanasius, 301:

> Like Athanasius, therefore, he thought of atonement as taking place within the incarnate constitution of the Mediator who is of one and the same being as God the Father. It was in this twofold atoning relation of Christ to the Father, that is, his dealing with God on the part of men and his dealing with men on the part of God, within the unity of his incarnate Person and life as the one Mediator between God and man, which called for a recasting of the traditional notion of 'penal suffering' lodged in current Scottish Calvinism.

\(^{51}\) G. Redding, *Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ in the Reformed Tradition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 194. For the same view see Torrance's chapter, 'John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872),' in *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 304, where he associates McLeod Campbell's doctrine of union with Christ with that of Calvin and Cyril of Alexandria noting that all three linked justification and union with Christ closely together.

\(^{52}\) T.F. Torrance, 'John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872),' in his *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 305-308.
incarnate Person of the Son through the hypostatic union;\textsuperscript{52} the familiar emphasis on the dire consequences of viewing the incarnation and atonement from only one of those perspectives, the retrospective; and the integral link between incarnation and atonement worked out in the Person of the Mediator.\textsuperscript{54} Within Torrance’s soteriology all these aspects become essential to a doctrine of \textit{theōsis} and from this perspective Torrance attempts to advocate a doctrine of participation in God which amounts to a theology of \textit{theōsis} while rejecting certain misunderstandings such a doctrine often engenders.\textsuperscript{55} This is what leads Torrance to affirm an ontological atonement.

\section*{§8.2 Ontological Atonement}

Torrance follows the Greek Fathers in constructing a doctrine of \textit{theōsis} around two distinct but interrelated movements. The first is the ‘divinizing’ of the human nature of the Logos; the second is the application of this to human persons in ‘deification’. The two are intimately interrelated, albeit distinct, aspects of the one reality of reconciliation. In the first act Torrance constructs an ontological view of


\textsuperscript{54} This is stressed in T.F. Torrance, ‘John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872),’ in his \textit{Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 313.

\textsuperscript{55} The views of McLeod Campbell, and by association Torrance, are not without their critics. According to R. Letham, \textit{The Work of Christ} (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 32, McLeod Campbell is a universalist who rejects any real penal element to reconciliation. Controlling Letham’s assessment is the vexed issue of the extent of the atonement. The logic employed by Letham and others is that if a universal atonement is advocated then a natural corollary must be that there is a universal salvation. Letham’s criticisms of McLeod Campbell could equally be levelled at Torrance for he too considers the atonement to be universal in scope and follows McLeod Campbell in his incarnational view of atonement and union with Christ. See a critical discussion in G. Redding, \textit{Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ in the Reformed Tradition} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 98-108. Paul Helm argues that Owen and Edwards did not hold to the position Campbell ascribed to them, ‘The Logic of Limited Atonement,’ \textit{Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology} 3 (1985), 37-54.

Letham and others have overlooked in McLeod Campbell’s theology, and by implication in Torrance’s as well, that the penal element is retained in their doctrine of atonement. Torrance writes in relation to McLeod Campbell’s theology that, ‘This does not mean that there was no penal element in the substitutionary sacrifice, but that it is of a fuller and profounder kind than can ever be expressed in terms of legal and logical equivalents as in the notion of ‘penal substitution,” T.F. Torrance, ‘John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872),’ in his \textit{Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 308-309; 312. He continues:

The usual criticisms of McLeod Campbell over the question of ‘penal substitution’ in his own times and since appear rather shallow for they fail to appreciate the profound soteriological, moral, and spiritual dimension in which his thought moved in the interrelation between the Father and the Son in the one divine-human person of the Mediator. Their critique regularly implies the very kind of Nestorian dualism in Christ, and external instrumentalist notion of atonement, which McLeod Campbell studiously avoided. (310)
salvation whereby he reinterprets and then reappropriates a nuanced version of the physical theory of redemption, something which we shall examine further in the next section.

Torrance generally applies the English term ‘divinization’ (*theopoīēsis*) to the human *nature* that Jesus Christ took upon himself in his incarnate person, not to human *persons* in general (*theōsis*).\(^{56}\) Strictly speaking there is only one ‘divinized’ person – the man Jesus Christ. In the hypostatic union Jesus divinized human nature ontologically and subsequently worked out this *theopoīēsis* specifically through his sinless life, death, and resurrection. As a result:

...the blessed exchange involved between the divine-human life of Jesus and mankind has the effect of finalising and sealing the ontological relations between every man and Jesus Christ...since in him divine and human natures are inseparably united, then the secret of every man, whether he believes or not, is bound up with Jesus for it is in him that human contingent existence has been grounded and secured.\(^{57}\)

Torrance is insistent on this point. The saving act of God in Christ was internal to the incarnate Son before it could be applied externally. Redemption, reconciliation, and *theopoīēsis* are not simply external to God, an arrangement between God and humanity, or between Christ and the world. Rather, ‘if the soteriological exchange takes place within the constitution of the incarnate Person of the Mediator, then it is as eternal as Jesus Christ himself, the eternal Son.’\(^{58}\) Through the entire life of the incarnate Son an atoning exchange is made once and for all as human nature itself is taken up and given a place in God and is thus grounded in his eternal unchangeable reality.\(^{59}\) By ‘human nature itself’ Torrance

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\(^{56}\) See for example T.F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988, 1995), 138, 139, 140, 141, 188, 189, 264, 305. This should not be taken to imply that Torrance makes a formal distinction between *theōsis* and *theopoīēsis*, applying the first to believers and the second to Christ in a strictly formal way. But he does tend to favour this convention.


\(^{59}\) As we shall examine later in the study (see Chapter Two, 158-162), the ascension is also in view for ‘the ascension means the exaltation of man into the life of God and on to the throne of God. In the ascension the Son of Man, New Man in Christ, is given to partake of divine nature,’ T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 135. While the term *theopoīēsis* is not used here certainly the doctrine is explicitly taught. *Theōsis* was
specifically refers, in the first instance, to the human nature of Jesus Christ the incarnate Son. In the incarnate person of the Son an ontological atonement has been perfectly accomplished – God and humanity have been reconciled once and for all. It is on this basis that believers may also be ‘deified’ but only in, by, or through the incarnate person of the Son.

The distinction (although not the specific terminology) between Christ’s theopoiesis and human theōsis is crucial to Torrance as it was for the patristic theologians from whom he derives this doctrine. Athanasius bases one of his principal arguments for the perfect divinity of the Son of God upon this distinction when he writes in his On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia:

If the Logos had also been God by participation, and not consubstantial divinity and the image of the Father by Himself, He would not have been able to deify, being Himself deified. For it is not possible that one who only possesses by participation communicate to others what he has thus received, because what he does not have from himself, but from the giver, and what he has received, is barely sufficient for himself.

§8.2.1 Beyond a Physical Theory of Redemption

Given Torrance’s stress on incarnational redemption it will pay us to return to the mistaken charge that Torrance presents a physical theory of redemption. Like Athanasius, Torrance understands the uniting of the divine Logos and human nature in the one person of the Son (hypostatic

mentioned earlier in the same work when Torrance stated that ‘through the Spirit Christ is nearer to us than we are to ourselves, and we who live and dwell on earth are yet made to sit with Christ “in heavenly places”, partaking of the divine nature in him,’” 135. These two statements clearly contrast what Torrance means by theopoiesis as applied to Christ on the one hand and theōsis as applied to humans on the other. Christ’s human nature is ‘divinized’ due to the hypostatic union and the active and passive obedience, our human nature undergoes theōsis only by grace as we are united to Christ in, with, or by the Holy Spirit and in that relationship we partake of the divine nature. This is not to say that Torrance does not use the term theopoiesis in regard to human ‘deification’ or conversely theōsis for Christ’s ‘divinization’, but simply to assert a two-stage movement of reconciliation that has its priority in Christ and then has an application to human persons.


Athanasius, Contra Arianos 2.67 (NPNF, 2nd series, 4.957), and De Incarnatione, 13 (NPNF, 2nd series, 4.288-289).
union) to divinize the human nature. If this same process were applied to men and women generally, it would amount to a 'physical theory' of theoasis. However, according to the way in which Torrance adopts patristic theology, the physical theory, mistakenly first put forward by Irenaeus, is not what is in mind.

According to the physical theory of theoasis human nature is immortalised (aphtharsia) and thus divinized by the very fact of the ultimate contact that the incarnation establishes between it and the divine nature of the Word. This would make human beings indistinguishable from God and deification would be automatic. At the very least a strict adherence to a physical theory of the atonement postulates deification by contact. In place of a physical theory of the atonement whereby 'deification' or theoasis occurs automatically or naturally within human persons,

63 Athanasius, Contra Arianos. 1.70 (NPNF, 2nd series. 4.959-960), explains how the so-called physical theory of atonement should be understood:

...the Word is not of things originate, but rather Himself their Framer. For therefore did He assure the body originate and human, that having renewed it as its Framer, He might deify it in Himself, and thus might introduce us all into the kingdom of heaven after His likeness. For man had not been deified if joined to a creature, or unless the Son were very God; nor had man been brought into the Father's presence, unless He had been His natural and true Word who had put on the body. And as we had not been delivered from sin and the curse, unless it had been by nature human flesh, which the Word put on (for we should have had nothing common with what was foreign), so also the man had not been deified, unless the Word who became flesh had been by nature from the Father and true and proper to Him. For therefore the union was of this kind, that He might unite what is man by nature to Him who is in the nature of the Godhead, and his salvation and deification might be sure. Therefore let those who deny that the Son is from the Father by nature and proper to His Essence, deny also that He took true human flesh of Mary Ever-Virgin...


65 See Athanasius, Contra Arianos 2.70 (NPNF, 2nd series, 4.960). Athanasius never clearly distinguished between the two terms οὐκόλα and ἰδιοτραίας, as Gross notes, 'Through a lack of important a distinction as this, it was difficult for him to specify — as Saint John Damascene will do later — that the deification of the human nature does not automatically entail that of the persons. Still, the fact is that he presents individual divinization as the result of the combined action of the subject, Christ, and the Holy Spirit,' J. Gross, The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers, trans. P.A. Onica (Anaheim, Calif.: A & C Press, 2002), 169.

66 Gross provides a standard definition: 'According to this theory, which springs from the Johannine idea of the Logos as the principle of life, human nature is immortalized and thus divinized by the very fact of the intimate contact that the incarnation establishes between it and the divine nature of the Word' J. Gross, J. The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers, trans. P.A. Onica (Anaheim, Calif.: A & C Press, 2002), 125.

67 J. Rivièere, Le dogme de la redemption: Essai d'étude historique (Paris: 1905), 147 and A. von Harnack, Lehrbuch der Domengeschichte, 4th edn. (Tübingen: 1909), 2.160-161, both present Athanasius' theology of theoasis as a mechanical process of physical redemption. This is mistaken, however, for Athanasius (and Torrance) the process or means of theoasis for the
Torrance presents an ontological theory of incarnational redemption, as we have seen. This ontological atonement, mediation, or redemption forms the first stage of theōsis proper in Torrance's theology, characterised by the theopoiesis of Christ's own human nature. As Torrance articulates it:

[Christ] had come, Son of God incarnate as Son of man, in order to get to grips with the powers of darkness and defeat them, but he had been sent to do that not through the manipulation of social, political or economic power-structures, but by striking beneath them all into the ontological depths of Israel's existence where man, and Israel representing all mankind, had become estranged from God, and there within those ontological depths of human being to forge a bond of union and communion between man and God in himself which can never be undone.68

A concept of federal headship for humanity is thus presented.69 This applies to every aspect of the life of Christ culminating in the cross, the ultimate conflict between God and sinful humanity in which Christ,

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came to grapple with evil, therefore, at the very point where under the unrelenting pressure of the self-giving presence and love of God to mankind [sin] was forced to uncover itself in the crucifixion of the incarnate Son of God, and then to deal with it decisively in atoning sacrifice.\textsuperscript{70}

At the cross God meets, suffers, and triumphs over the enmity entrenched in human existence once and for all in Jesus Christ. Ontological atonement has been achieved in the incarnate life and death of the Son of God, confirmed in the resurrection from the empty tomb, and in the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost.

The human life of Christ contains redemptive value in the sense that it completes the efficacy of the incarnation. For full redemption and reconciliation to occur the incarnate Logos assumed our natural – fallen – human condition himself in order to divinize the human life in its various stages. That is to say ‘he lived it personally’.\textsuperscript{71} This does not imply that Torrance’s conception of the matter has any form of mechanical \textit{theōsis} for men and women, the physical theory \textit{simplicitas}. There are processes or stages to be followed by which human beings in general may be ‘deified’, including the sacraments and the Christian life. This will be considered in a later chapter.\textsuperscript{72} Before that, Torrance constructs the basis for \textit{theōsis} to occur; it must first of all be a reality in the life of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. The work of \textit{theōsis} is supremely the work of Christ (and the Holy Spirit), to whom the initiative goes completely.

Torrance repeatedly advocates the axiom of Gregory Nazianzus: ‘that which has not been assumed has not been healed’.\textsuperscript{73} Torrance uses this phrase in at least two senses: first, that Christ assumed a complete or total human nature, the sense that Gregory of Nazianzus appears to have

\begin{footnotesize}
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See Chapter Four, 300-332.

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made of it; and second, that Christ has completely healed humanity in his own incarnation. This is what Torrance means by a doctrine of *theopoieis* applied to the human nature united to the divine nature within the incarnate person of the Mediator – Jesus Christ. On this basis there is a sense in which Torrance is advocating a physical theory of *theosis*: through the hypostatic union the human nature of Jesus Christ was perfected, redeemed, and reconciled. This work of *theopoieis* is what has enabled or qualified the incarnate Word to deify those who are united to himself – what Torrance would more technically term *theos* rather than 'divinization'. Clearly this form of physical redemption is not what his critics have in mind when making the charge.

The result of this work of *theopoieis* is that Christ has totally redeemed, reconciled, cleansed, lifted, restored, and recreated human nature to what God had intended it to be in the first place. In a discussion on the resurrection and ascension of Christ, Torrance paints a picture of what this restored human nature of Christ that partakes of the divine being is like:

Think of the risen and ascended humanity of Christ in the perspective of what the Johannine literature in the New Testament especially has to say about the triumph of light over darkness. Must we not, then, think of the risen and ascended humanity, even in respect of the body, as transfused with light, and as perfectly transparent? This is not to say that the Body of Christ in the resurrection and ascension was transmuted into pure spirit, whatever that may mean, but that the opaqueness and darkness that come from separation from God are utterly overcome and put away. Here redemption makes contact again with creation in which God turned his back upon the darkness and brought what he had made into the light of life. If the resurrection and ascension bring the work of atoning reconciliation and recreation to their consummation in the humanity of Christ, then here all darkness...is done away, and even the human nature he took from our dark and fallen existence is completely and finally restored to the light of God (2 Cor 4.6).

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75 T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 139. Note the use of a cognate for *theosis* - 'transparency' - in this context. It is no coincidence that amidst a discussion of *theosis* Torrance resorts to the analogical language of light in order to explain what it 'looks' like for human nature to participate in, or partake of, the divine nature.
While the particulars of what such a ‘vision’ really includes are beyond human comprehension in the present the image creates within the believer the biblical hope and anticipation that accompanies the waiting, in our present fallen condition, for the consummation of God’s purposes for the world. This consummation is centred upon the summing up of all things in Christ, when Christ transforms us in the whole of our human nature, so that we are resurrected and we will be able to see him and to know him as we are known. ‘When we see him we shall become like him, and when we become like him we shall see him with healed vision and recreated natures.’

With his commitment to a modified physical theory of the atonement we complete a major rung of Torrance’s doctrine of *theōsis*. The uniting of human and divine natures in the one person of the incarnate Son achieves *theopoiēsis*; it divinizes human nature ontologically. This has yet to be applied to other human beings but the important point is that it has been achieved in the God-man, Jesus Christ. This is what qualifies the Son to be the Mediator, Saviour, and divinizer of humanity.

Because humanity is divinized in Christ through the incarnation, atonement has been perfectly achieved in his own person, that is, ontologically. However, Torrance does not imply by this ontological atonement that all men and women are thus automatically saved. Torrance does not espouse a doctrine of universalism; neither does he adopt a merely physical theory of redemption. Instead, he seeks to work out the soteriological implications of the *homoousion* and the hypostatic union, themes to which we must now turn our attention.

§9 The *Homoousion*

The doctrine of the *homoousion* speaks to the fact that Jesus is both ‘of one being with the Father’ (Nicene Creed) and of one being with us in our

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This double homoousion forms the hinge upon which Torrance's development of incarnation and reconciliation turns. The homoousion is the ontological and epistemological linchpin of Christian theology. With it, everything hangs together; without it, everything ultimately falls apart. Torrance's christology is thus an attempt to work out this point in detail. As Lee's study points out, 'For Torrance, the homoousion is not only the one-and-sameness in their being but also the “unbroken continuity” in their presence (homopraesens) and activity (homoenergeia). The consubstantial relation between Jesus Christ and God denotes the fullness of the Godhead in His bodily dwelling in Christ.' Jesus Christ is thus homoousios with God in being and in act.

Lee's study on the motif of union with Christ in Torrance's theology has identified four significant implications of Torrance's use of the homoousion. First, the homoousion asserts that Christ's word of forgiveness is genuinely the Word and the forgiveness of God, 'for only God can forgive sins'. By extension this applies to all that Christ did in his incarnation to secure our salvation. As Torrance makes abundantly clear, without the homoousion the Gospel collapses. 'God's unsurpassable love of self-identifying with us in Jesus Christ would be diminished. Moreover, Christ's atoning sacrifice on the Cross would be invalidated due to its

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81 The logical step beyond this assertion of Christ's oneness with God is to apply the homoousion to the Trinity as a whole and to see this heuristic device as stating the ontological relation between the economic and the immanent Trinity. What God reveals to us in Jesus Christ is nothing other than a self-revelation of his own being. The God who acts ad extra is the God who is in se. This onto-relational notion of the Triune Persons Torrance more specifically treats under the concept of perichoresis. See T.F. Torrance, The Ground and Grammar of Theology (1980. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 172-175.
salvific powerlessness and he would be relegated to nothing more than another creaturely being with no power to forgive our sins.\textsuperscript{84}

Second, there is the epistemological significance of the term. Divine revelation is God himself coming to deliver his own message of reconciliation. It is only through Jesus Christ that we are able to really know this God and hence the \textit{homoousion} is the concept that moves our thought from the second to the third levels of knowledge, from the economic to the immanent Trinity.\textsuperscript{85}

The third significance is that the Holy Spirit is the other \textit{Paraclete} (\textit{allos parak\l\etos}, Jn 14.16) whom Christ sends to act in his place. In his \textit{homoousion} with Christ in being and act the Spirit is Christ’s other self through whose presence in us Christ makes himself present to us. ‘Thus it is by the Spirit that our adoption in Christ through atoning propitiation is sealed so that we are united to Christ and freely given to share in the Son’s filial relation with the Father.’\textsuperscript{86}

Finally, Torrance applies the \textit{homoousion} to the doctrine of grace. Working under a Reformed notion that grace is nothing other than God’s personal self-impartation Torrance makes much of the fact that ‘God is really like Jesus’. From his pastoral experiences in Scottish parishes and on the battlefield in World War Two, Torrance finds in this doctrine great comfort for people lacking assurance.\textsuperscript{87} Grace is Jesus Christ for there is no other gift from the Father besides his Son.

\textsuperscript{84} K.W. Lee, \textit{Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance} (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 142.


\textsuperscript{87} ‘Fearful anxiety arises in the human heart when people cannot connect Jesus up in their faith or understanding with the ultimate Being of God, for then the ultimate Being of God can be to them only a dark, inscrutable, arbitrary Deity whom they inevitably think of with terror...’ T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Mediation of Christ}, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 59.
Because of the oneness in being and act between Christ and God, salvation, knowledge, union, communion, and theosis are possible. Before this can be applied to human persons it first of all becomes a reality in the person of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. The homoousion thus necessitates the hypostatic union, the distinct instantiation of communion between God and humanity in the person of the Son.

§9.1 Hypostatic Union

'The hypostatic union is the centre of Torrance's theology' and 'is itself the heart of revelation,' states Yeung. Lee echoes similar conclusions in his study when he writes, 'For Torrance, the doctrine of hypostatic union is the epitome of his christology and soteriology; for the Incarnation takes the form of hypostatic union between God and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ.' Torrance believes 'the one supreme relation is the hypostatic union, the unique relation of divine and human natures in the One Person of the Son, but by reference to that personal relation, all

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other personal relations are to be understood in their likeness and in their difference to it.\textsuperscript{92}

The hypostatic union functions within Torrance's theology in an epistemological way: knowledge of the Father is commensurate with knowledge of the Son; the two are inseparable. We do not know the Father apart from the Son, or the Son apart from the Father.\textsuperscript{93} This movement of knowledge, understood in strictly relational terms after the work of Einstein, Clerk Maxwell, and Polanyi especially, is made possible by the Holy Spirit. It is this trinitarian 'knowledge' or activity that constitutes the \textit{ground and grammar} of Torrance's theology.

To know this God, who both condescends to share all that we are and makes us share in all that he is in Jesus Christ, is to be lifted up in his Spirit to share in God's own self-knowing and self-loving until we are enabled to apprehend him in some real measure in himself beyond anything that we are capable of in ourselves. It is to be lifted out of ourselves, as it were, into God, until we know him and love him and enjoy him in his eternal Reality as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in such a way that the Trinity enters into the fundamental fabric of our thinking of him and constitutes the basic grammar of our worship and knowledge of the One God.\textsuperscript{94}

Here we have a window into Torrance's meaning behind the term 'knowing' and through it into his conception of \textit{theōsis}. To 'know' God is to transcend our creaturely boundaries and to be 'lifted out of ourselves...into God,' to 'apprehend him,' 'love him,' and 'enjoy him' forever as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is, as advocates of \textit{theōsis} consistently state, to participate in the Triune communion.\textsuperscript{95} This is the

\textsuperscript{93} This was made clear in the essay 'Access to the Father,' in T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 47-75.
\textsuperscript{95} See Yeung's comparison of this type of 'knowing' to that of Tillich who argued for 'knowing' as mere ecstasy. J.H-K. Yeung, \textit{Being and Knowing: An Examination of T.F. Torrance's Christological Science} (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996), 103-105. Tillich represents a form of Christian mysticism that Torrance absolutely opposes. Tillich's religion is concerned with an immediate, ecstatic experience of union with the 'Ground of Being,' P. Tillich. \textit{Systematic Theology} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 2.192. The end result of Tillich's philosophical theology is actually pantheism, reaching out to the alleged god behind the God of theism. See P. Tillich, \textit{The Eternal Now} (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), especially 87-88. I am grateful for insights on Tillich's mysticism to G.R. Lewis, 'Is Propositional Revelation Essential to Evangelical Spiritual Formation?' \textit{Journal of the Evangelical Theological Association} 46 (2003), 273-274.
supreme *telos* of *theōsis*. In the person of Jesus Christ we see true humanity partaking of true Divinity *by nature* in such a way that by union, communion, and *theōsis* with Christ by the Spirit we too, *by grace*, can participate in the divine nature. This is worked out in a thoroughly christological fashion. Union of the two natures *in Christ* is the key to understanding our union with Christ.\(^{96}\) The former is by nature and substantial; the latter is by grace and is relational.

Torrance’s earliest mention of *theōsis* in his published works occurs amidst a discussion of christology, when commenting on the relevance of the hypostatic union for men and women he writes, ‘And in this God-Man we partake in grace, as members of his body, reconciled to God through him and in him, and even it is said, are incomprehensibly partakers of Divine nature!’\(^{97}\) Here as early as 1938-39 we have a bold statement on the orthodoxy of *theōsis* and how it functions within Torrance’s theology. As Yeung observes:

> When God became man He was no less God, for He was not diminished by the development of the body, but rather ‘deified’ the body and rendered it immortal. ‘Deification’ did not mean any change of human essence, but that without being less human we are by grace made to participate in divine Sonship.\(^{98}\)

Because of the hypostatic union accomplished in Jesus Christ a trinitarian movement from the Father through the Son in the Spirit is accomplished in his life, along with a doxological ‘return’ in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. This movement takes place first in the Son and then in believers by the Spirit of Christ. We share in the love of God through the grace of Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit. This is what Torrance calls the evangelical, doxological theology of the trinitarian life and love that God is. ‘Knowledge of God takes place through a movement of divine Revelation from the Father through the Son in the Spirit and an

\(^{96}\) Cf. Barth who makes this point very strongly in *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), IV/1., 67-78, 123-128. Barth argues that the act of atonement is to be found in the being of Christ. The union of deity and humanity in Christ is the pivotal point from which the whole of salvation is to be viewed. The incarnation has a controlling influence over the atonement as covenant, and thereby over the whole working out of salvation.


answering movement of faith in the Spirit through the Son to the Father.\textsuperscript{99} This constitutes an internal relation as the Son is \textit{homoousios} with the Father and the Spirit and hence this trinitarian structure is at the same time christocentric, 'for it is only though Jesus Christ that we know the Father and only through him that we receive the Holy Spirit. Everything depends on the indivisible inner relation in being of the Son and the Spirit to the Father...\textsuperscript{100}

How is this 'return' made possible? Torrance answers: exclusively by the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. In line with Athanasius and other patristic theologians, Torrance is careful to explain \textit{theōsis} as it occurs ontologically in the one person of Christ, via the hypostatic union, before going on to consider \textit{theōsis} as it relates to men and women. In this way false notions of \textit{theōsis} are explicitly ruled out, such as pantheism or varieties of post-Kantian, neo-Protestant theologies, which are based on a non-conceptual relation to God.\textsuperscript{101} The idea of being 'in' Christ is an analogical motif that is discussed by Torrance along with the wider special issues of time-space itself. Drawing on Athanasius, Torrance takes issue with the 'container' notion of space that he alleges dominated scientific, philosophical, and theological thinking up to the time of

\textsuperscript{99} T.F. Torrance, 'Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,' \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology}, 39 (1986), 461-462. The reason that Torrance singles out knowledge of God is not to dismiss or downplay other aspects of redemption. The emphasis Torrance identifies in the patristic, especially the Greek theologians is on the redemption of the human mind, for it is in the inner 'man' as Torrance calls it, the rational human soul, that men and women have fallen and need to be freed from. Against Apollinaris, Torrance sides with Athanasius who stressed the redemption of the mind and the inner-man ro less than the redemption of the flesh. This is the teaching about the redemption of the 'whole man in the whole Christ' which Torrance sees developed so powerfully in Athanasius' two books \textit{Contra Apollinarem}, and it is precisely from this work that Torrance derives his emphasis on the 'reconciling exchange' achieved by Christ. See T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 164-168.


\textsuperscript{101} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Ground and Grammar of Theology} (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1980), 150. Torrance appreciatively cites the work of Martin Buber who saw through the problem of modern Protestant thought when he attacked it for what he called its 'conceptual letting go of God.' Torrance imagines a mountain climber trying to climb the face of a rock cliff: if it is utterly smooth, without any cracks in it, it is impossible. Unless he can get his fingers or spikes into the rock, and thus make use of the interstices or intrinsic relations on the rock, he cannot grasp hold of it. Against Eastern mysticism, Eastern Orthodox apophaticism, and many Western mystics and liberal theology, Torrance argues that the fact that God is a trinity means that there are relations of love inherent to God which allow us to know this God as he is in his inherent relations (ortho-relations). 'There is a kind of meeting of love, a profound reciprocity, within God, and it is when our knowledge of God latches on to that internal relationship deep in God that we can really conceive him and know him in accordance with his intrinsic nature. And that is the ground, as Buber showed, for a conceptual grasp of God,' 150.
Einstein and beyond.\textsuperscript{102} Athanasius employed the concept of ‘in’ to illustrate the concept of space. Christ is ‘in’ us and he is ‘in’ the Father, according to Scripture, especially the Pauline corpus.\textsuperscript{103} But how are we to work out the relation between these two ‘in’s?\textsuperscript{104} According to Athanasius, by means of an analogical account. By respecting both the divine and the human nature we can see that to be ‘in’ the other (Christ in the Father and men and women in Christ), applies not to place but to nature. For in place (spatially) nothing is far from God. Therefore the phrase, ‘we are in Christ Jesus’ does not signify that we are located somewhere within the physical confines of the incarnate Christ, but points analogically to the fact that we are in a relationship with him. This applies to Christ being in the Father and to men and women being in the Son. As Athanasius and the tradition puts it, the ‘inter-relations of the Father and the Son must be thought out in terms of ‘abiding’ and ‘dwelling’ in which each wholly rests in the other. This is the doctrine of \textit{perichoresis} (περιχορεσις) in which we are to think of the whole being of the Son as proper to the Father’s essence, as God from God, Light from Light.\textsuperscript{105}

Getting back to \textit{theōsis} as it occurs first to the human nature of Jesus Christ we read, ‘The \textit{hypostatic union} carries with it the realisation that the atoning exchange whereby we are reconciled to God takes place within the incarnate constitution of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one


Mediator between God and man.\textsuperscript{106} Torrance has consistently rejected any and all suggestions that the humanity of Jesus Christ, the human nature he partook of in the incarnation, was anything other than a particular humanity – that of this person, Jesus of Nazareth. It was not simply some Platonically 'ideal' humanity. In this regard any notion that the human nature of Jesus Christ was deified 'in itself apart from the fact that it is united to the eternal Word or Son of God'\textsuperscript{107} is rejected. That is to say, the work of Christ did not divinize human nature in an automatic, mechanistic, or universalist sense but was a specific, personal, and real divinization of a human nature. The hypostatic union is a personal union. This leads Torrance into evangelical praise:

The supreme truth that lies behind everything else in the Gospel and gives it its decisive import and redemptive power is the love of God the Father for mankind – the divine philanthropia manifested in the astonishing event in which God the Son became man, not 'man' in some ideal or abstract sense, but actual historical man.\textsuperscript{108} The homoousion and the hypostatic union are thus central to a construction of theōsis within Torrance's theology. Due to the significance of the hypostatic union and Torrance's obvious reliance upon patristic thought a more precise articulation of hypostatic union is offered by Torrance, one that seeks to position itself within the various 'schools' of patristic thought.

\section{§9.2 \textit{Antiochene or Alexandrian Christology?}}

In order to understand his articulation of Christ's divinization Torrance must be situated with the wider Christian tradition, especially the early church. According to standard text-book accounts, two 'schools' of thought emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries with differing proposals on how to explain the precise nature of the divinity of Jesus Christ: the


\textsuperscript{108} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 147. Incidentally, it is also this point which distinguishes his view from that of a merely physical theory of redemption.
Alexandrian and the Antiochene. While the ‘two-schools’ theory is now thought to be radically simplistic it does draw attention to some of the general positions inherent in the early church. On the one hand the Antiochene ‘school’ with its so-called ‘Logos-anthropos’ christology found its most radical exponents articulating Nestorianism – the view that Jesus Christ is actually two beings residing in one. The other school, the Alexandrian, and its so-called ‘Logos-sarx’ christology found its most radical exponents articulating Apollinarianism or Eutychianism.

Apollinaris and his followers claimed that the soul of Jesus was replaced by the Logos, something refuted by the pro-Nicene tradition. Eutychianism held that Christ had only one nature, hence this tended to be Docetic, something rejected by the Chalcedonian Formula and its theology.

Rejecting a simplistic two-schools approach to the issues, Torrance’s theology, like Barth’s, reflects both christologies. According to an


110 The ideas of Nestorius came to prominence due to the use of the term theotokos (God-bearer) for Mary; he preferred the title anthropotokos (man-bearer) or Christotokos Christ-bearer). In so doing he was affirming an indwelling christology. Nestorius sought to follow the Antiochene tradition, teaching that Jesus was fully divine and fully human. However, his theory has not escaped the criticism of the ‘pantomime horse,’ the theory that while Christ appears to be one, at the deepest level Christ remains two. His views were condemned at Ephesus in AD 431. A. Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition. Vol. 1: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), trans. J. Bowden (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 447-472.

111 It is sometimes suggested that behind the Word-man - Word-flesh difference lie the philosophical underpinnings of each school. Broadly speaking the Alexandrian ‘school’ has been identified as Platonic and the Antiochene as Aristotelian. This may go toward accounting for their different constructions of christology. This distinction has been articulated by T.G. Weinandy, Does God Change? The Word’s Becoming in the Incarnation (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 1985), 32-33. For a more critical evaluation of the two ‘schools’ see F. Young, Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 202-212, who attempts to dismiss simplistic characterisations of hemmeneutical differences between the ‘two-schools’ in particular.

112 C.T. Waldrop, Karl Barth’s Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character (Amsterdam: Mouton, 1984), argues that Barth’s christology has some Antiochene elements but most of them can also be explained in an Alexandrian framework. Waldrop concludes that Barth’s analysis of the unity of
Antiochene christology, finite realities can be said to be divine; this applies to the Bible, to the bread and wine of the Eucharist, to the water of baptism, and to the words of gospel proclamation.

According to the Antiochene understanding of Torrance, the grounds for affirming Christ's deity are essentially the same as those used to establish the divinity of other creaturely media. These creatures are said to be divine because of their relation to God, their roles in revelation, not because of their inherent nature.113

the person of Jesus Christ, his divinity, and the nomenclature he used indicates that Barth stands in the Alexandrian tradition. This thesis has not gone unchallenged, however. Colin Brown notes Barth's endorsement of Chalcedon was a compromise between Alexandrian and Antiochene theology, see "False Options?" Review of Waldrop, Karl Barth's Christology. Journal of Psychology and Theology 14 (1986), 343-44; J.M. McDermott, 'Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character: Review of Waldrop, Karl Barth's Christology, Journal of Psychology and Theology 14 (1986), 343-344; J. Thompson, 'Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character: Review of Waldrop, Karl Barth's Christology,' Scottish Journal of Theology 39 (1986) 121-23; and R.A. Muller, 'Directions in the Study of Barth's Christology,' Westminster Theological Journal 48 (1986), 125-31. Muller gives several examples which show that Barth transcends the Christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries. It is somewhat anachronistic to argue that Barth's theology was Alexandrian or Antiochene considering his own christology was, as Van Til pointed out, a reaction against Schleiermacher and Ritschl, whose consciousness theology had provoked Feuerbach's ridicule of theology as 'glorified anthropology.' Cornelius Van Til, Barth's Christology (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962) 9-10. See further in H. Boersma, 'Alexandrian or Antiochian? A Dilemma in Barth's Christology,' Westminster Theological Journal 52 (1990), 263-280. G. Hunsinger, 'Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character,' in The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth, ed. J. Webster, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 127-142, argues Waldrop is unable to see Barth's real allegiance to Chalcedonian christology due to his insistence upon holding to only two options (132). With this contribution Hunsinger continues the compelling argument initiated in his earlier work How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), of reading Barth dialogically and seeing recurring patterns throughout the Church Dogmatics rather than a single unifying motif. In this later essay it is Hunsinger's conviction that Barth 'offers one of the most fully elaborated Chalcedonian Christologies ever to have appeared in Christian doctrine,' and when his theology is categorised as other than Chalcedonian, that is either Alexandrian or Antiochian, it is normally done so as to allege that he has succumbed to one or another of the inherent extremes each 'school' veers towards (129). Hunsinger concludes that 'Barth is probably the first theologian in the history of Christian doctrine who alternates back and forth, deliberately between an 'Alexandrian' and an 'Antiochian' idiom,' (130). When Barth is accused of holding to a non-Chalcedonian christology the interpreter has failed to appreciate that Barth employs 'a dialectical strategy of juxtaposition' (132). See G. Taxacher, Trinität und Sprache (Wurzburg: Echter, 1994), 349-371.


It is...the revelation of God actualized in our historical human existence through the instrumentality of Israel and in Jesus Christ the Word made flesh in Israel, in whom that actualization of divine revelation was brought to its fulfilment in acutely personalized form, that we learn about this self-revelation of God and the response of man ... God's revelation of himself to mankind did not operate in a vacuum, but penetrated into human existence in the particular life and history of one people elected as the instrument for the actualization of God's revelation in humanity and separated as a holy nation in whose midst God dwelt in an intimate and distinctive way through the presence of his Word.

This statement implies that Jesus can be said to be divine because he reveals the Father. Israel can be said to be divine (holy) because she reveals the Father. By implication, men and women in Christ can be said to be divine (theōsia) as they know and reveal the Father. Other examples provided by Yeung include a discussion on the Lord's Supper based on T.F. Torrance, Conflict and Agreement in the Church. Vol. 2: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 141, 178.
While Yeung applies this only to Scripture, the sacraments, and preaching, we can also see how it may apply to a doctrine of theōsis. Men and women can be said to be divine in so far as they are related to Jesus Christ and through that relation are able both to know God and make him known. Creatures are not divine in the absolute sense but can be said to be 'divine' when they are relationally united through Christ and the Holy Spirit to the Father and in turn are witnesses to that relationship in the world. Such an 'Antiochene' approach is at least a possibility in Torrance's theology, although he never speaks of humans as 'divine'.

However, there is a decided propensity in Torrance's christology towards the Alexandrian understanding and its 'Logos-sarx' christology. This is evident when christology proper is dealt with by Torrance. Jesus Christ is not only divine by relation but uniquely divine in nature. This is what separates him from the rest of creaturely being. According to Torrance, Jesus Christ is the Word Incarnate, God in the flesh, Emmanuel - and the hypostatic union explains this: two natures, but one person, the God-man Jesus Christ. 'For Torrance, there is no tension between the divinity of Jesus Christ and the divinity of God. The act of God is the divine being of God, and this act is Jesus Christ as the deity of God.'

This suggests that when he speaks about men and women and their 'divinity' Torrance considers this under a Logos-anthropos construction similar to an Antiochene christology. This means that by adoption, men and women are made to partake of the divine nature (theōsis). Adoption is a metaphor applicable to believers and has biblical sanction (Rom 8.15, 23, Gal 4.5, Eph 1.5); however, it is inadequate when applied to the incarnate Logos, the Son of God. Thus, when speaking of Christ, Torrance vigorously asserts that there is no indication that Christ is divine only by association or adoption: he is so by nature, because he is the act of God and hence the being of God in his act.

114 This conclusion is supported by J.H-K. Yeung, Being and Knowing: An Examination of T.F. Torrance's Christological Science (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996), 134.
According to some commentators Torrance adopts a synthesis between the Antiochene and Alexandrian paths, or he maintains a dialogical relation between these two traditions. As Yeung reasons, 'Torrance is not inconsistent because the Antiochian [sic] Christology makes claims consistent with an Alexandrian christology foundation. The important Antiochian elements fit within a framework that is basically Alexandrian.' Further support is found for this in Torrance's christology's explicit double objectivity – the human and divine. When treating the human nature of Christ, Torrance can be very Antiochene, but when treating the divine nature or the person of Christ he is very Alexandrian. In so doing Torrance believes he is following a third path, after the fashion of his theological hero, Athanasius. As Kelly asserts, 'Athanasius sums up his position saying that we are correct in our theology if, while distinguishing two sets of actions which Christ performs as God and as God-made-man respectively, we also perceive that both sets issue from one and the same person.'

The Antiochian Christological conceptualization is based upon the Alexandrian claim that Jesus Christ is fully and absolutely identical with the Word of God who speaks through the human nature. The human nature of Christ can be said to be divine only because the essentially and originally divine Christ decided to assume the human nature and become man.

While a dialogical relation to the 'two schools' appears to be the most natural reading of Torrance's method it is not the way he sees it himself. Because the 'two schools' typology often creates an artificial distinction between Antiochene and Alexandrian thought, Torrance argues, there was a third 'school' of thought operative in the early church: one that gave priority to the vicarious humanity of Jesus, and emphasised the deity and lordship of Christ. According to Torrance, patristic thought

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120 T.F. Torrance, 'The Place of the Humanity of Christ in the Sacramental Life of the Church,' *Church Service Society Annual* 29 (1956), 3-10. G. Redding assesses this claim in *Prayer and the*
plotted this middle path between the other two ‘schools’, and, as we have indicated, Athanasius is held up as the supreme model.121 Athanasius understood the incarnation to be God as man in Jesus Christ. Understanding God as man meant for Athanasius that he had to understand the humanity of Jesus in a profoundly vicarious manner. From this came his advocacy of the doctrine of theōsis, the exchange wrought by Jesus Christ for men and women. Though the issue underscores the over-simplification of the ‘two schools’ account in general, the supposition of a ‘third school’ is improbable. Rather than enlightening the somewhat fluid categories in which the early church worked, this suggestion merely posits another artificial ‘school’ of thought into which each thinker is made to fit. However, it does explain how Torrance reads patristic theology by adopting an Athanasian christology as his own, along with the rudiments of that theology. Redding’s study concludes that:

[T]he evidence seems to support Torrance’s interpretation of Athanasius, rather than Grillmeier’s and Wiles’. Athanasius refuted the dualistic categories of Origen and Clement in the Alexandrian school and, following Irenaeus, gave full emphasis to the humanity of Christ, body and soul. His soteriology hinged on the fact of Christ’s assumption of the human condition rather than the displacement of the soul by the divine Logos. Christ’s growth as a man, therefore, was not the progressive unveiling of the incarnate Logos to humankind but rather the progressive deification of human nature in the person of the Mediator... It seems that at almost every point in

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Athanasius’ consistent rejection of cosmological and epistemological dualism in his doctrine of Christ as well as in his doctrine of God enabled him to develop the Irenaean (and even Origenist) understanding of salvation as the redemption of the whole man, which rather makes irrelevant the distorting distinction between a Logos-sarx and a Logos-anthropos approach which some scholars have employed as a framework for the interpretation of Patristic christology.
Athanasius' writings we are met with the vicarious nature of Christ's humanity through his assumption of human flesh and limitation.\footnote{G. Redding, \textit{Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ in the Reformed Tradition} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 44.}

It is more correct to describe Torrance's theology as neither strictly Alexandrian nor Antiochene, but as pro-Nicene and pro-Chalcedonian, or, in J.B. Torrance's categorisation, a 'Nicene Incarnational Model'.\footnote{J.B. Torrance, 'The Vicarious Humanity of Christ,' in \textit{The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed A.D. 381}, ed. T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1981), 135-137. J.B. Torrance distinguishes between three models or classifications of christology: 1) the Harnack (Hick) Model represented by Lessing, Hegel, Troeltsch, Hick, and Willes; 2) the Existential Model represented by Ritschi, Herrmann, Schleiermacher, and Bultmann; and 3) the Nicene Incarnational Model represented by Luther, Calvin, and Barth (131-137), placing himself (and his brother Thomas) in this last category.} While this was not a discrete 'school' it was an approach to the issues of the day which Torrance adopts in his own work.

\section*{§9.2.1 The An- and En-hypostatic Christ}

Having established how Torrance endeavours to read patristic theology through the eyes of a 'third school' the \textit{theologoumenon} that Christ is an- and \textit{en-hypostatic} is integral to understanding Torrance's theology as a whole.\footnote{See for example T.F. Torrance, 'The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church,' \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology} 7 (1954), 249-252; 'The Atonement the Singularity of Christ and the Finality of the Cross: The Atonement and the Moral Order,' in \textit{Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell}, ed. N.M de S. Cameron (Carlisle: Paternoster/Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 229-230; and \textit{Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 199-201.}

asserted that in the *assumptio carnis* the human nature of Christ is given a real and concrete subsistence within the hypostatic union – it is *enhypostatic* in the Word.\(^{127}\) While the terms themselves are patristic, the couplet as such is not: it developed later, not least through the influence of John of Damascus.\(^{128}\) Here another important link with the East is forged within Torrance’s theology. By adopting this couplet Torrance keeps together the two natures of Christ within the one person.\(^{129}\) Why is this so important? As Torrance writes:

This is of supreme importance in application to the atonement. When we interpret a term like ἡλασκοθεῖα in this light we must say on the one hand that God is the Subject of the whole atoning action: ‘GOD was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,’ and yet on the other hand Jesus Christ is Himself the ἡλασμος, for within the divine act of atonement Jesus as Man has a particular place in obedience. Reconciliation is God’s supreme action, but within it, it is the concrete action of Jesus Christ that reconciles us. It is appropriate therefore that the middle voice should be used: ἡλασκοθεῖα. Because

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anhypostasia and enhypostasia are inseparable we cannot speak of two actions in the Cross, but of the act of the God-man.130

Torrance adopts the couplet in order to elaborate several dimensions of atonement. While this usage, according to Davidson, "presses the patristic logic to lengths not obviously legitimated by its original use,"131 this is the way Torrance sees the terms working in any fully-fledged christology.132 From this theological construction two contrasting formulations of the atonement are ruled out by Torrance: first, Gustaf Aulén's celebrated 1983 work Christus Victor133 is dismissed for applying to the incarnation the anhypostasia alone, by which the cross is a pure act of God 'over the head of' humanity, and not involving an atoning act involving incorporation; and second, any Pelagianising tendencies which understand the cross to have God placated by human sacrifice are dismissed for applying the enhypostasia alone to the atonement.134

The result of keeping together the doctrines of anhypostasia and enhypostasia is, according to Torrance, that we must give greater place in our understanding of atonement to the concrete conception of substitution together with incorporation. The Word did not enter history as a third party but as an historical individual, Jesus Christ. Christ entered our state of alienation from God and stood under the curse of the Law, he 'stepped into the conflict between the covenant faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of man and took that conflict into His own flesh as the Incarnate Son and bore it to the end.'135 Christ shared the cross 'from both sides,' as God and man in one person, as the God-man. With subtle allusions here to the mirifica commutatio of catholic

christology, Torrance speaks of the act of atonement as substitution and incorporation in the following way,

Within our flesh He was thus act of God the Judge condemning sin in the flesh, and within our flesh where man has no justification before God, He the Just in the place of the unjust stood under judgment and rendered to God the answer of complete obedience even to the death of the Cross.\textsuperscript{136}

In a recent article Davidson argues that \textit{an-} and \textit{en-hypostatic} christology offers a helpful way of understanding the theological significance of the humanity of Jesus.\textsuperscript{137} The christology of Torrance, with his utilisation of the \textit{theologoumenon} along with his other distinctive emphases, anticipates Davidson’s call, for he presents a fully human Jesus Christ who is ‘most definitely \textit{a} man, with a particular human consciousness and a particular assemblage of experiences, choices, emotions, traits and temptations which were his alone’.\textsuperscript{138} And yet, in his articulation of the full humanity of Jesus Christ, Torrance never loses sight of the equally important divinity of the Son who assumed human nature. By means of \textit{enhypostasia} and \textit{anhypostasia} Torrance is able to state clearly what it means for Jesus to be one person, albeit acknowledged in two natures. Davidson’s description of Barth’s christology could equally be applied to Torrance’s: ‘it sets out the basic terms of reference: \textit{vere homo}, particular, individual, historical, but never independent or generated by that which is contingent and finite – always \textit{vere Deus} also.’\textsuperscript{139}

Davidson maintains that any reclamation of the theological couplet must be supplemented with a robust pneumatology in order to specify the


The \textit{theologoumenon} does not have to do with the \textit{logical} questions surrounding the claim that there can be two ‘natures’ in one person, nor – emphatically – is it remotely concerned to explain the ‘how’ of incarnation. What it is about is specifying the way in which what Jesus does as a man is the action of God, which transforms but does not eliminate or suppress the human in its own sphere. It is about the sheer gratuitousness that lies at the heart of the Christian story of the God-human relationship.
relevance of the human Jesus for revelation, salvation, anthropology, ethics, and ecclesiology. Davidson is surely correct in this assessment and it is at this point that Torrance’s theology is somewhat lacking. In his discussion of enhypostasia and anhypostasia, and other christological themes, Torrance speaks of the Holy Spirit regularly but fails adequately to incorporate a pneumatological discourse. This underdeveloped pneumatology tends to detract from the very point Torrance wishes to make. By positing too great an emphasis on the agency of the divine Word on the human nature of Jesus, as opposed to a relation mediated by the Holy Spirit, Torrance implicitly makes the human nature of Christ merely instrumental. It would be too much to suggest that Torrance’s christology is docetic or Apollinarian, but his lack of pneumatology in this area does risk bringing him to the brink of such a failing, a criticism which will be examined in more detail in Chapter Four.

In a concluding critical comment on Barth’s christology Davidson reminds us of features of Torrance’s own theology which need correcting:

If it is in the Spirit that Jesus lives his dedication to the Father as incarnate Son, a commitment in which he is most fully himself as a man, it is by the same Spirit that we too are enabled to address the God of Jesus as Abba, and find our deepest human fulfilment and freedom in living towards this God. Indeed, by the Spirit’s action we are privileged to live not only towards God, but in God: not simply regarding God as an example of relationship...but participating within the triune communion of God’s own life.\(^{140}\)

This triune participation amounts to a doctrine of theēsis within Torrance’s theology, and yet, in working out the theological implications of Christ’s theandric nature, Torrance fails to develop the pneumatological bond of union that is so important for the triune Persons, for the hypostatic union, and for theēsis as a whole. Torrance is more concerned at this point with the epistemological bond of union – or with a doctrine of revelation, as we shall develop more fully in the next chapter.

§10 Vicarious Humanity

As a direct consequence of his doctrines of the *homoousion* and the hypostatic union Torrance makes significant room in his theology for the concept of the vicarious humanity of Christ whereby Christ becomes the last Adam and New Man to whom all humanity is ontologically related and must participate in for communion with God to be realised. This further clarifies what Torrance means by a doctrine of *theōsis*.

Of great importance to Torrance is the issue of Christ’s humanity; specifically the question: Was Christ’s humanity of the fallen stock of Adam or was it untouched by Adam’s sin? Throughout the history of Christian thinking the normative status of humanity has most often been ascribed to Adam and Eve in their pre-lapsarian condition rather than to the humanity of Jesus Christ in his incarnation, resulting in a general affirmation that Christ did not assume a fallen human nature. Torrance has consistently adopted the contrary position: that the eternal Son assumed a *fallen* human nature, and he argues that this is essential in a full articulation of the gospel.

If the incarnate Son through his birth of the Virgin Mary actually assumed our flesh of sin, the fallen, corrupt and enslaved human nature which we have all inherited from Adam, then the redeeming activity of Christ took place within the ontological depths of his humanity in such a way that far from sinning himself, he condemned sin in the flesh and sanctified what he assumed, so that incarnating and redeeming events were one and indivisible, from the very beginning of his earthly existence to its end in his death and resurrection.\(^{141}\)

Torrance’s argument hangs on the concept of a vicarious assumption of human nature in its fallenness and sin. Christ did not, according to this logic, inherit sin naturally and so, unlike all other children of Adam, he had no sin-nature or stain of original sin. However, through an assumption of human nature in its post-lapsarian condition, Christ could remain guilt-free while still assuming a vicarious and fallen human nature. Torrance is thoroughly patristic when he attributes sin to the person-*hypostasis*, not as Augustine (and the West) did, to essence or
nature. This accounts for why Christ could assume the likeness of sinful flesh (nature) and yet remain sinless (person). Again the an/enhypostatic couplet is playing its part in Torrance’s christology. Considered anhypostatically, Christ has a sin-nature, albeit vicariously. Considered enhypostatically, Christ is sinless for his person is consonant with that of the eternal Son of God.\(^{142}\)

Macleod claims that Torrance ‘went on to reintroduce to Scotland the peculiar Christology of Edward Trving,’ and so Macleod calls this the ‘Irving-Torrance theory’.\(^{143}\) But is this accurate? To answer in the affirmative would be too simplistic. According to Irving, in the incarnation the Son assumed a fallen human nature but did not become a sinner due to the influence of the Holy Spirit, active in the life of Christ from conception to resurrection. The soul of Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit and it was this union that enabled Jesus to resist the devil and live a sinless life.\(^{144}\) ‘Irving believed that to rely solely on the Son’s divinity as the solitary source of holiness within the humanity of Jesus bordered on Docetism or Monophysitism.’\(^{145}\)

Torrance does speak of Irving as providing some useful resources showing that the Son assumed a fallen human nature and so in this, Irving and Torrance are at one. However, Torrance is at odds with how Irving sought to account for this assumed nature. For instance, Torrance


wishes to avoid the two extremes that could result from a consideration of the vicarious humanity of Christ: on the one hand Ebionite (not Monophysism as Weinandy mentions above), and on the other hand docetic views. Torrance believes Irving espoused an Ebionite christology because he held that the sinlessness of Christ was due to the indwelling Holy Spirit not to his own nature. On the docetic side Torrance suggests that certain notions of the 'deification' of Christ's human nature are to be ruled out; notions which would mix or confuse the human and divine natures in such a way that the human nature disappears.¹⁴⁶

Torrance's problem with Irving's christology and treatment of this issue is that he makes the Holy Spirit the decisive factor to the relative neglect of the hypostatic union. While the Holy Spirit is, according to Torrance, integral to Jesus' life and especially here, to his sinlessness, it is also due to the fact of the hypostatic union that Jesus was sinless and so did not have any need to atone for his own sins. While Christ's humanity was capable of sin and rebellion, Christ did not possess a single nature (human), as humans do. Christ had another nature, the divine nature which was not only sinless but incapable of sinning.¹⁴⁷ Torrance realises this essential problem with Irving's christology and seeks to counter it with a stress on the vicarious assumption of a fallen human nature in the incarnation. However, it appears Torrance goes too far in the direction of Alexandrian christology and under-emphasises the atoning work of the Holy Spirit in the entire life of Christ.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ B.L. McCormack, 'For Us and Our Salvation: Incarnation and Atonement in the Reformed Tradition,' The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 43 (1998), 314, fn. 53, reaches the following critical conclusions in his own survey of these issues within 16th and 17th century Reformed theology: 'The 'sin nature' each of us has is a function of our primal decision to agree with Adam's rebellion. Through his life of obedience, Christ refused to make that primal decision his own. That he did not do so cannot be explained on the basis of the hypostatic union alone; the work of the Spirit has to be appealed to to make the conception fully coherent. That is, the Spirit who brought together divine and human nature in the Virgin's womb was the One who continually empowered the God-man in his life of obedience.' McCormack sees in the theology of Karl Barth this understanding of Christ's assumption of a fallen human nature. It is precisely the weakness of Torrance's own theology that he did not allow enough space for a consideration of the place pneumatology should play. Had he followed his Doktorvater Karl Barth in this matter also, his position would have been more coherent and convincing, despite the fact that even Barth did not go far enough either!
In his 1976 work *Space, Time and Resurrection* Torrance further articulates how Christ remains sinless despite vicariously assuming a fallen human nature:

Although he assumed our fallen and corrupt humanity when he became flesh, in assuming it he sanctified it in himself, and all through his earthly life he overcame our sin through his righteousness, our impurity through his purity, condemning sin in our flesh by the sheer holiness of his life within it.\(^{149}\)

Torrance goes on to say that this is precisely why death could not hold Christ (cf. Acts 2.24) for there was no sin in him which allowed it to subject him to corruption. Death had nothing in him, for he had already passed through its clutches by the perfection of his holiness.\(^{150}\) In short, 'He triumphed over the grave through his sheer sinlessness'.\(^{151}\) He then concludes with the clear statement that, 'The resurrection is thus the resurrection of the union forged between man and God in Jesus out of the damned and lost condition of men into which Christ entered in order to share their lot and redeem them from doom'.\(^{152}\)

Such a focus on Christ's assumption of a fallen human nature, despite its attendant difficulties, clearly highlights the role Torrance ascribes to the vicarious humanity of Christ. Torrance goes to such extremes in order to highlight the lengths to which the Word went in becoming human in order to enable humans to participate in the divine nature.

One of Torrance's clearest expressions of the vicarious humanity of Christ is found in a 1959 article 'The Atoning Obedience of Christ', in which we read:

In that life-act of the historical Jesus the Son of God so clothed Himself with our humanity and so subdued it in Himself that He converted it back from its resentment and rebellion to glad surrender to the Holy Will of God, and so lifted humanity up in himself to communion with the Father, setting it again within the divine peace, drawing it within the Divine holiness and placing it within the direction of the divine love.\(^{153}\)

This is a profound statement of the doctrine of *theōsis* which speaks forcefully of an internal work of God for humanity rather than simply speaking of an external or transactional relation between a transcendent Creator and his creatures. Once more Torrance reminds us that the work of *theōsis* is first of all a work of God in Jesus Christ (*theopoiesis*) and only then a reality applied to human beings in general (*theōsis*). In order to clarify this reality Torrance insists there is an indissoluble connection between substitution and incorporation. Summarising Torrance's position, Colyer writes:

Torrance contends that when Christ's atoning reconciliation on the cross is not understood in close relation to the incarnational assumption of our fallen humanity, the atonement is inevitably interpreted in terms of external forensic relations. In addition, without a unifying center in the incarnation, the various aspects of the atonement in the biblical witness break up into various theories of the atonement, each stressing one element or another found within Scripture.\(^{154}\)

Jesus Christ is God's exclusive language to humanity as well as humanity's exclusive language to God.\(^{155}\) While Torrance develops this theme at some length, venturing into areas irrelevant in this context, he does affirm that the human condition is fallen, knowledge of God is incomplete, and the image of God is defaced.\(^{156}\) Humanity is thus unable to respond to God as it should making reconciliation impossible; the fall has affected the very core of our being. In light of this, Christ becomes the centre of our faith as he is the divinely provided human through whom reconciliation is made available.

Torrance maintains that the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ not only delivered humanity from subjugation to sin and alienation, but also recreates humanity's relation to God by realizing perfect humanity on the earth, offering God the *true human response* to God on our behalf and in our place, which we cannot make for ourselves.\(^{157}\)

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In this context Torrance enters into a sustained treatment of what the vicarious humanity of Christ means for the mediation of our human response to God, something he terms the 'total substitution of Christ.' On this point Torrance has been most open to criticism as many see his application of the vicarious humanity of Christ as going too far.\textsuperscript{158} For Torrance faith is only properly exercised by Christ, not by the human person, and he sees conversion, worship, and even evangelism in the same way.\textsuperscript{159} For many this implies that human action is undermined. But, Torrance argues, this is to misunderstand 'the logic of grace' - all of grace does not mean to imply nothing of humanity.\textsuperscript{160} While we shall look at how our response is incorporated into Christ's response for us in his vicarious humanity more in a later chapter we will take some space now to look at Christ's side of this response, his vicarious humanity.

According to Torrance the vicarious humanity of Christ means that only Christ's response is ultimately valid. All other responses to God are excluded because Christ is the ground and the norm of our response to God. Torrance makes this clear throughout his essay 'The Word of God and the Response of Man'\textsuperscript{161} where we read, 'In the Gospels we do not have to do simply with the Word of God and the response of man, but with the all-significant middle term, the divinely provided response in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ.'\textsuperscript{162} The humanity of Christ occupies a unique place in which he is the exclusive representative and substitute in all our relations with God, 'including every aspect of human response to Him; such as trusting and obeying, understanding and knowing, loving

\textsuperscript{158} For instance T. Smail, \textit{The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person} (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), 109-112, and C.D. Kettler, \textit{The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation} (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 139-142. The same objections were levelled at one of Torrance's major influences, John McLeod Campbell, expressed in his \textit{The Nature of the Atonement} (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), that Jesus Christ provides a 'perfect response,' a 'perfect repentance,' a 'perfect sorrow' and a 'perfect contrition.' 115; 118; 121-125.


\textsuperscript{160} See E.M. Colyer, \textit{How To Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding his Trinitarian and Scientific Theology} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 118-123.


Indeed, this is what it means for Christ to be divinized and our *theōsis* in him.

Because the incarnate Son of God is fully human (*enhypostasis*), his response personalises ours. In all of his soteriological activity: 'Jesus Christ is engaged in personalising and humanising (never depersonalising and dehumanising) activity, so that in all our relations with him we are made more truly and fully human in our personal response of faith than ever before.' As Colyer describes it:

Our telos in Torrance's theology is personal sharing in union and communion with God the Father through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit in which we become ever more fully human and free, and respond in thanksgiving, faith and joyous freedom, as children of God, in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. It is a personal sharing of our humanity in union and communion with God, first in Jesus Christ through his vicarious humanity, and then in our humanity as we are incorporated by the Spirit into Christ and his union with our humanity in the incarnation.

Because of the obedience of Christ, his humiliation, and passion in his vicarious humanity, we participate in the Godhead as complete human beings. In Christ we live obedient lives as a response to God. Colyer reminds us that:

What we have then is not just a forensic forgiveness and an ever-present Spirit who enables us to join Christ in the fray; we have a forgiveness and a full and final transformation of our very humanity in Jesus Christ in which we may participate in the Spirit, the Spirit who is sent to us from the risen and ascended divine-human person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ – the Spirit imbued with all of the earthly, historical struggle and victory of Jesus Christ on our behalf. We walk by faith and not by sight, but it is the faith and faithfulness of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us (Gal 2.20).

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164 T.F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 64-66. Lee's study notes, 'Due to this perfect, indivisible hypostatic union, the humanity of Christ is the ontological Source and Ground of our being and existence regardless of our knowledge of him. However, it is only believers who are born anew in and through Christ as children of God the Father,' K.W. Lee, *Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 149.


Christ is the exclusive response of God to humanity and the exclusive response of humanity to God.\textsuperscript{168} Thus \textit{theōsis} is achieved not only \textit{in} Christ but, importantly, also \textit{by} Christ. In \textit{The Mediation of Christ} Torrance states that Jesus Christ ‘healed the ontological split in human being through the hypostatic and atoning union which he embodied within it’.\textsuperscript{165}

In a manner reminiscent of John Mcleod Campbell and Karl Barth, Torrance argues in his presidential address delivered to the Scottish Church Theology Society in 1960 that in Jesus Christ we have God’s ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to humanity.

Jesus Christ was not only the fulfilment and embodiment of God’s righteous and holy Act or \textit{dikaioma}, but also the embodiment of our act of faith and trust and obedience toward God. He stood in our place, taking our cause upon him, also as Believer, as the Obedient One who was himself justified before God as his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased. He offered to God a perfect confidence and trust, a perfect faith and response which we are unable to offer, and he appropriated all God’s blessings which we are unable to appropriate. Through union with him we share in his faith, in his obedience, in his trust and his appropriation of the Father’s blessing; we share in his justification before God.\textsuperscript{170}

Torrance continues: ‘therefore when we are justified by faith, this does not mean that it is \textit{our} faith that justifies us, far from it – it is the faith of Christ alone that justifies us...’\textsuperscript{171} The incarnate Son of God is the only proper response of humanity to God and God to humanity. In short, ‘We have no speech or language with which to address God but the speech and language called Jesus Christ.’\textsuperscript{172} Only through a participation in his person and work can men and women achieve union and communion – \textit{theōsis} – with God.\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{168} Christ is, as the Reformed tradition has emphasised, the Prophet, Priest and King. See R.A. Peterson, \textit{Calvin and the Atonement} (Great Britain: Mentor, 1999), 45-60.

\textsuperscript{169} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Mediation of Christ} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 79.


\textsuperscript{171} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 159-160.

\textsuperscript{172} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Mediation of Christ} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 78-79.

Torrance is open for criticism because his version of vicarious humanity is understood exclusively as the union of Christ in terms of nature (ontological), not of a union with Christ that is also spiritual (through the Holy Spirit). One appreciative critic of Torrance, Donald Macleod, speaks on behalf of many when he expresses concern with Torrance's theology of vicarious mediation: 'At first sight Torrance's exposition of this theme appears to involve a thorough-going Christo-monism in which the work of Christ is everything and that of the believer is insignificant and even needless.' Macleod then develops a three-point critique of Torrance's position, of which points two and three are of interest here. Macleod's second point may be dismissed before we examine his third since it is a weak one. While acknowledging the work of the Son is vicarious Macleod reminds us that the work of the Holy Spirit is not: 'Christ died in our place, but the Spirit does not believe in our place.' The Spirit enables us to believe but it is the human subject who must finally repent, believe, and worship. Torrance, while not emphasising sufficiently the pneumatological aspects of the human response to God, may not be opposed to what Macleod presents here. Torrance does allow for a real human response to God but argues that such a response is only possible in the Spirit of Christ who unites the believer to the incarnate Son. Our obedient response in faith, conversion, repentance, worship, and so on are free acts of our own, but free acts that are only enabled through union with Christ in the Spirit. It is this ontological and spiritual union that personalises humanity. Macleod's argument here would appear to lack any real substance.

The more important criticism of Macleod's is his demand for terminological clarification. What does Torrance mean by the use of the

174 D. Macleod, Jesus is Lord: Christology Yesterday and Today (Fearn: Mentor, 2000), 132.
175 D. Macleod, Jesus is Lord: Christology Yesterday and Today (Fearn: Mentor, 2000), 133.
176 D. Macleod, Jesus is Lord: Christology Yesterday and Today (Fearn: Mentor, 2000), 134.
178 Macleod's argument could be appropriately levelled at Barth but not Torrance for the latter formulates his soteriology along different lines than Barth and also constructs a different doctrine of election than Barth's. Through his adoption of the theme of theosis Torrance incorporates a significant space for the operation of the Spirit in a way that Barth never quite achieved.
term vicarious? The word may mean, in differing contexts, substituting, representing, or acting in solidarity with. Macleod believes that when Torrance speaks of the vicarious humanity of Christ he is using the word in the last of these senses, yet most readers instinctively take it in the first. If this is correct, then what Torrance means is that Christ is a believer with us (Heb 12.2), but not instead of us; he worships with us but not in our stead.179

If Torrance's use of 'vicarious' were to be understood in the sense of acting in solidarity with he would not be too far removed from John Calvin when he speaks of Christ as our example. In the Institutes Calvin writes that 'Christ through whom we return to favour with God, has been set before us as a model [example], the image of which our lives should express.'180 Through Calvin's exposition of the example of Christ two things stand out: first, Christ is our vicarious substitute on the cross in that he became a curse while we shall never be accursed (Gal 3.13);181 and second, that the rest of the incarnate life and death was an example for us to follow (imitatio Christi).182 It should not be inferred that his implies a simple external compulsion to imitate Christ as Latin theology has often asserted, but borrows extensively from the Eastern Orthodox view of cooperation between God and humanity made possible by the work of God in Christ.183 While not appealing to Calvin directly, Torrance considers that the New Testament sanctions an imitation of Christ that is very much a response to Paul's call to imitate Christ (1 Cor 4.15–16; 11.1; Phil 3.12–17; 1 Thess 1.6; 2 Thess 3.9–12).184 This is not a call to mere external imitation but a call to the 'obedience of faith', subjecting oneself to the pattern of Jesus' incarnate and continuing existence, so

179 See the helpful discussion in K.W. Lee, Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 159-177.
183 By the use of the term 'synergy' no Pelagian or semi-Pelagian notion is in view. 'Synergy' used here implies that the regenerated believer in the Spirit is empowered by grace to work with God.
that the illuminating and empowering work of the Spirit can effectively imprint the life of Jesus in the life of a believer. Torrance's ambiguous and often misleading terminology hides within it the profound mystery of godliness that the New Testament presents: that it is only through, in, and with Christ that true sanctification is achieved.

Macleod and others would have us believe that the only way in which Torrance's theology is comprehensible is if faith is understood to be an act of solidarity (or cooperation) with Christ, so that his faith is our faith, his worship is our worship, his repentance is our repentance, and so forth. But is this actually what Torrance intends? Macleod is partly correct in his conclusion about Torrance's use of vicarious mediation and vicarious humanity in this context. Torrance does not mean, as has been shown, that humans do not believe or do not respond to grace. Clearly they do. What he does retain is the priority of the response of God in Christ that allows a genuine human response. Reminiscent of the teaching of John McLeod Campbell, Torrance believes there is no human response that is independent of the response of Jesus Christ. We may assert that according to Torrance Christ's vicarious mediation is not representative or substitutionary - it is both, and it is this fact that Macleod and others have overlooked. As Lee's study highlights, "If

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188 Here again there are echoes of Torrance's arguments surrounding the issues of natural theology. See a defence of Campbell's theology of Christ's vicarious repentance in C.D. Kettler, 'The Vicarious Repentance of Christ in the Theology of John McLeod Campbell and R C Moberly,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 (1985), 529-543 and J.B. Torrance, 'The Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26 (1973), 295-311. Like T.F. Torrance, Campbell considered vicarious repentance to be the answer to the problem of the 'legal fiction' in other theories of the atonement, especially in John Owen and Jonathan Edwards.

189 Within Campbell's theology only 'representation' was used. Torrance is thus going beyond Campbell and in the process refuting objections such as those levelled at his theology by D.
Christ acts for us only as our representative, then this would mean that Jesus is only our leader representing our act of response to God. If Jesus simply acts as a Substitute in our place in an external-formal-forensic way, then his response would be ‘an empty transaction over our heads’ with no ontological relation with us. So to posit ‘solidarity’ as the key to Torrance’s doctrine of vicarious mediation is to undermine the point he is actually making. Representation and substitution go together in Torrance’s theology and both seek to explicate what a true human response to God actually entails. Torrance accuses evangelicals at this point of linking the atonement only with his death and not with his incarnate person and life and concludes that the biblical teaching related to the substitutionary act of Christ ‘is dynamite!’ Accordingly, for Torrance, our faith in Christ is not just ours, but is the faith of Christ himself who, in his vicarious and substitutionary role, believes for us.

What Macleod, Lee, and others have not observed, however, is the uniquely Athanasian insight into the vicarious ‘response’ of Christ that Torrance adopts, and it is this which accounts for Torrance’s real interest in the vicarious humanity of Christ. We have seen repeatedly how Torrance takes up insights of Athanasius, especially his christology, and makes them his own. Torrance’s discussion of the human response to God made through Christ is another such Athanasian appropriation (albeit without any direct reference to him). According to the logic of Athanasian christology Christ had to be both divine and human in order to unite humanity to God. Theōsis, the union of humanity with God, is made possible only through the incarnation of God in man, what Athanasius calls the ‘double proclamation’ (διὰ τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τοῦ λαοῦ). In Contra Arianos 2.70, salvation is defined as being ‘joined to God’. Because Christ is joined to God the Father by nature and joined to our humanity through the true human flesh which he put on (the assumption of a fallen human


192 Contra Arianos, 3.29 (NPNF, 2nd series, 4.1002-1003).
nature), it is by being joined to both God and humanity that Christ can effectively join us to God. This is the 'dynamic' behind Athanasius’ dictum ‘Christ became human so we may become divine,’\textsuperscript{193} that is, Christ’s inhominization was the means to our deification. Of utmost importance in our present context is not simply Christ’s revelation of the Father’s will but more precisely the reconciliation which this engenders. Christ is not only the exclusive revelation of God to humanity but he is also, by the same logic, the exclusive response (reconciliation) of humanity back to God.

According to Torrance, Christ secures our receptivity through the incarnation. In the incarnation the Word himself received grace humanly on our behalf and this granted us the definitive ability to ‘remain’ in grace, which, as the \textit{De Incarnatione} demonstrates, had been the barrier in human-divine communion.\textsuperscript{194} Anatolios summarises Athanasian christology as follows, ‘Athanasius says categorically that our own reception of the Spirit, on which hangs our salvation and deification, is impossible except as derivative of Christ’s human reception of it in the incarnation.’\textsuperscript{195} Deification is understood by Torrance, as it is in Athanasius, to include all aspects of the believer’s union and communion with God, not simply the inauguration of salvation in justification or adoption but the entire sanctifying and glorifying aspects which include in their scope faith, repentance, worship, and the sacraments. This is clearly the sort of receptivity and vicarious representative/substitutionary activity that the Son exercises on our behalf that Torrance has in view when he comes to speak of the activity of the believer. Anatolios expresses it:

Our deifying reception of the Spirit is thus derived from Christ’s human receptivity. As long as the Word’s activity was confined to the realm of divine 'giving,' we were not able to receive the Spirit in him. But if Christ’s humanity enables us to receive the Spirit in him, this reception is rendered perfectly secure, \textit{βεβαλος}, precisely because it is


\textsuperscript{194} See Athanasius, \textit{Contra Arianos} 1.50 (\textit{NPNF}, 2nd series, 4.863-864).

\textsuperscript{195} K. Anatolios \textit{Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought} (London: Routledge, 1998), 158.
indivisibly united to the unalterable divine Word, who is one in being with the Father.\textsuperscript{196}

Behind this logic is Athanasius’ argument that in Christ God is both the ‘gift and the giver’, the only possible bridge between humanity and divinity.\textsuperscript{197} Thus Christ both gives and receives and it is this dialectic of redemption and deification that corresponds to the radical ontological dissimilarity between God and creation.\textsuperscript{198} Because Jesus is the ‘Gift of the Giver,’ in the incarnation, God not only gives but his giving reaches the point of receiving on our behalf (we do not naturally receive due to our sinfulness), thus perfecting our capacity to receive, which is our only access to the divine. ‘In this way, divine giving and human receiving continue to be irreducibly distinct, but they are now united in the unity of Christ himself, who becomes the source of our receptivity by virtue of his humanity, and the perfector and securer of this receptivity, as well as the giver of the Gift itself, by virtue of his divinity.’\textsuperscript{199}

Because of this stress on the activity of God in Christ as both gift and giver, Athanasius views Christ as the only legitimate human response to God. In his adoption of ‘Athanasius’ theology Torrance’s doctrine of the vicarious humanity applied to our faith and response can at first appear to open him up to severe criticism, as Macleod has shown. However, when understood in this Athanasian fashion we can more clearly see the (theo)logic behind Torrance’s articulation of the human response to God. An ontological atonement wedded to a robust doctrine of Christ’s vicarious humanity allows Torrance to argue that Christ is the only human response to God that is accepted.\textsuperscript{200} Therefore, the believer must

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{196} K. Anatolios, \textit{Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought} (London: Routledge, 1998), 159.
\item \textsuperscript{197} Athanasius, \textit{Contra Arianos} 3.38 (NPNF, 2nd series, 4.1010-1011).
\item \textsuperscript{198} K. Anatolios, \textit{Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought} (London: Routledge, 1998), 161.
\item \textsuperscript{199} K. Anatolios, \textit{Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought} (London: Routledge, 1998), 161.
\end{itemize}
be incorporated into Christ's human response through \textit{theōsis} for communion with God to become a reality.\textsuperscript{201}

Hunsinger has commented on the 'passivity' in Torrance's work at this point and he styles Torrance's doctrine as 'salvation in the perfect tense.'\textsuperscript{202} By this Hunsinger means to imply, rightly in our opinion, that salvation is either a perfect reality in Christ to be received and partaken for what it is, or else it is an existential possibility that does not become fully actual and complete until the individual happens to believe it. 'If salvation is essentially in the perfect tense, then its present and future tenses must be seen as moments of receiving and participating in the one salvation already accomplished in Christ.'\textsuperscript{203} Torrance’s is indeed a salvation in the perfect tense, built as it is upon the perfect and complete work of the Word Incarnate. To miss this Athanasian strand in his christology is to misinterpret what he means by the vicarious response of Christ based upon the vicarious humanity of Christ.

§10.1 \textbf{The Mediation of Christ}

Due to his insistence on the vicarious humanity of Christ Torrance considers the theme of Christ’s mediation as integral to his christology and soteriology. In his 1954 essay 'The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church' Torrance sought to address the perceived imbalance in the Chalcedonian Formula by examining the meaning and implications of the Chalcedonian doctrine of the hypostatic union especially the distinct

\textsuperscript{201} This is in line with the logic of Torrance’s total argument. Identification with Christ is only made possible through Christ’s prior identification with fallen humanity in the incarnation. Identification equals participation in Torrance’s theology. The first movement, identification, is humanward – the movement of God into humanity in Jesus Christ, the second, participation, is Godward – the participation of humanity in the humanity of Christ. Christ perfectly fulfills both movements in the incarnation. Kettler draws these same conclusions in relation to the theology of Campbell, see C.D. Kettler, 'The Vicarious Repentance of Christ in the Theology of John McLeod Campbell and R C Moberly,' \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology} 38 (1985), 539, adding the crucial insight that 'to participate in the humanity of Christ is to participate in the filial relationship of love and trust between the Father and the Son.'


"moments" in the incarnate life that especially focus the process of reconciliation, incorporation, atonement, and redemption, themes which Torrance keeps closely connected and by which he structures the correlation he draws between incarnation and reconciliation. In this article he looks specifically at the baptism (Matt 3.13-17), the choosing of the Twelve (Mk 3.14-19), the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8.27-29), the Last Supper (Lk 22.1-23), and Pentecost (Acts 2). We would be mistaken, however, to conclude that these are the only moments Torrance thinks are important christologically or the only moments he discusses in his writing as a whole. Torrance asserts that throughout the life of Christ the immediate focus is undoubtedly centred on the human agency of the incarnate Son within the essential conditions of actual historical human existence, and therefore on the undiminished actuality of the whole historical Jesus Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and buried, and rose again from the dead. In a summary statement we read:

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


206 In T.F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1938-39 (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), the virgin birth, and sinlessness of Christ are investigated (117-132); in 'The Atoning Obedience of Christ,' Moravian Theological Seminary Bulletin (Fall 1959), 65-81, he discusses Christ's life of prayer (68-73); his life of perfect human obedience as a Son including his words, baptism, temptation (73-78); and the perfect two-fold revelation of God to humanity and humanity to God (78-81); and in Space, Time and Resurrection (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), the resurrection, ascension (106-122), and Parousia (143-158) are examined. It would appear that Torrance's earlier work was more concerned to elaborate the specific life of Christ whilst in his latter work (since the late 1970's), he glossed over the specific historical life of Christ in favour of explicating the theological significance of this life. The various moments within the life of Christ are complementary and must be seen in their totality one with the other. When the various redemptive moments are viewed separately or atomistically they furnish the familiar but faulty material for various 'theories of atonement.' Torrance wishes to see the life of Christ as a unitary atonement and to get beyond the dualisms repeatedly imposed upon theology. See T.F. Torrance, The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 159-160. A closer theological exposition of these various 'moments' in the life of Christ by Torrance could have contributed further to correcting the perceived imbalance in the Western tradition of setting up rival theories of the atonement.

way (ἀπόστολος), 'within the measures of our humanity,' as Cyril of Alexandria expressed it.\(^\text{208}\)

Rather than separating the hypostatic union from atonement Torrance acknowledges that there are distinct 'moments' in that movement.\(^\text{209}\)

From birth to baptism, cross to resurrection, Torrance sees the life of Christ as redemptive: 'The whole life of Christ is understood as a continuous vicarious sacrifice and oblation which, as such, is indivisible, for everything he assumed from us is organically united in his one Person and work as Saviour and Mediator.\(^\text{210}\) This is what Torrance means in the first instance by the term 'the Mediation of Christ'.

In a form of summary of the life of Christ Torrance states,

The first thing he did as he entered upon His active ministry was to be baptised in a crowd of sinners – that was His identification in the body of His flesh with the whole mass of sin and death. By Baptism He made Himself one with us all.\(^\text{211}\)

This baptism was linked by Jesus to the cross when he spoke of that baptism of blood (Mk 10.38-39); by crucifixion he was incorporated wholly with us in judgement. By identifying with fallen humanity in this personal way, Christ brought about communion between the One and the Many. Communion was initiated and theosis inaugurated. This identification, initiation, and inauguration was consummated on the cross when Christ died for sin. Then came the resurrection to life and the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost. It was then that the hypostatic union carried through crucifixion to its telos in the Risen Christ. 'In other language, through koinonia the Church, for which Christ died and rose again, was given to participate in the hypostatic union, in the mystery of Christ.\(^\text{212}\) Koinonia functions as an important cognate for theosis; not


only within Torrance's theology but in the history of the doctrine in general.⁴¹³

While the christological *kairos* that Torrance mentions do bring out the mediatorial significance of the life of Christ, the comprehensive treatment one would expect is absent from any of his published works.⁴¹⁴ The result of this lack of detailed attention to the actual historical life of Christ and its significance tends to detract from the case Torrance wants to adduce.⁴¹⁵ For instance: Where is the detailed treatment of the miracles and parables of Christ? or the forgiveness of sins? or Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom of God? The relative neglect of the life of Christ within Torrance’s christology diminishes the overall message he wishes to present – the supreme significance of the vicarious humanity and life of this person, Jesus of Nazareth, the Word made flesh. A fuller treatment

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²¹⁴ Within wider scholarship there are three moments or *kairos* in the life of Jesus that are consistently seen as of ultimate significance: his birth, baptism and resurrection. Cf. J. McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 44; and B. Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 203-202. Within the Gospels seven distinctive episodes are clearly of crucial importance: his birth; baptism; temptation; ministry (i.e., the various episodes that make up the ministry); cross; resurrection; and ascension; (if we include the book of Acts then an eighth may be mentioned, Pentecost), each of which deserves to be developed within its own right. In an Eastern Orthodox context many of these christological *kairos* become important stages in the imitation of Christ and form the prokope or way of theosis for those united to Christ by the Spirit. See for example P. Nellas, *Dellefication in Christ*, trans. N. Russell (1979. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 121-139; and A.M. Coniaris, *Achieving Your Potential in Christ: Theosis: Plain Talks on a Major Christian Doctrine* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1993), 45-65. Torrance’s theology does not show such a detailed examination of the life of Christ in this way at all.


Defending Athanasius, Gross comments that ‘given his way of thinking and his dominant preoccupation – the defense of the perfect divinity of Christ – one can understand that the human life of Jesus hardly held the attention of Saint Athanasius...’ J. Gross, *The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers*, trans. P.A. Onica (Anaheim, Calif.: A & C Press, 2002), 171, fn.48. The same defence cannot be applied to Torrance, however. In point of fact, in his own context of mid-twentieth century theology a concentrated theological treatment of the life of Christ would have been appropriate, especially in defence of Barth in light of the repeated criticism that he has overstressed the transcendence of God.
of the redemptive significance of specific aspects of Christ’s life might have contributed to Torrance’s appeal for Western theology to reappropriate the doctrine of theōsis.\textsuperscript{216}

Having made that criticism we must take explicit note of the fact that for Torrance mediation and redemption take place, first and foremost, within the being and life of the Mediator Jesus Christ, hence, within the being and life of God; ‘that is to say, the work of atoning salvation does not take place outside of Christ, as something external to him, but takes place within him, within the incarnate constitution of his Person as Mediator.’\textsuperscript{217} This phrase functions as a theological axiom of Torrance’s argument. This is what Torrance means by ‘incarnational redemption’ and ‘ontological atonement.’\textsuperscript{218} Especially important in Torrance’s doctrine of theōsis is the place of the cross and the role of the ascended Christ. We shall consider each of these in turn.

\section*{§10.1.1 God’s Love and the Cross of Christ}
Torrance has continually stressed the redemptive significance of the incarnation because he perceives a neglect of this theme as a particular weakness of Western theology. This accounts for his sustained polemic against any form of dualistic christology which would split the person of Christ from his work.\textsuperscript{219} For this reason Torrance has written less on the cross and its redemptive significance than he has on the atoning aspects of the life of Christ. This is certainly not to imply that Torrance does this at the expense of the cross-work of Christ or indeed of the atonement in general. Torrance is insistent that without the cross we are not saved and

\textsuperscript{216} In recent years a number of theologians have sought to address this imbalance in various ways, for example Spirit christologies, which attempt to work through the christological kairos in order to examine the significance of the incarnation. See: P.J. Rosato, ‘Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise,’ \textit{Theological Studies} 38 (1977), 423-449; R. Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and M. Habets, ‘Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo,’ \textit{Journal of Pentecostal Theology} 11 (2003), 199-235.


\textsuperscript{218} For an overview of further aspects of this Mediation see T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Mediation of Christ}, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992); and in the secondary literature E.M. Colyer, \textit{How To Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding his Trinitarian and Scientific Theology} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 55-126.

\textsuperscript{219} Torrance refers to this as the ‘Latin heresy’ on a number of occasions. See T.F. Torrance, ‘Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,’ \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology}, 39 (1986), 461-482.
the work of Christ would be incomplete. He is as respectful of the mystery of the cross as he is of the person of Christ or the being of God himself. This is evident in the following:

...divine revelation makes it clear that the consummation of the atonement was carried out in the transcendent realm of the triune God altogether beyond the perception and understanding of mankind. By its intrinsic nature the atonement is infinitely greater and profounder than we can ever conceive or express, so that in thinking and speaking of it we cannot but clap our hands upon our mouth and fall down before the Lord God in worship. Like the Holy Trinity the atonement is infinitely more to be adored than expressed, so that appropriate and faithful thought and speech about it cannot but break off in sheer wonder, reverence, thanksgiving and praise.\textsuperscript{220}

According to Torrance atonement cannot be confined simply to what Christ achieved on the cross (his passive obedience), nor can the incarnation (his active obedience) be regarded simply as the prelude to the cross. As Lee’s study shows, ‘Atonement is inseparable from the Incarnation, for what constitutes atonement is not the death of Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ per se.’\textsuperscript{221} As with his doctrine of union with Christ, it is not union that is most important but Christ. So too with the cross: what is of utmost importance is the Christ of the cross, but this does not entail a diminution of the centrality of the cross as the determinative climax of Christ’s saving work.

Torrance speaks of the cross as the ‘most astonishing part of the Christian message,’\textsuperscript{222} because it reveals nothing short of ‘God crucified,’ as Gregory Nazianzen expressed it.\textsuperscript{223} Because atonement has to do with Jesus Christ and he is \textit{homoousios} with God the Father, the cross has to do with God. Indeed, in language borrowed from H.R. Mackintosh, Torrance reminds us that the cross is ‘a window into the heart of God.’\textsuperscript{224} In order to express the magnitude of the cross event there is, running

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{221} K.W. Lee, \textit{Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance} (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 103.
\item \textsuperscript{222} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Preaching Christ Today} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 27.
\item \textsuperscript{224} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Preaching Christ Today} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 27.
\end{itemize}
like a red thread throughout Torrance’s theology, the phrase — ‘God loves us better than he loves himself!’

What does Torrance mean by this phrase and where did it originate? Again, it is a phrase Torrance first heard from his teacher H.R. Mackintosh. In an article on Mackintosh, Torrance recounts that for his former professor the concept of *kenosis* did not provide an explanation of how the incarnation took place, but an account of the almighty act of God in surrendering himself to humiliation and death in order to forgive sins. In short, Mackintosh taught that the cross was a revelation of the inexhaustible power of God’s love. ‘It was in fact another way of expressing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might become rich…God loves us better than he loves himself!’ The phrase functions within Torrance’s theology as an indication of *theōsis*. It is meant to imply the same reality — that the reconciling exchange wrought by Christ on the cross, which amounts to God becoming human so that humanity may become ‘divine’, can only really be explained by the divine love — a love for humanity that is ecstatic to the divine nature and thus ‘God loves us more than he loves himself’.

By this phrase Torrance means that as God gives himself over to death in the person of the incarnate Son, so God chooses his own death in his Son over our death in sin. This is what the cross attests. Citing Rom 8.32: ‘He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?’ Torrance sees at the back of

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225 A typical example of his use of the phrase is T.F. Torrance, ‘The Christ Who Loves Me,’ in *A Passion for Christ: Vision that Ignites Ministry*, ed. G. Dawson and J. Stein (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1999), 9, where four times he repeats the phrase ‘God loves us more than he loves himself’.


Paul’s mind the readiness of Abraham to sacrifice his ‘only son Isaac, whom he loved’ (Gen 22.2, 16), thereby demonstrating that Abraham loved God more than he loved himself.\textsuperscript{228} In giving his Son to die for us in atoning sacrifice God the Father has revealed that he loves us more than he loves himself.\textsuperscript{229} Accordingly it is in the cross of Jesus Christ above all that God has exhibited the very nature of his being as love and has irrevocably committed his being to relationship with us in unconditional love.\textsuperscript{230} On this basis Torrance affirms that in giving to us his beloved Son God does not give us something of his love but his very self and in this self-giving he gives us everything. While the language is somewhat startling it is one of Torrance’s preferred ways to express the profound truth of the\(\text{o}\)sis.

Not only is the depth of God’s love for us exemplified in the Father’s sending the Son to die for us; even more than that: the death of the Son implies that death is no longer foreign to God himself. ‘The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is God’s Son means that in him God the Father himself was actively and personally present in the crucifixion of Christ, intervening redemptively in our lostness and darkness.’\textsuperscript{231} The emphasis is that in Christ God suffers. ‘Indeed in and behind the cross, as Karl Barth once said, it was primarily God the Father who paid the cost of our salvation: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.’\textsuperscript{232} Torrance advances the logic of the hypostatic union further to conclude that since it was God and Man in one indivisible Person who was crucified, God


himself was crucified for us in Christ."\(^{233}\) It is this aspect of the cross which powerfully testifies to its sufficiency and completeness to which nothing can be added.\(^{234}\)

What are we to make of this phrase? It would seem to imply that the greatest object, or better, subject, in existence is humanity and not God, since humanity is the object of God's greatest love. But this is not consonant with the entire tenor of Torrance's theology and so it would appear unlikely this is what he has in mind. The phrase does not indicate that men and women are the supreme beings of worth in existence, even above God, but that God would go to such great lengths, even to death on a cross, in order to save men and women from eternal separation from himself because Jesus Christ the God-man is the supreme being. In going to the cross God shows his magnificent love, grace, and mercy in such a profound way that men and women are left with no doubt but that God is for them in Christ Jesus. Because God is the Supreme Being this phrase 'God loves us more than he loves himself' takes on such alarming force.

By adopting such radical language Torrance's theology is open to question. While he wants to restrict the use of this phrase to the economic level it is difficult also not to include at least some ontological significance in it. Despite his protestations to the contrary, and his work on the extra Calvinisticum and the (im)possibility of God,\(^{235}\) this phrase becomes a relatively clumsy rhetorical device as it risks identifying God's


\(^{235}\) The so-called extra Calvinisticum and the (im)passibility of God debates are germane at this point as Torrance makes clear, in the context of both discussions, that God remains impassible due to the alleged truth safeguarded by the extra Calvinisticum. From that vantage point it is clear that the phrase examined here is functioning at the economic level only. Torrance wrote Space, Time and Incarnation (1969. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), as a result of 'examining the problem of the so-called 'Calvinist extra' which has long been the subject of controversy between Lutheran and Reformed theologians;' (v). Cf. 40-51; God and Rationality (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 126; Space, Time and Resurrection (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 123-130; The Ground and Grammar of Theology (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1980), 24; Christian Theology and Scientific Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 18; The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 184-186. For the wider issues see E.D. Willis, Calvin's Catholic Christology: The
love for us (sinners) as greater than the Father’s love for the Son. Serious concerns are also raised over the propriety of Torrance’s use and endorsement of ‘death of God’ motifs in a *theologia crucis*. By adopting such language in the contemporary climate of soteriological discussion, Torrance unwittingly aligns himself with a theology of a suffering God along with aspects many would argue this must entail such as: a rejection of Chalcedonian christology, a reinterpretation of the Trinity, and the affirmation of a ‘terminal rupture’ within God on the cross. If Torrance’s intent was, as we have argued, merely to expose by provocative language the love of God exhibited at the cross, then he could have done so in less ambiguous terms which would not have the potential to implicitly undermine his own theology.

Despite the criticism which could be levelled at Torrance’s use of such language it is clear that he considers the cross-work of Christ as central to any evangelical soteriology. What is equally clear is that the cross does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, the power of the cross is evident when it is viewed in context – as the action of the vicarious humanity of Christ who lived, died, and rose again. As such the nature of Christ’s ascended humanity is equally important for Torrance’s theology of the incarnation as it is for his use of *theōsis*.

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236 See for instance P.S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 1-15, who surveys four main generating centres of thought in relation to the suffering of God: 1) Moltmann and the advocates of Kreuzestheologie; 2) process philosophy; 3) the death of God theologies, and 4) classical theism. Fiddes' work itself seeks a theology of a suffering God in weaving all four strands into a pattern, or, in his words, 'to use another image, it must stand where four ways cross,' (15).


238 Torrance has been used by a number of theologians to justify their own theology. Most notable in this regard is the adoption by Clark Pinnock of Torrance’s phrase ‘the openness of God’ from T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 74, to represent Pinnock’s neo-Wesleyan theology of God. This was explained to me by Clark Pinnock in private discussion during his 2003 visit to the Bible College of New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand.
§10.1.2 Ascended Humanity

While the ascension is an often-overlooked doctrine in contemporary theology Torrance returns to its central significance in constructing a doctrine of *theōsis*. Burgess helpfully points out that: 'A theology of the ascension belongs with and informs a theology of Jesus Christ's "heavenly session"...so that together these two form more or less one *locus* of theology.' This is true in relation to Torrance's ascension theology which covers far more than the bare act of ascension recorded in Lk 24.50-53 and Acts 1.9-11. Given Torrance's commitment to explicating the incarnation it is not surprising that the ascension is considered as integral to the atoning redemption of Christ; it too has saving significance. Drawing upon John Knox, Torrance asserts: 'Ascension is not just an addendum to the story of Jesus, a bringing down of the curtain on his earthly life, but it is one of the great essential salvation events.' The ascension is considered to be the requisite *anabasis* (ascent) of the Son of God corresponding to his *katabasis* (descent) in the incarnation. Burgess correctly states that Torrance has

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240 A. Burgess, *The Ascension in Karl Barth* (London: Ashgate, 2004), 2. Burgess also notes that 'Thomas Torrance has provided one of the few significant twentieth century treatments of Jesus' ascension,' 109.


adopted Irenaeus’ scheme of descent and ascent which involves a particular way of thinking about Jesus’ history as the history of salvation. The emphasis falls on the step-by-step recovery of the creation and creature through the obedience of Jesus, so that recapitulation is understood to mean that ‘humanity is somewhat gradually redeemed and perfected through [Christ’s] life-acts.’ Once again, our intent is not to present Torrance’s doctrine of Christ’s ascension as such but to investigate the relationship between Christ’s ascension and Torrance’s conception of theōsis, which is unmistakably present throughout.

In his ascension to the right hand of the Father the risen Jesus Christ is still a human; in fact he is the ultimate or true human. In returning to heaven Christ must be thought of as ascending above space and time without ceasing to be human or without any diminution of his physical human existence. ‘For Torrance the absence of Jesus via His ascension is therefore specifically the absence of His risen humanity,’ writes Burgess, which in turn thrusts the church back to the previous earthly history as the place in which we are still to meet Christ. As Burgess explains, ‘It is in the God-man Jesus of Nazareth that God and humanity are hypostatically united, and Jesus’ ascension simply throws us back upon that truth – for the one who is ascended and ‘absent’ is none other than this same Jesus.’

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245 According to Irenaeus the descent of the Son into human flesh and the ascent of the Son in human flesh joins the creation he has assumed to the eternity of God. Human being is now understood only in Jesus’ humanity before the Father. See G.S. Dawson, Jesus Ascended: the Meaning of Christ’s Continuing Incarnation (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing/London: T & T Clark/Handsel Press, 2004), 164-165, who situates Torrance’s concept of ascended humanity within the broader tradition from Irenaeus through to Andrew Murray.


250 A. Burgess, The Ascension in Karl Barth (London: Ashgate, 2004), 111. Burgess suggests that Torrance’s ascension theology is troubling at this point because it can tend to imply a bifurcation between Jesus’ earthly-historical life and being, and the being he now has in heaven (112). In our
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. Because of the theandric nature of Christ, the ascension represents the exaltation of humanity into the life of God and on to the throne of God. In the ascension the Son of Man, New Man in Christ, is given to partake of the divine nature.

The union of God and man in Christ was assumed into the immediate presence of God the Father on his throne - there Christ wears our human life, and it is in our name that he is there at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, standing in for us.

It is precisely here that Torrance considers we reach the goal of the incarnation - for we are beside Jesus, gathered up in him and included in his own self-presentation before the Father. Without using a technical vocabulary, Torrance states that the goal of the incarnation was theosis and this is achieved, first, by the ascension of Jesus Christ.

The importance of this for Torrance's doctrine of theosis is that Jesus Christ as man (human) now resides in intimate communion with the Trinity in heaven. As a man, Jesus Christ has perfect fellowship with God, and because of the eternity of the hypostatic union, the one person of the Son is the 'place' (topos) and 'space' (chora) of humanity in and with God. Because the ascended Lord fills this place and space:

- the ascension is the exaltation of new man, with his fully and truly human nature, and therefore of man with his 'place' as man, with the 'room' which he is given for his human life, to participate in the divine 'place'.

...It is ascension in which our humanity in Christ is taken up

reading of Torrance there is no bifurcation and Torrance utilises the emphasis upon the ascended humanity of Christ to present a thoroughly Reformed doctrine of Christ's ascended work as High Priest.


Accordingly, 'The ascension means that our relation to the Saviour is only possible through the historical Jesus, for the historical Jesus is the one locus within our human and creaturely existence where God and man are hypostatically united, and where man engulfed in sin and immersed in corruption can get across to God on the ground of reconciliation and atonement freely provided by God,' T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 132.
into the full Communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in life and love. This is why Dawson, in continuity with Torrance, can speak of deification as humanization. For Torrance and other recent thinkers, the ascension achieves theosis. In the ascended Lord, believers are enabled to participate in the Divine nature and achieve immortality, so becoming like God without ceasing to be human, and they do so precisely 'in Christ'.

In presenting the implications of the ascension of Jesus Christ in this way, Torrance is once again affirming that in theosis we never leave behind our creaturely status even in becoming 'gods.' This is made patently clear when he writes:

The staggering thing about this is that the exaltation of human nature into the life of God does not mean the disappearance of man or the swallowing up of human and creaturely being in the infinite ocean of the divine Being, but rather that human nature, remaining creaturely and human, is yet exalted in Christ to share in God's life and glory.

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256 G.S. Dawson, *Jesus Ascended: the Meaning of Christ's Continuing Incarnation* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing/London: T & T Clark/Handsel Press, 2004), 166-169. 'The deification is actually a radical humanization. It is based on the life of Jesus lived as a man in the power of the Holy Spirit...We do not become the divine Son – he is unique. Rather, we, too, are fitted by the Spirit for communion with the Father and empowered for service as the Spirit unites us continually to Jesus the new Adam. In Christ, we become men and women of the Spirit; our exaltation is the recreation of humanity lived in joyful dependence on God, out of his very life, as we were meant to be, (167).

257 A. Burgess, *The Ascension in Karl Barth* (London: Ashgate, 2004), 126, fn.55, states, 'We might call this a moderate doctrine of deification, such as also found in [Robert] Jenson.' While Burgess is right to see deification here, although it is rather more comprehensive than 'moderate,' it is a grave mistake to equate it with the views of Jenson. Burgess also has serious difficulties with Torrance's 'sequential' interpretation of descent and ascent as it would appear that Jesus' humanity is only fully united to the life of God in the ascension. This would seem to call into question the reality of union with God in the incarnation. While Torrance never defended his view of the ascension on this issue, one may suppose that the tenor of his christology would argue that it was not until the ascension that the vicarious humanity of Christ was fully acceptable to the Father and so only in his ascension was he able to send the Spirit as promised. In his representative and substitutionary role Jesus fully united new humanity with God in the ascension, coming after his perfect obedient life, death, and resurrection, as one would expect. While the criticisms of Burgess deserve more thorough treatment, they fall outside the scope of the present work.

258 It is this fact which unites the ascension to Torrance's doctrine of the Eucharist. As Letham affirms, 'The bodily ascension of Jesus is the basis for our communion with him – according to both natures – through the Holy Spirit, who unites things separated by distance. The Eucharist is for the church until Christ's parousia. It is coterminal with his ascended ministry. It points to our destiny, union with God in Christ: the ascended Christ has sent the Spirit to unite us to him and thus to the Father. It is the ascension that makes room for this to occur. As Jesus said, "It is to your advantage that I go away" (John 16:7),' R. Letham, 'The Ascension of Christ in Biblical and Theological Context,' (Wilmington, DE: Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, Wednesday, September 22, 2004), at http://www.calvin.edu/faith/discipleship/fac_events/lecture_ref_th/letham.htm (accessed 11.05).

He is also affirming that we never leave behind Jesus Christ in his role as our Mediator and High Priest. Knowledge of God and communion with God in eternity adhere to the same basis as knowledge of God and union with him now, exclusively through Jesus Christ:

Therefore we are sent back to Jesus, for there and there only may we hear God speaking in person, and there and there only at the foot of the Cross, where God, and man meet over the judgment and expiation of sin and guilt may we meet with God face to face and live, may we be judged and cleansed and have living communion with him in love through the propitiation of Jesus Christ.260

How is this communion and theōsis made possible? Torrance answers, only through the Spirit. It is through the Spirit that Christ is made known to us and that intimate communion is maintained between Father and Son and between divinity and humanity. Through the Spirit Christ is nearer to us than we are to ourselves, and we who live and dwell in earth are yet made to sit with Christ “in heavenly places”, partaking of the divine nature in him.261 While the dynamics of the Holy Spirit are yet to be explored, what Torrance highlights through his discussion on the ascension is that as vicarious man, the Man for others, Jesus has deified humanity through the deification of his humanity. As believers participate in his ascended humanity, they participate in the divine nature of the Trinity. The ascension thus forms a final feature of Torrance’s doctrine of vicarious humanity.

§11 Conclusion

Chapter Two has outlined Torrance’s commitment to an incarnational redemption; Jesus Christ as Mediator has achieved salvation for humanity in his own person. By presenting a christology in which Christ is fully human and fully divine, Torrance asserts that in Christ human nature has been redeemed, reconciled, ascended, and ‘divinized’. As last Adam,


261 T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 135. While Torrance places some stress on the work of the Spirit he is highly critical of Barth’s doctrine of ascension for emphasizing ‘the presence and work of the Spirit in such a way that the risen humanity of Christ becomes somewhat lost,’ A. Burgess, *The Ascension in Karl Barth* (London: Ashgate, 2004), 109. Jesus’ ascended role as High Priest involves three features: Jesus’ endless self-oblation, his eternal intercession and advocacy and his eternal benediction. The third feature, benediction, is the gift of the Spirit, a gift directly attributable to the ascension (see 115-118).
Christ has made possible the full realisation of salvation, understood as something which transcends a legal and external transaction in favour of a relational and internal reality. The life and death of Christ, his so-called active and passive obedience, along with the retrospective and prospective aspects of atonement, all contribute to a Christian doctrine of *theōsis*. Torrance thus understands the incarnation as inherently redemptive, yet not in a merely physical or mechanical sense.

Torrance’s doctrine of the incarnation raises critical questions at several points, a number of which include the accuracy of his reading of patristic sources, especially Athanasius; his adoption of a theology of ‘vicarious humanity’; the coherence of his claim that the Word assumes a *fallen* human nature; along with the reality of a universal pardon that does not result in universal salvation.

What remains is to see more clearly how *theōsis* is communicated to the believer through the ‘wondrous exchange’ in Torrance’s theology. How does a past event (incarnation) effect present salvation? This will occupy our attention in the next chapter, as we examine how Torrance moves from an appropriation of Athanasius’ christology to a more explicit dependence on Calvin’s soteriology of exchange, in which union with Christ and the blessings this bestows are communicated to the believer. Torrance contends in this discussion that justification is understood as both declaration and deification. Torrance’s doctrine of *theōsis* is developed more fully in his treatment of *reconciliation*. 
Chapter Three

Partaking of the Divine Nature

'Just as the word of God became flesh, so it is certainly also necessary that the flesh may become word. In other words: God becomes man so that man may become God. Thus power becomes powerless so that weakness may become powerful. The Logos puts on our form and gestalt, our image and likeness. Thus it may clothe us with its image, its gestalt, and its likeness. Thus wisdom becomes foolish so that foolishness may become wisdom, and so it is in all other things that are in God and in us, to the extent that in all these things he takes what is ours to himself in order to impart what is his to us.'

- Martin Luther

'We should notice that it is the purpose of the Gospel to make us sooner or later like God; indeed it is, so to speak, a kind of deification.'

- John Calvin

'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 Holy God, where he lives and moves and has his being in the uncreated but creative energy of the Holy Spirit.'

- Thomas F. Torrance

§12 Reconciliation and Redemption

In this chapter we examine in more detail the soteriological aspects of *theōsis* as Torrance moves from a consideration of Christ's deification of human nature in the Incarnation to believers' partaking of the divine nature. Torrance's doctrine of reconciliation, the term he uses most for soteriology, is heavily influenced by Calvin and Barth and thus critically draws upon the Reformed tradition while also contributing what he believes to be some significant corrections and advancements to it. While not materially separate, incarnation and reconciliation are formally distinct as theological *locri*, and for the purposes of systematic study it has been necessary to deal with each under a separate chapter.

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1 M. Luther, *Martin Luther's Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1883ff), 1, 28, 25-32.
The consensus of Torrance scholarship to date is that his doctrine of reconciliation can be expressed in terms of a theology of union with Christ. For instance, Kruger characterises Torrance’s work as ‘a theology of communion’; while Lee sees it as a theology of ‘union and communion’. The present study highlights the central role the concept of union with Christ plays in Torrance’s theology, but proposes a further question: to what extent is Torrance’s theology of union underpinned by his concept of \textit{theōsis}? Torrance believes that \textit{theōsis} and \textit{theōsis} constitute,

the sustaining inner cohesion of our cognitive union with Christ through faith and the very substance of our personal and corporate union with Christ through the Word and Sacraments, for in Christ our human relations with God, far from being allowed to remain on a merely external basis, are embraced within the Trinitarian relations of God’s own Being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Union with Christ is thus informed by the more determinative doctrine of \textit{theōsis} within Torrance’s theology. Against the background of \textit{theōsis} one can discern how 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). What controls each dimension of union with Christ is \textit{theōsis}; it is this controlling metaphor that gives coherence to the disparate themes of Torrance’s soteriology.

Drawing on fundamental insights of Reformed theology union with Christ is, according to Torrance, the first stage in the order of salvation and from it flow all the blessings of Christ. These blessings do not come as a consequence of justification, instead, what is Christ’s becomes ours and what was ours is taken by Christ. This is the ‘atoning exchange’ wrought

\begin{itemize}
  \item[7] This is overlooked by many studies of his theology. A criticism of Lee’s otherwise fine study, \textit{Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance} (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), is that he remains content to examine Torrance’s theology at the level of union and communion without penetrating behind these key themes in order to explicate the rational order that exists and is controlled by his doctrine of \textit{theōsis}. This is most evident in Lee’s confusion over Torrance’s use of the concept.
\end{itemize}
by Christ and the Spirit. Union with Christ is, more specifically, union with the humanity of the incarnate Christ which, by grace, provides believers with the gift of adoption. Through adoption the believer in Christ is now a ‘son of God,’ and so participates in communion with the Trinity as a fully human but reconciled and adopted ‘son’ or ‘child’ in the Son. In Torrance’s articulation of theosis he presents a theology of both reconciliation and redemption, adopts the language of personal and cognitive union with Christ, and outlines the progress the believer can make in partaking of the divine nature. Each of these features is compatible, Torrance believes, with the Reformed tradition and thus requires examination.

By ‘redemption’ Torrance means the emancipation of humanity from bondage, corruption, and nothingness which as such is often synonymous with ‘atonement’. Given the centrality and singularity of Jesus Christ for Torrance, he is obliged to view the entire history of redemption from a christocentric perspective, when he looks at the Old Testament terms and images that speak of redemption and atonement, namely, kpr, ga’l, and pdh. These express ‘something of the ineffable truth of atonement in its various but profoundly interrelated aspects.’ These three aspects of redemption which Torrance categorises as the dramatic/dynamic, the cultic/priestly, and the ontological aspects of atonement, must all be present in any biblically based doctrine of redemption. If any one of these aspects is missing or a single aspect made the sole basis of an atonement theory, then a serious distortion creeps into our soteriology.

The first aspect is the dramatic/dynamic aspect of atonement (πς, pdh). This is the mighty act of God’s saving deliverance out of the power and oppression of evil and the judgement of God upon it. The second is the

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8 By ‘son of God’ Torrance is appealing to the biblical language and not implying any sexist or gender exclusive theology.


culti/pries.ly aspect of atonement (אכ, kpr). This has to do with redemption through atoning sacrifice for the expiation of sin and guilt whereby God incarnate in Christ draws near to us and draws us near to himself, cleansing us through his blood, sanctifying and healing us by the power of his Spirit, ransoming us from servitude to the world, delivering us from slavery into liberty, from darkness to light, thereby constituting us as a new priesthood and a special people belonging to himself for ever. The third aspect is the ontological implications of atonement (αιών, ga'). This has to do with redemption out of destitution or forfeited rights, perdition, and death, for it depends on the divine-human nature of the Redeemer who stands in for us in our need and makes our desperate condition his own on the ground of his incarnate oneness with us. It is this third feature which is the most important of the three as apart from it the other two tend to fall apart in our understanding.

The above outline of redemption caries with it several implications; one of which is epistemological union with the incarnate Christ. According to Torrance, ontology and epistemology are essentially related: personal union also effects epistemological union. Both themes are subsumed under the concept of theōsis. While Torrance’s commitment to developing the epistemological foundations of Christian thinking has already been noted, it is worth exploring in a little more detail here the crucial role epistemology plays in his thinking on theōsis when, for example, Torrance holds together revelation and reconciliation.

One of the outstanding achievements of Barth’s work was that he held together revelation and reconciliation, and in so doing laid the platform upon which Torrance builds. For Barth revelation and reconciliation, while distinct, were never separate because both find their identity in Jesus Christ, who is himself both of them in one. According to Barth,

11 See the Introduction, 11-20, and Chapter Two, 102-139. Especially important to this discussion is T.F. Torrance, The Mediation of Christ, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).
12 ‘The outstanding characteristic of Professor T.F. Torrance’s doctrine of the knowledge of God,’ writes Baxter Kruger, ‘is that it does not separate revelation and reconciliation. As a result, soteriology and epistemology, salvation and knowledge of God are inseparable in Torrance’s theology,’ C.B. 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,’ Scottish Journal of Theology 43 (1990), 366.
'Revelation takes place in and with reconciliation; Indeed, the latter is also revelation. As God acts in it he also speaks...Yet the relationship is indissoluble from the other side as well. Revelation takes place as the revelation of reconciliation'.

Outside of Christ there is no real knowledge of God. Torrance, following Barth, rejects a natural theology as traditionally conceived, for there is no 'natural' knowledge of God. God cannot be known 'behind his back' as Torrance phrases it, nor can we know God without his willing himself to be known. It is only in and through the eternal Word that God is known. This raises the question of the possibility of a genuine knowledge of God before the incarnation. Torrance deals with this at length when he speaks of the mediation of Christ within Israel.

This is a crucial aspect of Torrance's doctrine of the knowledge of God and it affects all of his theology. 'As the full and final self-revelation of God, however, Jesus Christ confronts us as One who is identical with the divine Self whom he reveals.' In this one person we have revelation and reconciliation. Based on such verses as Jn 14.6, 'I am the Way the Truth

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13 Barth, CD IV/3, 8, cited in G. Hunsinger, 'Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character,' in The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth, ed. J. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 137. Hunsinger goes on to note the inseparability 'Barth establishes between 'knowledge' (Erkenntis) and 'communion' (Gemeinschaft) throughout his theology, not only centrally in CD II/1 but as early as CD I/1,' 142. Hunsinger takes to task two interpreters of Barth, Alister McGrath and Alan Torrance, who fail to see this, 141-142, fn.15.

14 See Chapter Two, 117-123.


and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by me,' and Jn 14.9, 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,' Torrance concludes that:

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.\(^{19}\)

Here again we see a consistent principle within Torrance’s theology - the identity of Jesus Christ as both the Revealer and the Revelation of God. God is one in being and act.\(^{20}\)

The significance of this christocentric epistemology is that in order to know God we must know Jesus Christ. ‘In the Hebrew idiom revelation implies not only the uncovering of God but the uncovering of the ear and heart of man to receive revelation.’\(^{21}\) Revelation is neither static nor passive; standing firmly within the Barthian tradition Torrance sees revelation as event. When we wish to come to know a personal being we must, by necessity, participate in the life of that personal being for true knowledge to be realised. This holds true for human relationships as well as divine. ‘That is why,’ Torrance contends, ‘we cannot know God without love, and if we are estranged without being reconciled to him.’\(^{22}\) Torrance draws the following conclusion: ‘Knowing God requires cognitive union with him in which our whole being is affected by his love and holiness. It is the pure in heart who see God.’\(^{23}\)

This seeing or knowing is a personal participation in the triune relationship of the Father’s love for the Son by the Holy Spirit and the Son’s love for the Father by the Holy Spirit.\(^{24}\) For Torrance, knowledge is relational, not merely cognitive; it is a personal knowing that comes only

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\(^{24}\) The pneumatological aspects of Torrance’s epistemology are an essential element. We will consider this in more depth in the next chapter.
by personal participation.25 In an accurate summary of Torrance's position Kruger writes, "our knowledge of God arises through the sharing in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father in the Spirit. This can be stated in other words either as "sharing in the Son's knowledge of the Father in the Spirit" or as partaking of "God's own Self-knowledge."26 This vocabulary takes us into the domain of theosis with its emphasis on knowing, participation, and communion through Christ in the Spirit within a trinitarian framework.27

Knowing God or more technically, 'cognitive union' with God amounts to another cognate for theosis within Torrance's theology. As Torrance makes clear, theosis 'does not mean "divinisation", as is so often supposed, but refers to the utterly staggering act of God in which he gives himself to us and adopts us into the communion of his divine life and love through Jesus Christ and in his one Spirit...28 The relevance of this for our present discussion is made clear by the words immediately following the above quotation: 'That is what constitutes the sustaining inner cohesion of our cognitive union with Christ...29 For Torrance knowing God, the cognitive dimension of the faith, is a significant aspect of theosis.

From this epistemological basis Torrance articulates his doctrines of revelation, reconciliation, and redemption. Cognitive union is the first stage in a process of union with Christ in which the believer partakes of the divine nature. For this to happen there has to be a complete

27 Kruger structures his exploration of Torrance's knowledge of God around his emphasis upon communion, considering three aspects: one, the self-knowing or communion of the triune God; two, the actualisation of that communion in our humanity in Jesus Christ; and three, our sharing in that fulfilled communion through the Spirit. C.B. 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, Scottish Journal of Theology 43 (1990), 373. The work of J. H-K. Yeung, Being and Knowing: An Examination of T.F. Torrance's Christological Science (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996), largely follows this same order.
identification of Christ with humanity and in turn humanity with Christ, something Torrance calls the ‘wonderful exchange’, the central feature of his theology of union with Christ.

§13 Union With Christ
Torrance considers union with Christ as fundamental to Calvin’s theology and in his own work it also occupies a central place. Throughout Calvin’s theology three distinct but interrelated ‘unions’ are presented. The first is the incarnational union, the second, the unio mystica, and the third, a spiritual union. While Torrance adopts each sense of unio cum Christo into his own theology he does not follow Calvin’s exact vocabulary. In the present study we are following Torrance’s more general vocabulary of union with Christ rather than Calvin’s precise delineation of the term.

As we highlighted in the previous chapter, the incarnation is for Torrance the way in which union with Christ is achieved. Union with Christ is the soteriological correlate to the christological notion of the hypostatic


union." This makes the hypostatic union commensurate with *unio mystica*; distinct but inseparable. Only by means of the incarnation does God join men and women to his Son in order for them to enjoy the benefits of salvation in Christ. The sole access to the Father is through Christ the Son, made possible by faith, which is the operation of the Spirit. Calvin specifically cuts out any 'extrinsecist' notions of justification or reconciliation by positing justification as a benefit of union with Christ. Through participation in Christ we receive all the benefits of salvation, including Christ's righteousness, a righteousness which equates to the filial life. Calvin insists on the forensic nature of justification but equally insists that we are justified as a result of our union with Christ. This is affirmed when he writes, 'You see that our righteousness is not in us but in Christ, that we possess it only because we are partakers in Christ; indeed, with him we possess all its riches.'


34 J. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.1.1: How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son — not for Christ's own private use, but that he might enrich poor and needy men? First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.

There is a sustained polemic at the back of Calvin's thought here in which he seeks to distinguish his own theology from that of Osiander who argued that the divine *Logos*, stripped of his humanity, is the indwelling and transforming Christ within. Cf. *Institutes*, 3.11.5-10.


37 The forensic nature of justification is explicit in all editions of the *Institutes*, see A.E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 223, 462, fn.31, 32, 33. McGrath sees Calvin following Melanchthon in this respect but also preserving an important aspect of Luther's standing on justification as the personal union of Christ and the believer. As a result of his stress on union with Christ, Calvin was able to affirm both imputation and impartation of righteousness, understood christologically. For an account of both the forensic nature of justification in Calvin but also of the pneumatological elements involved in his doctrine of union with Christ see G.D. Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997), 99-105. Badcock also mentions the role 'mystical union' plays within Calvin's soteriology.

The *unio mystica* is a personal union as men and women participate in a real way in Christ (Calvin’s second sense of ‘union’). Christ is thus the *mediating* bond of union (Calvin’s first sense of ‘union’). This union is not without the Spirit, however, the Spirit functions as the *unitive* bond of union with Christ (Calvin’s third sense of ‘union’).\(^ {39}\) Calvin also appropriates the Augustinian notion of the Spirit as the ‘bond of love’ (*vinculum caritatis*) between Father and Son and applies it to the bond of union between Christ and the believer.\(^ {40}\) This enables Calvin to state that ‘the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.’\(^ {41}\) Tan summarises Calvin’s position well:

> Through the unitive operation of the Holy Spirit, Christ and the elect are brought into reciprocal relationship. The one is the humanward trajectory – Christ’s participation in us – where ‘he had to become ours and to dwell within us’; the other is the Christward movement – our participation in Christ – where we ‘are said to be ‘engrafted into him [Rom 11.17], and ‘to put on Christ’ [*Institutes 3.1.1.*].\(^ {42}\)

Finally, within Calvin’s doctrine of *unio cum Christo* is the organic union it creates not only between Christ and the believer but between believers in the body of Christ. Again Tan is helpful:

> [T]he inseparable corollary of communion with Christ is ‘the communion of saints.’ Although salvation has an intensely personal dimension, viz. an individual person’s relation to God, nonetheless, it is not a private affair, since its context is ecclesiologically framed [*Institutes 4.1.3*]. Hence, a proper understanding of the reality of *unio mystica*, which recognizes the Spirit’s function as its *vinculum*, demands that righteousness and holiness be interpreted communally.”\(^ {43}\)

For this reason Torrance consistently follows Calvin’s lead, stating; ‘This evangelical conception of union with Christ governed Calvin’s teaching about justification and sanctification, Holy Communion, and the Church


as the body of Christ. It also governs Torrance’s own doctrine of union with Christ.

The fundamental basis of \textit{unio mystica} for Calvin is to ‘put on Christ’ and to be ‘engrafted into him’.\textsuperscript{45} With this in mind Tamburello’s study includes a detailed appendix of references to union with Christ in selected Calvin texts and includes as cognates the following: engrafting, communion, fellowship, in the Spirit, mysterious/incomprehensible, one flesh/marriage, spiritual union, mystical union, growing together/becoming one, union with God, adoption, regeneration, and partakers of Christ.\textsuperscript{46} This is important for our study because it shows that within Calvin’s theology, a theology which exerted an immense influence over Torrance and Reformed theology generally, the ideas behind the classical formulations of \textit{theōsis} are already present and are crucial to an understanding of Reformed soteriology. Torrance adopts many of these same cognates into his own soteriology in order to present his doctrine of salvation with a concept of \textit{theōsis} at its heart.\textsuperscript{47} To misunderstand Torrance’s reading of Calvin’s theology of the \textit{unio mystica} would be to misunderstand Torrance’s doctrine of reconciliation and the place of \textit{theōsis} in his wider dogmatics.

The most concise definition Calvin gives to the \textit{unio mystica} is found in \textit{Institutes} 3.11.10:

\begin{quote}
Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{47} Barth does the same although he is careful not to use the term \textit{theōsis} and he is as reticent as Torrance to use the actual term \textit{unio mystica}. See K. Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics}, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), IV/2, 538-449. Torrance maintains Barth’s reticence over the term mysticism, aware that it is open to confusion but, in a manner significant for the present study, Torrance’s affinity with Eastern theology (patristic and modern) does not inhibit him from consciously adopting the language of \textit{theōsis} in a way that Barth never could. See B.L. McCormack, ‘Participation in God, Yes, Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question,’ in Denkwürdiges Geheimnis: Beiträge zur Gotteslehre. Festschrift für Eberhard Jüngel zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. I.U. Dalféér, J. Fischer, and H-P. Großhans (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2004), 347-374.
accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him. For this reason, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him.48

Once again, the themes of ‘putting on Christ’ and ‘engrafting’ are developed. The ‘putting on Christ’ metaphor, according to Tan’s reading, operates within Calvin’s theology to represent the imputed righteousness received by the believer in justification. The ‘engrafting’ metaphor stands for the imparted holiness of Christ received by the believer in sanctification. While distinct concepts, they are not separate and they are both the benefits received in faith through the unio mystica.

Thus, the distinction between the once-for-all ‘alien’ righteousness of Christ freely imputed on [sic] a sinner (justification) and the progressive holiness imparted through the indwelling Spirit in the regenerated person (sanctification) is obtained without separation, since they are simultaneous realities within unio mystica.49

One can clearly see how Torrance’s theology is informed by Calvin’s. An external transaction between Christ and the Father applied to the believer as imputed righteousness is not wrong per se but it is insufficient if it is made to represent the entire doctrine of salvation. When this happens, Torrance argues many times, exclusively juridical categories of atonement are accepted and salvation becomes something less than evangelical (the so-called ‘Latin Heresy’). This is not a rejection of the Reformation doctrine of imputation but a relocation of the doctrine into the context of participation. Imputation can only rightly be understood when viewed, ‘not just in terms of imputed righteousness but in terms of a participation in the righteousness of Christ which is transferred to us

through union with him. When we see salvation as *unio mystica*, or as a personal participation in Christ, we discern that all the benefits he won for us are actually imputed and imparted to us simply because we are in Christ. What Torrance’s doctrine of *unio mystica* achieves is a dynamic understanding of salvation whereby Christ becomes ours and we become Christ’s through an organic, vital, spiritual, eternal, and mystical union in which justification and sanctification are no longer separated, they are simultaneous realities.

The final goal of salvation is not only to be united to Christ by the Spirit but to commune with the Father through the incarnate Son in or by the Holy Spirit. Union with Christ is thus understood to be participation in the divine life. In his commentary on 2 Pet 1.4, the key patristic text on *theōsis*, Calvin rejects outright any Platonic idea of imitation, Manichean emanationism, or Neoplatonic mysticism by which human being and divine being are blurred or mixed. In its place he argues that the biblical text asserts that the goal of justification and sanctification is that we may become ‘partakers of divine immortality and the glory of blessedness, and thus we shall be in a way one with God so far as our capacity allows.’ In unequivocal terms Calvin affirms the doctrine of *theōsis* when he concludes, 'We should notice that it is the purpose of the Gospel to make us sooner or later like God: indeed it is, so to speak, a kind of deification.' Does Calvin mean to imply that there is some ontological union with Christ achieved in *theōsis*? Clearly he does. In

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52 For these categories and definitions see A.H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907), 800-802. Strong also provides a concise overview of what *unio mystica* is not. It is not: a natural union (rationalists); a moral union (Socinians and Arminians); an essential union (mystics, pantheists); or a sacramental union (Romanists, Lutherans), 799-800. Due to the culturally conditioned nature of these categories they are not used in the present study.

53 The pneumatological aspects partaking of the divine nature are explored in detail in Chapter Four, 243-333.

54 See the earlier discussion in the Introduction, 30-32.


arguing against the views of Servetus\(^7\) and Osiander,\(^8\) Calvin contends that in our union with Christ the divine essence is not mixed with our own but an energetic or spiritual union is achieved through ‘the secret power of his Spirit.’\(^59\) To be a partaker of the divine nature means a participation not of ‘essence but of quality’, and so it is not, strictly speaking, a *substantial* union. It is, nevertheless, an ontic participation in the divine nature, for it involves a sharing in the properties of the essence or what Calvin preferred to term ‘nature’:\(^60\) Calvin is not implying that our participation in the divine nature is like the hypostatic union (incarnational union). There is only one hypostatic union and that is found within the God-man Jesus Christ. We participate in divinity through his humanity and so our *unio mystica* is formulated within an


\(^59\) See J. Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Sermon 42 on Eph 5.31-33 (1562. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 614: ‘I have told you briefly already how we are bone of our Lord Jesus Christ’s bone, and how he is our flesh. It is not that we are taken out of his body, for we come of the lineage of Adam, but because we live of his own substance, according to this saying that his flesh is our meat and his blood our drink, by which he means that we live in him — spiritually, however.’

asymmetrical relationship to Christ's *unio* with the Father. Like classical formations of *theōsis*, this upholds Christ as God and Son by nature and believers as 'gods' and 'sons' by grace.

In volume two of *Conflict and Agreement in the Church* Torrance states that Calvin's language of 'mystical union' preserves the christological mystery involved in participation in Christ achieved in the dynamic character of union and communion. While this discussion is in the context of the sacraments a few lines later we read: 'The matter or substance is not any mystical event but Jesus Christ Himself, the *totus Christus*.' As Lee correctly notes:

> Just as what is important in the notion of the Church as the body of Christ is not the body but Christ the Head of the body, so what is crucial in the notion of union with Christ is not union itself but Christ, the substance and reality of that union. Torrance never uses the term 'mystical union,' which inevitably plunges us into a sort of esoteric mysticism by obscuring the reality of Christ with emphasis upon 'union' itself. For Torrance the mystery does not lie in the process of union itself, but rather in the mystery of Christ in which we participate.

In Calvin's presentation of the believer's participation in the divine nature through union with Christ, understood within a strictly trinitarian context, the concept of *theōsis* is clearly in view. More recent Reformed scholarship has identified Calvin's commitment to *theōsis* and thus the possibility for a thoroughly Reformed construal of the doctrine. It is this Calvinian construction of union with Christ that Torrance adopts almost

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Reformed understandings of the believer's union with Christ involve an understanding of Christian existence as participation in the divine life. Such recognition could provide at least a starting point for significant dialogue with Eastern Orthodox understandings of salvation in terms of *theosis*, or 'deification.' The importance of these concepts to the two traditions surely provides the basis for conversation and exploration.
point-for-point and builds upon in his own theology, allowing him to speak of the believer’s real participation in the divine nature, and not just of fellowship with God.\textsuperscript{65}

Torrance adopts Calvin’s approach via a Scottish inheritance. Torrance believes Calvin’s doctrine of union with Christ, which is both ‘real and substantial’, was given ‘an essential place in the Reformation theology of the Church of Scotland beautifully expressed in the Scots Confession, and several sixteenth-century catechisms’, however, it was given ‘scanty place in subsequent Scottish theology due to the Westminster Confession of Faith, with its exiguous attention to the Trinity, and the Puritan form of Calvinism that characterized it.\textsuperscript{66} According to his reading of the tradition, the doctrine of union with Christ as Calvin explicated it survived only through the efforts of ‘Christ-centered churchmen and theologians.\textsuperscript{67}

Without exploring the entire history of Scottish theology as read through the eyes of Torrance, we may note a few key influences on his thinking about union with Christ from this context.\textsuperscript{68} Torrance believes that ‘Union with Christ probably had a more important place in [Robert] Leighton’s theology than that given to it in the thought of any other Scottish

\textsuperscript{65} As his essay infers, B.L. McCormack, ‘Participation in God, Yes, Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question,’ in Denkwürdiges Geheimnis: Beiträge zur Gotteslehre. Festschrift für Eberhard Jüngel zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. I. U. Dalferth, J. Fischer, and H. P. Großhans (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2004), 347-374, considers participation to be a thoroughly Reformed concept, as evident in the theology of Barth and Jüngel, but he is totally opposed to construing this as \textit{theosis}, especially Torrance’s approach, on the basis that Reformed theology occupies a different ontology than a doctrine of \textit{theosis} requires. Torrance’s trinitarian theology provides an answer to this objection when it presents what may be termed a relational ontology which makes it entirely compatible with a doctrine of \textit{theosis}. This is evident throughout T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), and \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998). Cf. S.J. Grenz, \textit{Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 200-215.


theologian. Torrance gives Leighton (1611-1684) praise for not considering union with Christ simply as a 'judicial union' but as a 'real union' which occupies the centre of the whole redemptive activity mediated through Christ as saving grace. Utilised in this way union with Christ is fundamentally related to both election in Christ and the concept of saving exchange whereby Christ gives to humanity what is his – his righteousness and filial status - and takes to himself what is not his own – our sin and alienation. In James Fraser of Brea (1639-1698) Torrance identifies the same emphasis placed upon union with Christ, 'It is through union and communion with [Christ], grounded in the "personal union" of his divine and human natures, that we come out of ourselves and partake of his fullness; we approach him empty to find all our salvation in the all-sufficient Lord Jesus.' Thomas Boston (1676-1732) viewed union with Christ not merely as a legal union but a 'real and proper union with the whole Christ' transformed through his death and resurrection, that is, a union of an ontological kind. Boston often spoke of this as a 'mystical union' in which all the benefits of the covenant of grace are given to the elect. Torrance traces these ideas back directly through Robert Bruce (c1554-1631), John Knox (1505-1572), John Calvin, and many others.

Of special interest to Torrance is H.R. Mackintosh (1870-1936). Torrance shows how Mackintosh in continuity with Calvin and the Scottish Reformed tradition, also made the concept of the unio mystica central to his soteriology. For Mackintosh, the concept of the unio mystica was

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69 T.F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 174. Leighton was principal of Edinburgh University and a Minister in the Church of Scotland. See 157-179.

70 See the discussion of this later in the chapter, 190-198.

71 Leighton especially used the biblical concept of Goel or 'kinsman-redeemer' applied to Christ the incarnate Son. See T.F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 175.


73 T.F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 207. It is Torrance's belief that, 'In federal theology and rationalistic Calvinism Calvin's own doctrine of union with Christ had been altered into a 'judicial relation' brought into line with a largely forensic notion of justification as imputation.'

74 See the earlier discussion in the Introduction, 13; and Chapter Two, 159-170. See H.R. Mackintosh, 'The Unio Mystica as a Theological Conception,' *The Expositor* 7 (1909), 138-155. However, as Redman stated, the theme runs throughout his theology serving as a leitmotif. For
merely a cogmatic restatement of the biblically rich material on the believer's *participatio Christi* found throughout the New Testament, particularly in the 'in/with Christ' language of Paul and in the organic relationship between Christ and believers depicted in Johannine theology.

According to Mackintosh, mystical union effects a change in the believer's identity. Through participating in Christ there is an 'importation of another's personality into him; the life, the will of Christ has taken over what once was in sheer antagonism to it, and replaced the power of sin by the forces of a divine life.' There is a twofold objectivity about union with Christ: on the one hand, there is a 'Christ-in-you' relationship, and on the other there is a 'you-in-Christ' aspect. The former has to do with Christ being present within the believer as the source of new life, while the latter points to the foundation of this new life as lying outside of the believer in Christ. The union is mediated by the Holy Spirit. Torrance adopts these two aspects of participation in Christ into his own theology.

Mackintosh was attempting to postulate a union with Christ Jesus that went beyond the merely moral or ethical. Like Torrance, Mackintosh had reservations over using the term 'mystical union' (despite teaching its substance), but chose to define what he meant by *unio mystica* more willingly than discard the term altogether. By 'mystical' Mackintosh means, according to Redman, 'that the believer's relationship to Christ transcends human relationships and human experiences of solidarity and union.' In place of a mere moral union Mackintosh presents a spiritual

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76 Redman considers this to be an ill-advised move as Mackintosh rarely used the words 'mystic' or 'mystical' except from his defence of them against their detractors, and he substantially reinterpreted the phrase so that in the end the continued use of it was a confusing distraction. R.R. Redman, 'Participatio Christi: H.R. Mackintosh's Theology of the Unio Mystica,' Scottish Journal of Theology 49 (1996), 218. Perhaps this explains Torrance's own refusal to use the term at all in his own work.


78 A moral union was espoused by the Socinians and Arminians whereby a union of love or sympathy is envisaged rather like that between teacher and pupil or between friends. As Berkhofer notes, 'Such a union does not involve any interpenetration of the life of Christ and that of
union that, while rational, is beyond human comprehension. By ‘union’ Mackintosh does not mean a complete identification in which Christ and the believer become indistinguishable; this would be an essential union, something found in the writings of some of the medieval mystics. Mackintosh was aware of the risk of pantheism and avoided this in his christology. Through participatio Christi, Mackintosh argues, one has communion with God as a human being because it is through union with the incarnate Christ that we come to commune with God. By defining union with Christ in such a way Mackintosh is in basic agreement with Calvin’s three senses of the term - incarnational, mystical, and spiritual. One can clearly see why Torrance is so attracted to Mackintosh’s theology.

In his critique of Mackintosh’s doctrine of the unio mystica Redman comments on his use of language. He argues that Mackintosh should have ceased using the language of mystical union and instead used concepts more akin to the essential logic of his theology, such as spiritual communion. Torrance perhaps agrees with Redman’s critique for he does not use the term ‘mystical union’ either, but retains the basic three-fold sense of union with Christ.79 Despite differences of terminology, Torrance considers his use of theōsis, both in terminology and in substance, conforms to a consistent theme of Reformed theology going back to Calvin and found particularly within the Scottish tradition.

Within this very specific trajectory of Reformed theology Torrance posits his own soteriology. Torrance articulates the dimensions of union with Christ in various ways but consistently he sees three realities involved.

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79 Even Charles Hodge agrees with the doctrine of mystical union and links it to the doctrine of theōsis when he concludes, ‘This, and no more than this, is necessarily implied in the oft-quoted language of Athanasius in reference to Christ, ἀυτὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπερήφανος, ἐν ἑαυτῶν ὑπερήφανος,’ C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (reprint. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 2:591.
Firstly, there is union with Christ made possible objectively through the *homoousion* of the incarnate Son (Calvin's 'incarnational union'). Secondly, there is the hypostatic union, and its significance for the reconciling exchange wrought by Christ in his life, death, and resurrection (Calvin's *unio mystica*). Finally, these two aspects of union with Christ are fulfilled or brought to completion in the communion that exists between believers and the triune God (broadly corresponding to Calvin's 'spiritual union').

In a paraphrase of Torrance’s theology, Hunsinger presents three aspects which correlate approximately to our outline. Firstly, *reception*, a past event which involves what Christ has done for us. This is received by grace through faith alone. Secondly, *participation*, a present event, in which believers are clothed with Christ’s righteousness through partaking of Christ by virtue of his vicarious humanity. Thirdly, *communion*, the future or eschatological aspect which equates to eternal life itself in which believers enjoy communion in reciprocal love and knowledge of the triune God.

According to Torrance, union with Christ is not a 'judicial union' but a 'real union' which lies at the heart of the whole redemptive activity mediated through Christ as an act of saving grace. Torrance uses three words to elaborate what union with Christ means in his essay 'The Mystery of the Kingdom': divine purpose (*prothesis*), mystery (*mysterion*), and fellowship/communion (*koinōnia*). This triadic structure reflects the trinitarian action of the triune God: *prothesis* – the Father, *mysterion* – the Son, and *koinōnia* – the Holy Spirit.

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83 The trinitarian structure of mystical union (and of *theōsis* more specifically), is crucial in avoiding an erroneous notion of this union. See T.C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 3: *Life in the Spirit* (Peabody, MA.: Prince Press, 1992), 206-207. For a concise overview of the trinitarian dimensions of Christ's life in us in which Oden draws on the insights of Athanasius, the Cappadocian fathers, and contemporary theologians. Oden includes the insight of Pohle that:
refers to divine election whereby the Father purposed or 'set forth' the union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ. Divine election is a free, sovereign decision, a contingent act of God's love; as such it is neither arbitrary nor necessary.\textsuperscript{84} Torrance thus holds to the Reformed doctrine of unconditional election, one which represents a strictly theonomous way of thinking, from a centre in God and not in ourselves.\textsuperscript{85} Torrance draws on certain aspects of Barth's doctrine of election for he equates the incarnation as the counterpart to the doctrine of election so that 'the incarnation, therefore, may be regarded as the eternal decision or election of God in his Love...\textsuperscript{86} Calling upon Calvin's analogy, Torrance insists that 'Christ himself is the 'mirror of election,' for it takes place \textit{in him} in such a way that he is the Origin and the End, the Agent and the Substance of election...\textsuperscript{87}

The second key expression Torrance uses is \textit{mystērion}; the term is applied to Christ, and specifically to the mystery of his hypostatic union.\textsuperscript{88} In relation to God this means that the consubstantial union of the Trinity


\textsuperscript{85} Torrance links the doctrine of election to the unconditional grace of God shown in the Covenant of Grace. See further in T.F. Torrance, \textit{Christian Theology and Scientific Culture} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 132. Torrance does not, however, accept the post-Reformation concept of election when construed within the Augustinian-Aristotelian or Augustinian-Newtonian framework in which election comes to be understood as 'predestination,' in a deterministic way, viewed as particular election based on limited atonement and resulting in a double predestination, or conversely, in a Barthian form of 'universalism', 134-135. Torrance considers the adoption of a logico-causal understanding of divine grace to be behind the twin errors of limited atonement and universal salvation, (136). See the related discussion in D. Fergusson, 'Will the Love of God Finally Triumph?' in \textit{Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God}, ed. K.J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 186-202.


upholds the hypostatic union so that God does not merely come in man but as man. In this union of God and man a complete *henosis* between the two is effected, and they are ‘perfectly at one’.89

He had come, Son of God incarnate as son of man, in order to get to grips with the powers of darkness and defeat them, but he had been sent to do that not through the manipulation of social, political or economic power-structures, but by striking beneath them all into the ontological depths of Israel’s existence where man, and Israel representing all mankind, had become estranged from God, and there within those ontological depths of human being to forge a bond of union and communion between man and God in himself which can never be undone.90

Hence the hypostatic union is also a ‘reconciling union’ in which estrangement between God and humanity is bridged, conflict is eradicated, and human nature is ‘brought into perfect sanctifying union with divine nature in Jesus Christ.’91

This atoning union is not merely external or juridical but actual, and points to the higher reality of communion. Hence Torrance can assert that:

> 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.92

Union with Christ must be understood within Torrance’s doctrine of reconciliation to refer to the real participation of believers in the divine nature made possible by the dynamic atoning union of Christ. Torrance contends this is atonement in effect. As a result of the incarnation, humanity is united to divinity in the hypostatic union so that:

> In the Church of Christ all who are redeemed through the atoning union embodied in him are made to share in his resurrection and are incorporated into Christ by the power of his Holy Spirit as living members of his Body... Thus it may be said that the ‘objective’ union

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89 T.F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 29. By emphasising the two aspects of union with Christ Torrance is asserting the reality of what Calvin termed ‘mystical union.’ Louis Berkhof summarises this twofold union in traditional Reformed language as ‘a designation not only of the subjective union of Christ and believers, but also of the union that lies back of it, that is basic to it, and of which it is only the culminating expression...’ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 447.


which we have with Christ through his incarnational assumption of our humanity into himself is 'subjectively' actualised in us through his indwelling Spirit, 'we in Christ' and 'Christ in us' thus complementing and interpenetrating each other.\textsuperscript{93}

In addition to the hypostatic union Torrance applies the concept of \textit{mystērion} to the mystery of the one-and-the-many, or Christ and his body the church. Torrance thus understands union with Christ to be largely corporate in nature but applicable to each individual member of his body who is ingrafted into Christ by Baptism and continue to live in union with him as they feed upon his body and blood in Holy Communion.\textsuperscript{94} Understanding the church as the body of Christ is thus another way of asserting an ontological union between the community of believers and Christ the Head.\textsuperscript{95}

The third term Torrance uses is \textit{koinōnia}, and it too has a double reference. First, vertically, it represents our participation through the Spirit in the mystery of Christ’s union with us. Second, horizontally, it is applied to our fellowship or communion with one another in the body of Christ.\textsuperscript{96} At the intersection of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of \textit{koinōnia} is the church, the community of believers united to Christ, who is himself united to humanity through the incarnation. Torrance asserts that 'in and through \textit{koinonia} the divine \textit{prothesis} enshrining the eternal \textit{mysterion} embodies itself horizontally in a community of those who are one with God through the reconciliation of Christ.\textsuperscript{97} It is this theology of union with Christ by means of fellowship or participation in God which links Torrance’s doctrines of soteriology and ecclesiology; both are aspects of his christology, as we shall see in more detail in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{95} The corporate nature of \textit{theōsis} is explored in more detail throughout Chapter Four.
In summarising Torrance's use of these three concepts Lee's study helpfully concludes that 'the cause (causa) of 'union with Christ' is prothesis, the election of God. Its substance (materia) is mysterion, the hypostatic union in Jesus Christ, and its fulfilment (effectus) is koinonia, the communion of the Holy Spirit.'

This outline focuses on the trinitarian foundation inherent throughout Torrance's work which reminds readers not to see the work of reconciliation as exclusively that of the Son, or the Son and the Spirit, but as the work of the triune God.

Lee's study of Torrance's theology of union and communion further outlines eleven characteristics of Torrance's conception of union with Christ which emphasise the elements of unio cum Christo.

Two in particular are germane for our present purposes. Lee's fifth characteristic of union with Christ is Torrance's perceived rejection of deification: 'Torrance is strongly opposed to the notion of the deification of human nature through participation in the divine nature through sacramental grace, for this notion discloses a form of Monophysitism or docetism.'

According to Lee, Torrance concludes that this is the error in both mysticism and pantheism, where creaturely being is identified with the divine being. Lee acknowledges that Torrance posits a real and substantial union with Christ in his human nature as well as our

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99. Despite distinctive nuances of his theology Torrance is in basic agreement with a traditional Reformed position on union with Christ. His outline of unio cum Christo is comparable with the four features of union with Christ Berkhof mentions: 1) the federal union of Christ with those whom the Father has given him, in the counsel of redemption; 2) the union of life ideally established in the counsel of redemption; 3) the union of life objectively realized in Christ; and 4) the union of life subjectively realized by the operation of the Holy Spirit.' See L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 448-449.

100. The eleven characteristics are: 1) union with Christ involves a twofold movement consisting of Christ's union with believers and our union with Christ, whether mystical or spiritual; 2) the way of Christ's incarnational union with us is the means of our union with Christ; 3) atonement goes together with incorporation; 4) union with Christ has a decidedly corporate nature but applies to all individual members of his Body who are united to Christ by the sacraments; 5) union with Christ involves Torrance's rejection of deification; 6) union with Christ relates to the doctrine of perichoresis and involves the human participation in the divine Life and Love; 7) union takes place within the fellowship of the church as the body of Christ; 8) the Holy Spirit is recognised as central to Christ's union with us and our union with Christ; 9) it is eschatologically grounded and oriented; 10) a sacramental union with Christ is established, and 11), union with Christ as used by Torrance refers to the way in which the 'Word becomes flesh in us'. K.W. Lee, *Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 201-211.

exaltation to participate in the divine life and love, but this participation is that of a human in the Divine and as such constitutes koinōnia and not methexis throughout.102

Lee is right to distinguish between theōsis and mystical forms of deification in Torrance’s theology. He is also right to assert that theōsis has a humanizing function in contrast to the depersonalising notion of mystical union, in which the human literally becomes divine. What Lee’s study fails to highlight, however, is how robust Torrance’s doctrine of theōsis is and how union, communion and participation function as cognates of theōsis in both Greek patristic theology and Torrance’s work. Lee affirms Torrance accepts a doctrine of theōsis over one of deification/divinization103 (a form of Monophysitism). However, in his conclusion we read this:

Torrance strongly rejects the notion of divinization through union with Christ, and instead argues for the Greek notion of theōsis. Contrary to this, he sometimes states that union with Christ means ‘the exaltation of man to be a partaker of the life and love that God is, and thereby to be a partaker of divine nature.’ Having said this, one may wonder how one cannot be divinized or deified when one partakes of divine nature.104

By failing to see the comprehensive use Torrance makes of theōsis, understood within the context of Greek patristic theology and the Reformed tradition, Lee is unable to appreciate how Torrance can reject a form of divinization/deification and yet endorse a doctrine of theōsis. By limiting his vision of Torrance’s corpus to union and communion Lee finds himself unable to account for a central feature of Torrance’s thought.

The other relevant feature of Lee’s account of Torrance’s doctrine of union with Christ is his sixth point, which focuses on the doctrine of perichoresis and involves the human participation in the divine life and

102 See earlier in the Introduction, 24; and Chapter One, 94. Torrance emphasises the point in Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 184. Also see J.D. Zizioulas, Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1985), 93-94.


love. This sharing, participation, or perichoresis is not a union of identity but, 'a real sharing in the union of the incarnate Son with the Father, through a sharing not only in his human nature but in the life and love of God embodied in him.'\textsuperscript{105} The end or goal of union with Christ is thus to participate in the Divine life by being lifted up into a perichoretic union. While Lee does not identify this with theosis, this is surely Torrance's point when he repeatedly speaks of ontological communion, real participation, perichoresis, and partaking of the divine life and love, all cognates for theosis within his theology.\textsuperscript{106}

Lee's analysis of Torrance's doctrine of union with Christ is succinct and helpful at numerous points. It highlights the many dimensions union with Christ takes in Torrance's theology, especially the movement from Christ's prior union with us (incarnational union) and subsequently the believers union with Christ (mystical and spiritual union). It brings to the fore the role of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in Torrance's theology, and it shows how union with Christ unites the various loci of his dogmatics; his doctrines of creation, redemption, ecclesiology, and eschatology, all worked out within a trinitarian framework with a christological concentration. The weakness of Lee's analysis is his dismissal of the doctrine of theosis in Torrance's theology and his inability to see how pervasive and controlling this concept is for Torrance's doctrine of union and communion, which incorporates the various other cognates such as participation, engrafting, spiritual union, sacramental union, and cognitive union, to name just a few. An otherwise fine study is hindered by a myopic concentration on union and communion and by a failure to see, in his own words, the 'meta-sacramental' dimensions involved.


According to Torrance, union with Christ is not simply evangelical detachment or a monistic merging. In accordance with his reading of Scripture, the tradition, and Reformation insights, Torrance sees union with Christ retaining the distinction between Christ and the Christian, along with a spiritual union, in which believers become partakers of the divine nature through participation in Christ (and the fellowship with the Spirit). Reflecting Barth's comments on union with Christ, Torrance is adamant that this process does not involve any 'dissolution,' 'disappearance,' 'identification,' 'conjunction' or 'reversibility' of the human with the Divine. However, it is for all that a 'true' but not 'ideal' union. It is a 'total' but not 'physical or intellectual' union, an 'indissoluble' not a 'transitory' union. It is a union which is commensurate with theōsis.

§13.1 Mirifica Commutatio!
Torrance's concept of participation in Christ finds expression in the notion of the 'wonderful exchange' (mirifica commutatio), according to which Christ takes upon himself the sinful nature of humanity and bestows his own righteousness upon that humanity. Reconciliation involves not only forgiveness of sins and freedom from bondage, but in particular, new life in union with God. According to Torrance, the prospective aspect of atonement fills out the retrospective aspect so that this blessed or wonderful exchange involves the 'redemptive translation of

107 K. Barth uses all these designations throughout his discussion of union with Christ in Church Dogmatics, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1955-1975), IV/2, 538-549. It is apparent how his thought has influenced Torrance's.

108 From the second century the theme of the 'wonderful exchange' (admirabile commercium) is found. This 'saving exchange' is reflected in the opening Antiphon for the first and second Vespers of 1 Jan, the Octave Day of Christmas: 'O wonderful exchange! The Creator of human nature took on a human body and was born of the virgin. He became man without having a human father and has bestowed on us his divine nature.' Cited in G. O'Collins, Incarnation (London: Continuum, 2002), 121.


110 See Chapter Two, 105-108.
man from one state into another brought about by Christ who in his self-abnegating love took our place that we might have his place, becoming what we are that we might become what he is.  Atoning or reconciling exchange (katallagē) is thus central and forms a leitmotif running throughout Torrance's soteriology.  

By means of a 'wonderful exchange,' 'reconciling exchange,' an 'atonning exchange,' a 'sweet exchange,' or 'atonning propitiation,'  Christ takes what is his and gives it to fallen humanity and takes what is ours and heals, restores, forgives, and judges it within his own being and life.  

What is the relation between the unio mystica which we have been considering and the doctrine of the mirifica commutatio? Taking his lead from Scripture and the patristic theologians, Torrance uses the

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112 Colyer's reading of Torrance is that: 'Atoning exchange is at the center of Torrance's understanding of incarnational redemption, for Christ's union with us in our actual 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 own trinitarian life,' E.M. Colyer, *How To Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding his Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 93.


Theological expression was early given to this redemptive translation as the 'exchange' (Avta lágy) effected between God and sinful humanity described by the New Testament term for 'reconciliation' (katallagē), thereby bringing out its profound import as 'atonning exchange'. Thus the unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetus spoke of 'the sweet exchange' (glókeia Avta lágy)...at the same time this concept of atoning exchange was linked to that of 'sacrificial exchange' (Avta lágya) which brought out further its substitutionary significance.

114 Torrance derives the concept of 'exchange' from the Pauline corpus, although he provides no Pauline texts at this point, and from and the early church. T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 167.

115 Especially such texts as Rom 5.15-21; 2 Cor 5.21; Gal 3.27; Heb 4.14-5.10; 9.26-28. Frequently using 2 Cor 8.9 as a key text ('You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich'), Torrance repeatedly introduces the theme of exchange into his theology, especially his articulation of a doctrine of *theosis*. See T.F. Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 32-34. A failure to understand this aspect of Torrance's theology is a failure to understand any of it. Torrance reminds us that 'It is, then, upon this concept of atoning exchange as its inner hinge that the whole doctrine of incarnational redemption through the descent (katəskhías) and ascent (Avpískhías) the death and resurrection, the humiliation and exaltation, of the Son of God rests,' T.F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 180. As Yeung rightly concludes, 'in this way a set of intrinsic relations between God, Christ and humanity becomes the main pattern of the faith, with the dynamics of reconciling exchange at its heart,' J.H-K. Yeung, *Being and Knowing: An Examination of T.F. Torrance's Christological Science* (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996), 205.
concept of reconciling or wonderful exchange as a bridge idea between the *unio mystica* and a fully-fledged doctrine of *theōsis*. Torrance identifies this ‘wonderful exchange’ with certain elements of Irenaeus’ doctrine of recapitulation" and Calvin’s *mirifica commutatio*. Anticipating more recent interpretation Torrance sees Luther’s soteriology as emphasizing much the same elements of an atoning exchange. According to Mannermaa, at the heart of Luther’s soteriology lies the doctrine of participation understood as a ‘happy exchange’.

In a particularly clear passage in the *Church Postil*, Luther presents his doctrine of *theōsis* as follows:

This is one of those apposite, beautiful, and (as St. Peter says in 2 Pet 1) precious and very great promises given to us, poor miserable sinners: that we are to become participants of the divine nature and be exalted so high in nobility that we are not only to become loved by God through Christ, and have His favor and grace as the highest and most precious shrine, but also to have Him, the Lord Himself,
dwelling in us in His fullness. Namely (he wants to say), His love is not to be limited only to the removal of His wrath from upon us, and to having the fatherly heart which is merciful to us, but we are also to enjoy this love (otherwise it would be wasted and lost love, as it is said: ‘to love and not to enjoy...’), and gain great benefit and riches from it.122

Torrance rejects the idea that propitiation relates to a just God placating his own wrath through the exaction of the death of his Son on the cross. Propitiation has to do with ‘the two-way movement on the part of God who in his prevenient love freely draws near to us in order to draw us near to himself on the ground of the atoning self-sacrifice of Christ offered for us.’123 ‘Any adequate account of the atoning life and work of Christ must consider it from two aspects, the life and faithfulness of the Incarnate Son toward man, and the life and faithfulness of the Incarnate Son toward the Father,’124 wrote Torrance in 1959. Torrance’s soteriology, like his christology, is centred on the Person of the incarnate Son.

The rendering of atonement is to be understood, then, in terms of the inward experience of the incarnate Son in a profound union with sinners in the actualities of their alienated existence and fearful perdition – ‘My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?’ – whereby he took completely upon himself shame and responsibility for their sin and guilt in acceptance of the righteous judgement of the Father, all in unbroken union with the Father and in perfect identity in will and mind with his condemnation of sin.125

While it is true that on the cross God’s inexorable opposition to sin is exhibited, it is evident as much in forgiveness as in judgment. God’s judgment is based on his holiness and has a redemptive as well as a condemnatory aspect and so his judgement is finally a manifestation and


instrument of his grace as much as his wrath.\textsuperscript{126} From Mackintosh Torrance learnt 'to think of the wrath of God as the obverse of the moral passion of his love when he stooped down to suffer in behalf of men and bring them forgiveness at unspeakable cost to himself; and it was always on this ground that he exposed the moral superficiality and soteriological deficiency of any attempt to eliminate the notion of wrath from the doctrine of God.'\textsuperscript{127} Whether this is how propitiation is used within Scripture or the tradition is not of immediate concern.\textsuperscript{128} Torrance interprets the term 'propitiation' for his own purposes.

The expression 'atonning propitiation' is another way Torrance explains how the sinner is saved by grace. It is through this drawing near from both sides, God and human (propitiation), that the sinner is made right with God (atonement).

It is only on the ground of the reconciliation with God effected through the cross that the Holy Spirit is mediated to us, and it is only as Christ Himself is mediated to us through the presence of the Spirit that we may be united to Christ in his vicarious humanity and participate in the fruit of his saving and redeeming work.\textsuperscript{129} Here we find in more exact terms the theology that underlies theosis: the exchanging of sin for holiness; a saving knowledge of God as Father; and access to the inner relations of the triune Being.

It is not too much to say, then, that a proper understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit takes place only within the movement of atoning propitiation whereby God himself draws near to us and draws us near to himself and thereby enables us to have communion with him in his inner trinitarian relations, for it is only within that two-way movement of divine reconciliation that God's self-giving and self-revealing to mankind achieve their full end.\textsuperscript{130}


\textsuperscript{128} Torrance is certainly emphasising key aspects of the word \textit{λατρευτικός} and its biblical cognates \textit{λατρευς} and \textit{λατρευτικόν}, but provides no extended discussion over the distinction between propitiation and expiation.


So we again find a constitutive doctrine of theǒsis at the centre of Torrance’s soteriology. While the technical vocabulary is used sparingly, the theological foundations are clearly in place and the various aspects which contribute to such a doctrine are unmistakably articulated.

The life and death of Jesus Christ form the locus of redemption. Jesus Christ is the response of God to humanity and of humanity to God, so in him we have salvation and in him we have union and communion with God. For Torrance, union with God is ‘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.’

Here we see the vital link between the wonderful exchange and theǒsis. As Colyer succinctly puts it: ‘The atoning exchange is incarnational redemption, and incarnational redemption is atoning exchange, all worked out in the one person of the incarnate Son of God within the twisted depths of our fallen humanity.’

So profound is the doctrine of exchange for Torrance that it comes to embrace the whole relationship between Christ and the believer, as illustrated by his employment of Gregory Nazianzen’s statement:

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become divine for his sake, since he for ours became man. He assumed the worst that he might give us the better; he became poor that we through his poverty might be rich; he took upon himself the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; he came down that we might be exalted; he was tempted that we might conquer; he was dishonoured that he might glorify us; he ascended that he might draw us to himself, who were lying low in the fall of sin. Let us give all, offer all, to him who gave himself a ransom and reconciliation for us.

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The doctrine of theosis thus provides a window into Torrance's soteriology, articulated here by means of the concept of 'exchange', opening up other aspects of his theology.\textsuperscript{134}

From the concept of exchange Torrance draws three specific implications. First, he uses it to remind the believer of the boundless significance of what took place in Jesus Christ: 'if God did not spare his own Son but gave him as a ransom for many, how will he not also give us all things in Christ?' (Rom 8.32). This speaks of the infinite worth of Christ's sacrifice, which, by the blessed exchange involved between the divine-human life of Jesus and humankind, has the effect of finalising and sealing the ontological relations between every person and Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{135} Why? Precisely because the soteriological exchange takes place within the incarnate Person of the Mediator. From this Torrance contends, 'That is the staggering truth of the Gospel that so overwhelmed the early church which they sought to express in their doctrine of theopoiesis...'\textsuperscript{136}

Torrance's theology of reconciliation moves from union with Christ through a reconciling exchange to what this originally intended, the richer meaning of communion with the triune God. This emphasis on communion forms another cognate for theosis in Torrance's theology, as made explicit in his articulation of the implications of the atoning exchange brought about by Christ.\textsuperscript{137}

By communion Torrance means many things. One prominent emphasis is that 'revelation does not achieve its end in humanity apart from reconciliation.'\textsuperscript{138} Accordingly, communion and revelation, like revelation

\textsuperscript{134} Torrance acknowledges this, 'Through this saving interchange between Christ and ourselves we have a window open to all the creative, redemptive and sanctifying purposes of God...,' T.F. Torrance, The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 181.


\textsuperscript{138} T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 132.
and reconciliation, are correlative: ‘Revelation involves a communion through the reconciliation of the estranged parties, a reconciliation of the will and mind of man and the will and mind of God.’\(^{139}\) Moreover, communion explains *koinōnia* which is defined as ‘participation through the Spirit in Jesus Christ, participation in the union of God and man in Him.’\(^{140}\) Here communion is not entered into by merely cognitive knowledge, but through participation in the person and work of Christ made possible by the Holy Spirit. Cognitive union is *accompanied* by a mystical union and a spiritual union.

The Holy Spirit thus plays a vital role in Torrance’s doctrine of *theōsis*, ‘for to have the Spirit dwelling in us is to be made partakers of God beyond ourselves. This is made possible through the atoning exchange that took place in the incarnation.’\(^{141}\) Through the presence of the Holy Spirit we are ‘deified’, our humanity is lifted up beyond itself into Christ and enjoys a new fullness of human life in blessed communion with the divine.\(^{142}\) This is a result of what the Spirit accomplished in the life of the incarnate Son. Through Jesus Christ the Spirit descended upon a man and effected the union between human and divine nature. The Holy Spirit is now mediated to us by and through the humanity of Christ who sanctified himself in the Spirit so that we might be sanctified in him. Torrance explains how the Pentecost event is integrally related to the atonement and united by the concept of *theōsis*:

> This twofold movement of the giving and receiving of the Spirit actualised within the life of the incarnate Son of God for our sakes is atonement operating within the ontological depths of human being. It constitutes the ‘deifying’ content of the atoning exchange in which through the pouring out of the same Spirit upon us we are given to participate. The indwelling of the Spirit mediated to us through Christ is the effective counterpart in us of his self-offering to the Father through the eternal Spirit. In other words, Pentecost must be regarded, not as something added on to atonement, but as the

\(^{139}\) T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 133.


actualisation within the life of the Church of the atoning life, death and resurrection of the Saviour.\(^{143}\)

The hypostatic union is eternally grounded in the communion between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is, in a secondary sense, the 'projection...of that communion in and through Christ into mankind, creating \(\kappaονω\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\alpha\) as its counterpart.\(^{144}\) It is a trinitarian reality of ontological import. Once again we have an explicit movement from union with Christ to communion with God. The former, union with Christ, is represented by the first stage of \(\thetaεοποι\epsilon\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\) - \(\kappa\epsilon\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\)\(\omicrontext
and Spirit of God but also to the grace of God.\footnote{147} Accordingly, Torrance concludes that 'the grace of God given to us in Christ is not some kind of gift that can be detached from Christ, for in his grace it is Christ himself who is given to us. \textit{Properly understood grace is Christ}, so that to be saved by grace alone is to be saved by Christ alone.'\footnote{148} This is how Torrance understands the Reformers' use of \textit{sola gratia} - grace alone implies Christ alone.

To illustrate further the revolutionary advance in the Reformation concept of grace Torrance discusses the differences between a Roman Catholic and a Reformed doctrine of grace, utilising the idea of \textit{theōsis} as a case-study.\footnote{149} Roman Catholic theology posits a created grace between God and humanity which Torrance views as deeply Pelagian in its outworking, even if not in its intention. It is Pelagian insofar as there are attendant notions of co-operation and co-redemption implicit in its doctrine of deification. Under this conception grace is a commodity of the church, which is itself considered to be an extension of the incarnation, and the priest becomes a second Christ who mediates this grace. In response to Roman Catholicism, Reformed theology associates grace specifically with the incarnate Jesus Christ. When the \textit{homoousion} is applied to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ all distinctions between this and that type of grace with which Roman Catholic theology operates are abolished. Along with the \textit{homoousios} of Nicaea is added the doctrine of the hypostatic union of Chalcedon, for if grace is God's self-giving to us in Christ, then grace must be understood in terms of his human and divine natures as well. 'It is from this point of view that the notion of deification through grace must be tested,'\footnote{150} writes Torrance. This \textit{test} proves insightful for our present study.

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\begin{itemize}
\item[150] T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 183.
\end{itemize}
In order to examine this christologically, Torrance asks how it is that if, according to Roman doctrine, deification is achieved through grace in union with the divine, the human nature of Jesus is deified? What is the relation of his human nature to his divine nature in deification? In the Roman construction of deification Torrance believes an attempt is being made to go further than the doctrine of the hypostatic union, which pictures the union as taking place inconfuse, immutatabiliter, indivise and inseparabiliter. Torrance understands the use of grace in this way to betray a ‘Monophysite’ error of sinning against the inconfuse specifically. Torrance finds a similar ‘error’ inherent in Lutheran christology in the sixteenth century.151 Clearly, Torrance is accusing a Roman doctrine of deification of advocating a form mixture of human and divine natures rather than the patristic and Reformed doctrine of theosis as he understands it as participation, union, or communion between divinity and humanity.

At the heart of the disparity between Catholic and Protestant conceptions of salvator lie these differing conceptions of grace. The Protestant (specifically Reformed) view emphasises the objective nature of redemption whereby God imputes Christ’s righteousness (dikaiosune) to others, but does not constitute them as dikaioi in themselves. The Catholic view places the stress on the subjective nature of redemption, emphasising the reality of grace at work in the life of the believer so that such believers can be spoken of as iusti, recipients of an imparted righteousness.152 Each side has repeatedly accused the other of some form of heresy: from the Protestant side come claims of Pelagianism, from the Catholic the charge that the Protestant view is a ‘legal fiction’.

151 The charge of ‘Monophysitism’ is of course a pejorative term applied historically by opponents of such theology. B.L. McCormack, ‘For Us and Our Salvation: Incarnation and Atonement in the Reformed Tradition,’ The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 43 (1998), 281-316. Monophysitism, or Eutychianism when Torrance refers to Lutheranism, refer, of course, to the same theology, the former to the movement and the latter to one of its earliest representatives Eutyches (c.378-454).

which deals merely in external categories.\(^{153}\) In his discussion of the doctrine of grace Torrance raises both objections about both groups! This leads us to ask what his view on the matter is. We find in Torrance’s theology an appeal to Barth and through Barth to the soteriology of Calvin.\(^{154}\)

Due to a one-sided application of certain arguments utilised by Calvin against the erroneous views of Osiander\(^{155}\) many scholars in the Reformed tradition are reticent towards any notion of participation in their soteriology. Participation is a central feature of doctrines of theōsis and so Torrance asks, what is the cause of this reticence? He finds the answer in divergent conceptions of grace. Trevor Hart presents the issue in its wider context:

The problem with both Catholic and Protestant formulations of the doctrine of grace would seem to be not so much that which each seeks to affirm (for which both can provide considerable biblical warrant) but rather the framework within which they both operate, a framework which tends in practice to separate the person of Christ from his work, and to define salvation as humanity’s direct and immediate participation in certain ‘benefits’ procured by the latter.\(^{156}\)

From this deficient framework, both sides, in Hart’s estimation, are unable to affirm adequately the truth that the human person reconciled to God in Jesus Christ is simul iustus et peccator. Hart provocatively writes, ‘Do we really possess iustitia as Christians, or is the grace which we proclaim to be understood in terms of a cloak which covers a corpse?


\(^{154}\) According to Torrance, because of Rome’s failure to appreciate the place union with Christ played in Calvin’s soteriology they misunderstood his doctrine of justification to be a ‘legal fiction.’ See T.F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church. Vol. 1: Order and Disorder* (London: Lutterworth, 1959), 66-67.


Is the church a Society of Saints or a School for sinners? Hart concludes that 'both points of view may be described as 'extrinsicist': one makes grace something external to our being, and the other tears it away from its ontological moorings in the humanity of the Saviour; they both ultimately rob his humanness of its true mediatorial significance. We find within Torrance's theology exactly the same critique (aimed at his own Reformed tradition), something he typically terms the 'Latin Heresy'. For Hart and Torrance alike, the solution is found within Calvin's soteriology: we need to consider the questions of grace and justification again from a strictly christological perspective, asking ourselves, 'Who am I in Christ?' The basis for this lies in the doctrine of the unio cum Christo. From this foundation Torrance constructs a theology that affirms at the same time a legal declaration and the 'deification' of the believer.

§14.1 Declaration and Deification
In his doctrine of reconciliation Torrance offers a discussion of justification that upholds the Reformation insight of imputed righteousness but at the same time incorporates a more dynamic and relational application of the term so that it can be related to sanctification in a meaningful way. To do this the concept of theōsis is appealed to which, controversially, results in viewing justification as declaration and deification. This, Torrance argues, adequately relates justification to sanctification. It is also a way to incorporate glorification as well as the other consequences or blessings of union with Christ.

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157 Hart does not suggest that Lutheran soteriology is any better: ‘Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989), 69.


160 T.A. Hart, ‘Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989), 70. Hart is influenced by J.B. Torrance in this area and this accounts in part for the affinity between T.F. Torrance and Hart.

Because of his emphasis on an incarnational redemption through the saving humanity of Christ, Torrance's doctrine of justification is profoundly shaped by this christology. In addition, given Torrance's emphasis on the positive or prospective aspects of the atonement, it is no surprise that in dealing with justification he considers it from the 'positive side of salvation' and links it to the resurrection. To him the resurrection is the starting point of soteriology, and the incarnation itself is interpreted in light of the resurrection. According to Torrance, forgiveness is not just a word of pardon but a word translated into our existence by crucifixion and resurrection, by judgement and re-creation; it means the sinner is now given a right standing before God and is holy - justified. The believer is even now holy (hagios, iustus) in Christ. In stressing the in Christ dimension Torrance is perhaps exemplifying the sort of 'paradigm shift' called for by Trevor Hart:

What would seem to be required...is for Western theology to undergo a 'paradigm shift', to leave behind the outlook which has been predominant ever since the writings of Tertullian, and to seek to recapture the missing dimension in our soteriology, namely the person of the Saviour himself.

Torrance is insistent in opposing certain dogmas of scholastic Protestantism, seeing justification as not simply a declaratory act, but an actualization of what is declared. Justification has to do with forgiveness and when forgiven, sinners are forgiven. By implication, when 'the Protestant doctrine of justification is formulated only in terms of forensic imputation of righteousness or the non-imputation of sins in such a way as to avoid saying that to justify is to make righteous, it is the


166 Torrance uses the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2.1-12 to bear this out, T.F. Torrance, Space, Time and Resurrection (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 62.
resurrection that is being by-passed. Why is this so? Because the resurrection means that the Word God sent on his mission does not return to God void but accomplishes that for which he was sent. The resurrection tells us that when God declares someone just, he or she is just on the ground of being in a real union with Christ. Once again the language of union, communion, and fellowship is prominent in Torrance’s reasoning. It is this which leads us to affirm that Torrance articulates what we might term an account of justification as declaration and deification.

Forgiveness, thus intimately associated with justification, is experienced by the believer united to Christ in a perichoretic bond in which we partake of all Christ’s saving benefits precisely because we partake of Christ. This perichoretic union goes well beyond anything humans can experience with one another, ‘for it involves a relation of mutual indwelling and spiritual coalescence between Christ and his people.’ Because of the resurrection, this union with Christ is not merely a moral affair: it is a sharing in the inner life of Jesus, being united to him in the wholeness of his incarnate reality as the crucified and risen Son of God. Thus it is a personal-ontological union. Echoing classical formulations of the doctrine of theōsis Torrance contends, ‘This must include, in some real measure, an intimate assimilation into that inner life through sharing in the power of Christ’s resurrection.’

In Torrance’s estimation:

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168 ‘We need to consider the questions of grace and justification again from a strictly christological perspective, asking not “what do I gain from grace?” as if the latter were some independent quantity, but “who am I in Christ?” T.A. Hart, “Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989), 70. Torrance recognises the problem and prescribes the same solution as Hart.


We require an active relation to Christ as our righteousness, an active and an actual sharing in his righteousness...when we approach justification in this light we see that it is a creative event in which our regeneration or renewal is already included within it.\textsuperscript{172}

Justification is a continuing act in Christ, in whom we are continuously being cleansed, forgiven, sanctified, renewed, and made righteous. This is not to imply that the process is fully completed in the present. This would be to deny the reality of the eschaton and of humanity's bodily resurrection at the parousia. There is a time-lag, in the context of space-time reality, between the resurrection of Christ, the Head of the body, and the resurrection of those who are members of his body.\textsuperscript{173} And yet in the power of the Spirit we have union and communion with God through the risen Christ in the present, a taste of the age to come.\textsuperscript{174} Theosis is the culmination of Torrance's thought as he claims it as the effective or prospective aspect of justification.

\textsuperscript{172} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Space, Time and Resurrection} (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 63. Here Torrance cites Calvin, \textit{Institutes}, 3.1.1-4; 3.3.9; 3.11.6ff. In these passages of Calvin several arguments are obviously significant to Torrance who cites them. In 3.1.1-4 Calvin speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about repentance and union; in 3.3.9 union with Christ is analysed. Calvin links union with Christ not only to Christ's death but also to his resurrection in which we are raised to new life which conforms us to the righteousness of God. Calvin properly identifies this work with regeneration – hence he links it with the gift of the Holy Spirit – while Torrance prefers to treat it under the more general topic of justification. Torrance does not focus on this point but uses general terms to communicate his central idea – the power of the resurrection of Christ and its eternal effect on believers. Calvin, by contrast, is writing a more systematised theology in which he works comprehensively through each stage of a soteriology. When Calvin gets to 3.11 justification by faith is treated specifically, and in 3.11.6 righteousness and justification are directly linked so that 'as Christ cannot be divided into parts, so the two things, justification and sanctification, which we perceive to be united together in him, are inseparable.' In addition to this Calvin speaks of adoption as the essential union between believers and God.

One final observation on Torrance's use of these passages is that in 3.11.5ff Calvin is actually countering a false claim which Osiander terms 'essential righteousness'. By this term Osiander was advocating a 'Latin' doctrine of justification by faith and works, which Calvin equates with semi-Pelagianism. In Torrance's view of justification not simply as a declaratory act but as actually making righteous, one could be forgiven for thinking he was leaning towards a 'Latin' or even semi-Pelagian view of justification himself. However, the use of this passage from Calvin makes clear that this is precisely what he is not doing. Rather than confuse Christ's justification and righteousness with our own, Torrance wishes, like Calvin, to discern the inherent link between justification and sanctification so that in being just before God we are actually united to Christ and his work. Thus what is Christ's truly becomes ours. This is yet another instance where the mediation of Christ is thoroughly worked out by Torrance, inspired by Calvin.

\textsuperscript{173} This is also what distinguishes Torrance's doctrine of sanctification as Reformed as opposed to Wesleyan. An undisputed point of Reformed 'orthodoxy' is that sanctification is a process never complete in this life. Beardslee stresses this point, '...the doctrine is typical of Reformed teaching...without which one has left the Reformed fold,' J.W. Beardslee III, 'Sanctification in Reformed Theology,' in \textit{The New Man: An Orthodox and Reformed Dialogue}, ed. J. Meyendorff and J. Molliand (New Jersey: Agora Books, 1973), 140.

\textsuperscript{174} Torrance sees this vividly portrayed in the sacraments. In Baptism, we have a 'realized justification' which speaks to us of our once for all justification, but Holy Communion is the sacrament of our continuous partaking of the power of the risen Lord in anticipation of the new creation and final resurrection of the body.
Torrance argues that a truly Reformed understanding of justification must go beyond a merely forensic or legal transaction and must be understood to mean more than, though not less than, the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Torrance suggests that Latin theology and its understanding of forensic justification has failed to comprehend the recreation of the sinner effected by Christ's resurrection from the dead and for this reason it deserves the label the 'Latin Heresy.' Justification is not just a cancellation of guilt and the bestowal of a new status. New status is achieved through union with Christ; it is the resurrection of the sinful flesh into the new life of Christ, and thus the believer's holiness is found in Christ's.

It is an outstanding characteristic of all the documents of the Scottish Reformation that a place of centrality is given to the union of God and Man in Christ, and therefore our 'blessed conjunction' or 'society' or 'fraternity' with Christ. That union with Christ lies at the heart of our righteousness in him, for it is through that union that we actually participate in his holy life. It is this participation or union with God which makes us truly holy, not just legally so. Justification is not only the forgiveness of sins, but the bestowal of a positive righteousness that derives from beyond us, and which we have through union with Christ.

Whenever a Protestant theologian speaks of justification in this way, especially a Reformed Protestant, the suspicion of Pelagianism, or at least semi-Pelagianism is aroused. Is this what Torrance is advocating? It is evident that this is precisely what Torrance states about Calvin and Calvinism is striking.

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175 This is dealt with in detail in his 1960 Presidential address to the Scottish Church Theology Society, T.F. Torrance, 'Justification: Its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life,' in *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 150-168. Torrance is highly critical of the way the Westminster Catechisms have separated justification from sanctification and dislocated the concept of union with Christ from justification. Recent Finnish interpretations of Luther criticise the Lutheran *Formula of Concord* on the same grounds. See S. Peura, 'Christ as Favor and Gift (*donum*): the Challenges of Luther's Understanding of Justification,' in *Union With Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. C.E. Braaten, and R.W. Jensen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 45-48. The parallel between Luther and Lutheranism with what Torrance states about Calvin and Calvinism is striking.

176 See earlier, Chapter Three, 175, fn. 50.


draws between 'objective' and 'subjective' justification. Torrance with what the Reformed tradition has termed the active obedience of Christ. Subjective justification has also already taken place in Jesus Christ, as he acts as our Substitute and Representative, thus assuming two roles simultaneously – the Justifier and the Justified, the Sanctifier and the Sanctified, what the Reformed tradition has termed the passive obedience of Christ. In this way the active and passive obedience of Christ are held together as are justification and sanctification. Torrance brings these themes into succinct summary in the following:

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 own human nature, in our human flesh in Jesus, our Brother, and our Mediator.

The stress of Torrance's soteriology is continually on what Christ does and who Christ is – this is God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Thus:


Torrance appeals to Calvin, Knox, and the Scottish Presbyterian tradition for upholding these truths against that of Reformed scholasticism epitomized, for him, by the Westminster Catechisms. T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 157-162. Due to the dynamic nature of justification and sanctification Torrance rejects a formal *ordo salutis* such as those of 'federal Calvinism' (157).

Torrance objects to Westminster theology, which he variously describes as 'federal Calvinism,' 'hyper-Calvinism,' 'Bezan Calvinism,' 'scholastic Calvinism,' and 'Westminster Calvinism.' He considers his own position to be 'moderate Calvinism' or 'evangelical Calvinism.' See *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 59-60, 65, 224. Torrance counts himself with Calvin, Knox, and many of the early Scottish theologians, in opposing so-called 'hyper-Calvinists' such as Beza, Perkins, Owen, and Edwards. Hyper-Calvinism is considered to hold a federal scheme of salvation, a moralising of Christian life, the intellectualising of faith, a logicalising of theology, and an overly forensic notion of election and justification in which faith and assurance tend to be torn apart (59), and *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 133-134. Federal theology, in Torrance's estimation, works on the premise of a contract or bargain made between the Father and the Son in eternity past, and interpreted in necessary, causal, and forensic terms. It fails to ground election in the incarnate person of Christ, as Calvin and Knox did. Torrance rejects a strictly causal relation between God's eternal decrees and their end because they eclipse any real meaning to such passages as John 3.16 on the one hand, and as a result, on the other hand, they tend to restrict the proclamation of the Gospel to the 'heathen' due to a 'forensically predetermined covenant-structure;' *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 107.

T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 160. This has a direct bearing upon Christ's vicarious human response.
Justification is not the beginning of a new self-righteousness, but the perpetual end of it, for it is a perpetual living in Christ, from a centre and source beyond us. To be justified is to be lifted up above and beyond ourselves to live out of the risen and ascended Christ, not out of ourselves.\(^\text{182}\)

Torrance is critical of Roman Catholics, evangelicals, and liberals alike, who, in direct antithesis to a Reformed doctrine of election,\(^\text{183}\) rest salvation upon our own personal or existential decision.\(^\text{184}\) When Torrance states that in justification we actually become righteous his statement has an eschatological tone to it, and he is concerned not to present an over-realised eschatology at that. The only full realisation of

\(^\text{182}\) T.F. Torrance, 'Justification: Its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life,' in \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 152. Later Torrance goes even further to regard the term 'justifying faith' as inappropriate because it gives the question of assurance undue prominence. When speaking of 'subjective justification' Torrance is insistent that our faith is actually Christ's faith made vicariously for us and so the quest for assurance by means of our faith, as in covenant or federal Calvinism, became an anthropologically centred abstraction. It is not our faith that is determinative for salvation but Christ. See 160-161. 'We do not rely, then, upon our act of faith, but upon the faith of Christ which undergirds and upholds our faith,' 159.


Torrance follows Barth's christologically conditioned doctrine of election closely, but not slavishly, and presents a view of universal atonement and even universal pardon, but not universal salvation. Torrance contends that the word 'predestination' emphasises the sovereign freedom of grace 'and so the 'pre-' in predestination refers neither to a temporal nor to a logical prius, but simply to God Himself, the Eternal,' see 'Predestination in Christ,' \textit{Evangelical Quarterly} 13 (1941), 116. For God, election is not an event of the past but rather an action internal to God (a se). Because Christ is the ground of election, and Christ came in space-time, election took on a temporal component. The 'pre-' in predestination thus refers to the will of God to save humanity in Christ. Torrance is adamant that election derives from the Divine initiative of grace. He is highly critical of Arminian theology at this point, accusing it of being semi-Pelagian; he is equally critical of Roman Catholicism which, according to Torrance, is also semi-Pelagian if not Pelagian outright.

While christologically conditioned and universal, election does not equate to universal salvation for Torrance. 'The doctrine of unconditional grace and universal pardon cannot be twisted into universal salvation without evacuating the Cross of its profound nature and ultimate meaning, and distorting the self-revelation of God as Holy Love,' 277. The reprobate reject God's pardon, his provision of salvation, not simply God's judgment as such. Sin is so irrational, such an accident, that it is a rejection of God's love which is revealed in universal pardon. It is this theology which Torrance sees working in John McLeod Campbell and Edward Irving no less than in Barth. Other Scottish theologians who basically follow a Barthian doctrine of election include J.K.S. Reid, 'The Office of Christ in Predestination,' \textit{Scottish Journal of theology} 1 (1940), 5-18, 166-183; 'Introduction' to J. Calvin, \textit{Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God} (London: 1961), 9-44; G. Hendry, \textit{The Westminster Confession in the Church Today} (London: 1960), 49-58; and D.A.S. Ferguson, 'Predestination: A Scottish Perspective,' \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology} 46 (1993), 457-478.

righteousness is in the man Jesus Christ. Our union with him is what makes us righteous and is the basis upon which justification and sanctification rests.

According to Torrance, incarnation and atonement are intrinsically 'locked into one': 'It is surely in this way that we are to understand the teaching of the New Testament that the Lord Jesus Christ is himself our justification, redemption, mediation and propitiation; he is himself the resurrection and the life.'\textsuperscript{185} We are united to Christ not only in his death but also in his perfect life of filial obedience and love to the Father. This is also what holds justification and sanctification together, and it is this which explains Torrance's unusual use of objective and subjective justification.

The logic employed here by Torrance, especially in his discussion of how justification is more than simply a declaratory act, is to be found in the theandric nature of Jesus Christ and his role as Mediator. Justification, sanctification, mediation and propitiation took place principally in the person of the Mediator, not as a third party between God and humanity, for Christ was of one and the same being as God and of one and the same humanity as we are. 'His mediation took place, therefore, both within his ontological relations with God and within his ontological relations with mankind.'\textsuperscript{186} Pratz brings out the force of this in relation to our justification:

\begin{quote}
[T]his essential element in the obedience of the Son is of supreme importance because solely through the hypostatic union Christ gives us not only his negative righteousness, which is the remission of our sins, but also his positive righteousness, which is his life in perfect love, obedience, and filial relationship to the Father...
\end{quote}

This keeps Torrance's doctrine of justification from being simply a forensic non-imputation of sin, the flaw he sees in Western (Latin)


doctrines of atonement. It also explains the relationship between justification and sanctification in his theology.

On the basis of the unity between the active and passive obedience of Christ, Torrance contends that in our justification:

we have imputed to us not only the passive righteousness of Christ in which he satisfied for our sins in suffering the judgment of God in his death on the Cross, but the active righteousness of Christ in which he positively fulfilled the Father’s holy will in an obedient life.188

The only possible conclusion for Torrance therefore is that justification means more than the non-imputation of our sins through the pardon of Christ, but in its place a positive sharing in his divine-human righteousness. Sanctification is correlative with justification so that to receive one is to receive the other.

By seeing justification and sanctification as the result of our intimate union with Christ Torrance once again shows his commitment to a deeper integrative motif at work behind his soteriology, ordering it, controlling it, and directing it to its ultimate object – Jesus Christ himself. That integrative motif has to do with the union and participation of believers in the True Man, Jesus Christ, and through Christ with God the Father (in the Holy Spirit).

Paul Achtemeier reminds us of a critical feature of Torrance’s work: ‘Union with Christ involves not simply a participation in the life of Christ, but also a sharing in the mind of Christ.’189 Sharing in the mind of Christ takes on a heuristic force in Torrance’s work, pointing the reader back to Jesus Christ himself whose life, thoughts, prayers, and particularly worship become ours in a trinitarian event of transposition.190 Drawing heavily on John McLeod Campbell’s theology, Torrance contends that the

190 This Torrancean theme is developed in the work of C.D. Kettler, The God Who Believes: Faith, Doubt and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2005).
believer is brought 'within the circle of the life of Christ'\textsuperscript{191}, to know, love, and worship God. In similar vein, Jenson reminds us:

With respect to the knowledge of God, East and West are often thought to disagree drastically, but there is no disagreement on our present fundamental point. God, East and West have agreed, is not known because he is amenable to the exercise of our cognitive powers. He is known by us in that he grants us what we could never reach, or even know we could or should reach: he takes us into his own knowledge of himself...\textsuperscript{192}

Jenson cites Palamas: 'The gift that transcends the mind’s natural 'cognitive capacity' is 'union' with God, 'the grace of adoption, the deifying gift of the Spirit.'\textsuperscript{193} According to Torrance it is in the Holy Spirit that we have access through Christ to the Father, and by whom a oneness of mind and will is created between the believer and the triune God. 'Coming to us from the incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended Christ the Holy Spirit enables us to enter through the veil of the flesh of Christ into the holiest, and connects us with Christ as he dwells in the immediate presence of God in unbroken communion with him.'\textsuperscript{194}

It is because justification and sanctification are commensurate within Torrance's theology that he can articulate a theology of what amounts to declaration and deification. But how successfully he does this requires some examination of the coherence of justification and theōsis in his work.

\textsuperscript{191} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West} (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 139. Torrance also notes that in addition to McLeod Campbell he could have taken the same idea from H.R. Mackintosh.


\textsuperscript{194} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West} (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 140. According to Torrance, to reject the view that the believer is granted, in justification, access to the mind of the incarnate Christ is to fall foul to Apollinarianism, with its rejection of a real human soul and rational mind in Christ.
§14.1.1  The Coherence of Justification and Theōsis

Before closing this discussion of justification we must further enquire whether holding together the doctrines of justification and theōsis can meaningfully be called Reformed theology. Given recent concerns, especially the official dialogue between various Christian communions, the acceptability of Torrance’s doctrine of reconciliation, asserting both justification and theōsis, must be evaluated.\footnote{Official dialogues such as we find in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, See Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue, see Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue, ed. J. Meyendorff and R. Tobias (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992); and the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue, see T.F. Torrance, (ed.), Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985, 1993).}

The recent comment by Kärkkäinen is significant:

[A]ny expert on Reformation theology would have a hard time trying to reconcile the idea of theosis with the doctrine of justification. Historically, these two traditions have been considered to be diametrically opposed to each other.\footnote{V-M. Karkkainen, ‘Grace and the Ecumenical Potential of Theosis,’ in Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission, ed. A. Yong (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), 149. After acknowledging this point he goes on to attempt a synthesis within his own Lutheran/Pentecostal context in One With God: Salvation as Deification and Justification (Collegeville, Mn.: Liturgical Press, 2004).}

According to Torrance, these two traditions can be reconciled because in fact, they are not mutually exclusive. Elements within the Lutheran communion have been able to agree.\footnote{Lutheranism has been open to seeing justification and deification as compatible for two reasons, first, ecumenical dialogue and second, the ‘Manermaa school’s’ interpretation of Luther. See H. Kamppuri, ed., Dialogue between Neighbours: The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church 1970-1986 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1986); and R. Saarinen, ‘Salvation in the Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue: A Comparative Perspective,’ in Union With Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther, ed. C.E. Braaten, and R.W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 167-181.} However, a reforming of theōsis is required if the two traditions are to come together in a coherent way. While Torrance has indicated the direction in which this theology might proceed, his is certainly not the final word on the issue.\footnote{See the exploratory essay by M. Habets, ‘Reforming Theosis,’ in Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology, eds. S. Finlan and V. Kharlamov (OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 146-167.}

Torrance downplays the juridical or forensic elements in his soteriology, especially where one might most expect to see these features, in a doctrine of justification. While Torrance is surely right to argue against an
over-emphasis on juridical elements in contemporary soteriology, especially a Reformed one, he does tend to obscure the fact that the New Testament language of justification, of dikaiosune and its cognates, does carry within it a forensic character which cannot be removed without doing violence to the biblical text. Like the Orthodox, Torrance may be at risk of presenting a doctrine of theosis at the expense of a doctrine of justification. While his position is not as radical as some Orthodox theologians, such as Lossky and Ware, Torrance does tend to diminish the nature of justification, something which provokes significant critique amongst Western theologians. However, Torrance’s appeal to theosis is a welcome reminder to Protestant thinkers that even Reformation theologians such as Calvin did not separate justification from sanctification in a way that made the former external and forensic and the latter internal and progressive. Torrance has shown through his employment of both the doctrines of justification and theosis that one may coherently hold together a doctrine of salvation in its various tenses (perfect, present, and future), and anchor them in the incarnate person of the Son.

Justification and theosis are complementary, as each plays its part in the process of salvation in Christ. However, unlike a number of thinkers who have sought to account for both justification and theosis, Torrance does not see these as two stages in the process of salvation, with

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202 The compatibility of Eastern and Western soteriologies is argued by B. Nassif, ‘Are Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism Compatible? Yes. [With Responses],’ in Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism, ed. S.N. Gundry and J. Stamoolis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 25-114. The other essays in the volume argue variably that they are incompatible or they ‘may be’ compatible.
justification as the negative side and the ἁγιασμός the positive. Neither does he consider justification to be prior to the ἁγιασμός within an ordo salutis. Torrance’s use of the ἁγιασμός portrays it as an overarching concept that contains within it the entire dynamic of salvation. As such, justification is an aspect of the metanarrative of the ἁγιασμός and so it no longer has a static form as it arguably does in much Protestant orthodoxy. Alternatively, the explicitly dynamic character of justification can be maintained, along side the other aspects of the ordo such as adoption and sanctification when the ἁγιασμός functions in the way Torrance employs it.

The introduction of the ἁγιασμός to a Western soteriology such as Torrance’s removes the doctrine of the articulus iustificationis from a central position and affords this place instead to union with Christ, from which flow all the blessings of salvation, including justification and sanctification. Torrance grasps a central feature of Calvin’s theology, that the question of justification is essentially an aspect of the larger question of humanity’s relations to God in Christ, and these need not be discussed exclusively in terms of the category of justification. McGrath credits Calvin for overcoming this weakness inherent in Lutheranism and notes that this is how Scottish theology from Knox to Torrance has generally understood it. The result of including the ἁγιασμός in a Reformed soteriology like Torrance’s, is that salvation is viewed in quite different terms. No longer is salvation thought of as exclusively salvation from sin, alienation,

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204 This has already been demonstrated in our discussion of Torrance’s doctrines of creation and anthropology; see Chapter One, 15-34. The eschatological implications of the ἁγιασμός will be dealt with in Chapter Four.

205 This point is made strongly by G. Vandervelde, ‘Justification and Deification – Problematic Synthesis: A Response to Lucian Turcescu,’ Journal of Ecumenical Studies 38 (2001), 74, when he writes, ‘Justification is neither a foundation buried underground nor an initial stage left behind. Justification is the dynamic suspension of Christian life that shapes all that it carries.’


and hostility, although those themes are clearly part of any biblical soteriology. Instead, union, communion, and participation are more meaningfully incorporated. A retrospective focus is replaced with a prospective one without losing the strengths of the former. The ultimate goal of salvation is no longer to appease the wrath of an angry God but to attain to participation in the divine life through the Son by the Holy Spirit. This still necessitates judgment on sin and justification of the sinner, but it does not end there. Salvation in a theōsis-centred soteriology is accomplished by the incarnation in the hypostatic union. It is this perspective which focuses Torrance's theology.

§14.2 Progress in Theōsis
Having established the fundamental nature of salvation as declaration and deification, Torrance's work also articulates how progress in theōsis may be achieved. One way he does this is to appropriate the concept of prokope. The term prokope was appropriated by the fathers to refer to the Lukan account of the obedience and development of the child Jesus, who literally 'cut his way' (proekopten) as he 'grew in wisdom and favour with God and with men' (Luke 2.52). This reveals, according to Torrance, what amounts to a model of the way of theōsis. Knowledge is the basis of this aspect of theōsis: knowledge of God the Father as revealed through God the Son. Not only is Jesus Christ the Truth who has accommodated himself to humanity in an economic condescension, he is also a man who hears and obeys the Divine Word, apprehends the truth in his incarnate life, and so provides for us in his own obedient Sonship, within our human nature, the way whereby we are carried up to this knowledge of God the Father, which is the attainment of true life. This is where the use of prokope is taken up by Torrance as he cites Basil from De Spiritu Sancto:

We understand by Way that advance [prokope] to perfection which is made stage by stage, and in regular order, through the works of

208 The word 'grew' is prokopto, literally a nautical expression meaning 'to beat one's way forward blow by blow,' G. Stählin, 'προχομή, προχότημα' in TDNT, eds. G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 6.704 (703-719). The word is also used in middle and later Stoicism to refer to moral progress (706).

209 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 38.

210 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 38.
righteousness and the illumination of knowledge; ever longing after what is before, and reaching forth unto those things which remain, until we shall have reached the blessed end, the knowledge of God, which the Lord through Himself bestows on them that have trusted in Him. For our Lord is an essentially good Way, where erring and straying are unknown, to that which is essentially good, to the Father. For no one, He says, cometh to the Father but through me. Such is our way up to God through the Son.  

This is the christological side of theōsis to which Torrance, by means of Basil, then adds the pneumatological aspect. Christ became incarnate through the operation of the Spirit and it was through the power of the Spirit that he advanced (proekopte) through life performing miracles through the power of the Spirit and raising the dead. This is the ‘economy of the Spirit’ that complements the ‘economy of the Son’. Thus theōsis moves from christology to pneumatology. The Holy Spirit is considered the ‘perfecting cause’ who brings Christ and all other creatures to their fulfilment in God and so consummates their creation.  

This perfecting cause takes place perfectly in the prokope of Christ, for since he came to share our human nature and we are united to him through the Spirit whom he gives, it is through the power of the Spirit that we participate in his prokope. As a result, those in Christ rise through the Son to true knowledge of and communion with God the Father. This process is not completed once we become new creatures in Christ; it continues to develop in the power of the Spirit to the final judgment and renewal, for, according to Basil and Torrance, it is only at that time that God’s works of creation and redemption will be brought to their ultimate completion.  

Torrance is not alone in appropriating this biblical and patristic concept. His brother James also utilizes the idea in order to present a model of incarnational redemption.  

In an essay in honour of James Torrance, Newell presents two competing models of atonement, the ‘subject-
centred appropriation model’ and the ‘object-centred participation model.’ The latter is associated with Thomas and James Torrance and the Scottish tradition generally. In endorsing it Newell argues that it offers us a ‘response to Christ’s victory which is not cast in terms of our appropriating the benefits of Christ’s victory through moral effort or our cessation of effort.’ What we have in its place is ‘an interior portrait of our participation through the koinonia of the Spirit in the one true man who has experienced the agonizing conflict between sin and love.’ In real terms,

When our life’s conflicts, failures and triumphs are intersected by the atoning journey of the Son into the far country, our life becomes a pilgrimage of relational union with the One who was made perfect through what he suffered (Heb 5.8). We participate by the Spirit in the Son who bent back our twisted humanity as ‘he grew in wisdom, stature and favour with God and man’ (Luke 2.52).

Participation in the prokope of Christ is used by both Torrance brothers to shed light on certain Pauline emphases found in Phil 1.12; 3.10-11; Acts 14.22; Eph 4.12-16; and 2 Cor 4.8-10, 16.

From his brief study of this term and its application to the atonement theology of Thomas and James Torrance, Newell concludes, ‘It is never adequate to merely analyse the atonement intellectually...the twin movements of Christ’s participation in our fallen creatureliness and our “blow by blow” participation in his life, death and resurrection cast us loose upon the gracious sea of the Trinity.’ Newell is surely right to see in Thomas Torrance’s theology a vision of communion with God that goes well beyond the mundane confines of contemporary creaturely being. The other aspects of the beneficia Christi that Torrance argues are part of the prokope of the life in Christ now deserve some examination.

§14.2.1 Resurrected ‘Sons’ of God

In articulating the way of progress in theōsis for the believer united to Christ, Torrance identifies reconciling aspects of the resurrection as yet another witness to communion with the triune God. The resurrection is to adoption, even though adoption is a proleptic reality this side of our resurrection. What makes this possible is the resurrection of Jesus Christ for us. Thus when united to Christ the believer is also, proleptically, adopted.

Torrance asserts in unequivocal terms that human beings remain human beings, even in theōsis, and it is in the resurrection of the Man Jesus Christ, the Man in whom our nature is assumed and healed, that this kind of redemption is achieved and set forth. ‘It is thus the resurrection of our human nature in Christ into communion with the life of God that is the end and goal of atonement.’\(^2\)\(^{19}\) In Torrance’s words, ‘resurrection as redemption means the restoration of man in all the fullness of his humanity, for it is redemption out of corruption and the lapse toward annihilation into the new being and new life of the new creation.’\(^2\)\(^{20}\) The resurrection is the actualizing of human reality, the humanizing in Jesus of dehumanized humanity. Torrance summarises this ontological aspect:

Now on the ground of the resurrection, and its final rejection of all contradiction between God and man, and therefore in its rejection of all negation of being in judgment, we can really believe that man is, that man is man. He is the creature God made him to be and may not now cease to be what he is. He is man in living communion with the creative Source of life. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and of human nature in him is therefore the foundation and source of a profound and radically new Christian humanism.\(^2\)\(^{21}\)

In this way what God initiated at creation is finalised in the resurrection.

Reconciliation is nothing other than the everlasting union of God and humanity in Christ Jesus and God and humanity with Christ Jesus. The resurrection is the capstone to the work of Christ, the completion of all that was done for us in the life and death of Jesus Christ, so that he is

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\(^{220}\) T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 74. He goes on to add, ‘the resurrecting of Jesus is to be thought of as the recreating and restoring of man into the same sphere of real being as that to which we human creatures belong...’ 87.

our peace and our reconciliation. Christ is the living reconciliation in the form of personal being and reality in God. 222

Reformed theology typically includes the glorification of the saints as the final aspect of the *ordo salutis* and Torrance, as a Reformed theologian, is no different. However, he speaks more of resurrection than of glorification, though it is clear that he means the same thing by this expression. This is not to imply that he collapses the resurrection into glorification, but he sees the one as integrally bound up with the other as one movement of glorification in two stages. Resurrection is to glory - the glorification of humanity through the exaltation of Jesus Christ forms the climax of Torrance’s *ordo salutis*. 223

At the final resurrection, when Christ comes again, we shall see Christ in his glory and in that seeing we shall know as we are known and so we shall become like him. 224 The resurrection of believers at the last day is not a resurrection to an incorporeal spirit-state, but a physical resurrection like Christ’s. To be spiritual is not to be less human but more fully and truly human, as it was for Christ before us. To be a ‘spiritual


It is evident that Torrance does offer at least a rudimentary *ordo salutis*, in the sense that he distinguishes between various aspects of reconciliation and an implicit logical and chronological articulation of them. From the foundational event of union with Christ several corollaries follow, and it is these corollaries which we may view as an *ordo salutis* in Torrance’s work. Each aspect of the *ordo* is in effect an aspect of theósis, culminating in ultimate communion with God in glory. Torrance, like Calvin and Barth, takes seriously the eschatological character of Scripture and is reticent to translate that into a teleological scheme or *ordo salutis* such as was attempted by Reformed scholasticism. Cf. T.F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Vol. 2: Order and Disorder* (London: Lutterworth, 1959), 65; and *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 157-161. Torrance rejects any identification of primary and secondary causes in the context of an *ordo salutis* since this tends to reduce the eternal decrees to a transactional bargain in which the ends and means of individual humans destines are predetermined in a strictly logico-causal way. See T.F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 128-129. Cf. also J.B. Torrance, ‘Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology,’ in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today: Papers Presented for the Church of Scotland Panel on Doctrine*, ed. A.I. Heron (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1982), 40-53.


body' (1 Cor 15.44) is not to be less physical but more completely and truly physical, and yet without a fallen nature. As our Head, Christ's life experience will one day be experienced by all those who are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit: as he was raised to newness of life and into a glorified state so too will we be. Torrance reminds us that the bread and wine consecrated in the eucharist are pledges of this. As surely as in Holy Communion we eat the bread and drink the wine which become assimilated into our own physical existence, so surely we who partake of the body and blood of Christ given for us will rise with him out of the grave into newness of life, attaining at last the redemption of the body in the new creation. Here Torrance echoes what the early Christians thought to be an indispensable aspect of theōsis: that finite human beings can, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, attain immortality.\\(^{225}\)

The resurrection has the effect of initiating and achieving the adoption of women and men, a central theme in any doctrine of theōsis. Adoption is more biblically termed sonship through Christ (Rom 8.15, 23; Gal 3.26, 4.5-7; Eph 1.5).\\(^{226}\) Accordingly, our human nature is now set within the Father-Son relationship of Christ by the Spirit. Through faith in Christ and union with him we share brotherhood with him and so experience in him the Fatherhood of God, and in and through him we share in the Spirit of the living God. Unlike much post-Reformation theology, Torrance (along with Calvin and Jonathan Edwards), identifies adoption and justification as parallel benefits and not simply the result of justification.\\(^{227}\) In making such a move Torrance replaces the overly juridical union evident in much

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Reformed soteriology with personal union as the centre of his soteriology.\textsuperscript{228}

Here we see classical formulations of \textit{theōsis} again coming to the fore: participation in the divine Being while remaining human beings; communion with the Father of the Son by means of the Spirit; and adoption as 'sons' to participate in the Triune communion of love. Torrance himself makes this link when he relates this work of adoption to the Triune communion prayed for by Christ in the high-priestly prayer of John 17 and again in the Epistle to the Hebrews (4.14; 9.24). In these texts it is suggested that through the consecrated bonds of our union with Christ we are made to share in the union of the Son with the Father.\textsuperscript{229} 'It is not surprising,' concludes Torrance, 'that this could be spoken of as the exaltation of man to be a partaker of the life and love that God is, and thereby to be a partaker of divine nature.'\textsuperscript{230}

The resurrection of Christ secures the adoption of believers and is the 'first fruits' (1 Cor 15.20) of our resurrection, it also has other effects. One in particular stands out for Torrance, the ultimate goal of \textit{theōsis} – the \textit{visio Dei}.

\section*{§14.2.2 The \textit{Visio Dei}}

The theme of light occupies an exalted place in the Christian tradition, with notable roots in the New Testament's Johannine literature which defines God as Light which is foreign to all darkness (1 Jn 1.5), to Christ as the Light of the world who sends out his disciples to be as lights to the world (Jn 8.12; cf. Mt 5.14-16). The New Testament is also unanimous in its teaching that the saints and angels see God's face directly (Mt 18.10; 1 Cor 13.12; 1 Jn 3.2).\textsuperscript{231} The Nicene Creed represents the Son as Light

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{228} See the discussion on adoption later in Chapter Four, 275; 283-286; 307; 311.
\item \textsuperscript{231} If God reveals himself to humanity as Light, and is able to be anticipated by them, can he also be inaccessible and transcendent, as Scripture affirms? This was the question put to the hesychasts by Barlaam the Calabrian in the form of a bitter accusation. The hesychast monk Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) undertook to answer Barlaam in his \textit{Apodictic Treatises} (1336) followed by a series
\end{itemize}
proceeding out of Light. These themes have played an important part in the Christian tradition, especially within Byzantine Christianity, and have been intimately linked with doctrines of theōsis.232

According to Torrance, for Christ to be Light necessitates his being Word also, the two being hypostatically related. 'The very Light of God could not be consistently Light,' Torrance writes, 'and certainly could not be known as such, if Jesus Christ were not also Word of Word as well as Light of Light, and thus immutably, eternally God of God as both Light and Word.'233 This conclusion is drawn from the deduction that if Jesus Christ is of one and the same being with God (homoousios) as incarnate Son, this must apply to him also as incarnate Word of God.234 This is consistent with the entire tenor of Torrance's method and theology: what God is toward us in his self-revelation in Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh, he is in his own divine being.

Torrance forcefully reasons that 'God is himself the supreme Light, unapproachable and invisible,' and yet, 'he is illuminatingly present in the
world of thought." How? God is visible through the things he has made but is only knowable through the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. True knowledge of God, even of his uncreated and invisible Light, is 'seen' and 'known' only in Christ. Drawing heavily on the insights of John Philoponos of Alexandria and John of the Cross, Torrance develops a theology of light - both scientifically and theologically. God is unapproachable in the radiance of his pure light. As one cannot look at the sun and see, one cannot see God and live. According to John of the Cross this is so for two reasons. First, God is unapproachable because of the sheer invisibility of his uncreated Light. God is infinite and transcendent and our finite capacities have no means by which we may see or comprehend this Light. Second, 'God is unapproachable for us because of the inability of our impure minds to bear the sheer purity of his divine Light.' The utter holiness of God which consumes all evil and impurity overwhelms the sight of the sinner.

Torrance draws from this the following significant conclusions concerning knowledge of God: first, God must establish a degree of reciprocity between himself and humankind in which his uncreated Light adapts itself to the lowly understanding of fallen minds so that men and women may be elevated to communion with God in such a way that they may have access to him beyond their creaturely capacities. This is a clear statement of theōsis defined as the 'elevation' of the person to communion with God.

Second, the reconciliation accomplished between God and humanity must ensure that guilt is expiated, sin is forgiven, and defilement is removed.

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236 'Through the mystery of the invisibility of light God guards and reflects the mystery of his own invisible Light before which our creaturely finite minds falter and fail, but nevertheless he allows us, as St Paul expressed it, to 'see' him darkly or indirectly as in a mirror,' T.F. Torrance, *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 91.
so that our minds may be equipped to 'see' the divine Light. This is accomplished through the 'two-fold [sic] relationship between God and humanity mediated through the incarnation and passion of God’s beloved Son in Jesus Christ.'\textsuperscript{240} In Christ the invisible Light of God is made visible and the 'indissoluble oneness' with the eternal Word and Love of God is made accessible to humankind. Jesus Christ is the 'Light of the world,' and it is only in and through him that we are enlightened and may see and come to know the invisible God. Jesus Christ is thus 'Light of Light' and 'God of God;' the two terms being synonymous, 'thus he constitutes in the reality of his divine-human person both the invisible radiation and the creaturely reflection of the eternal Light which God is.'\textsuperscript{241} By becoming one with us in our human nature and condition the incarnate Son is both the eternal Word of God and a human word, both the uncreated Light of God and created light, in the indivisible unity of his life and person.\textsuperscript{242}

Using the analogy of Light Torrance is enabled to extend his doctrine of \textit{theōsis}. The incarnation shows us what true humanity is; it reveals what true 'seeing' or 'knowing' God consists of,\textsuperscript{243} for it is an accurate reflection (Calvin's 'mirror') of the uncreated Light in a created human subject. In sermonic tone, Torrance writes:

\begin{quote}
Jesus was completely and absolutely transparent with the Light of God. There was no darkness in him, nothing unreal, no deceit, no insincerity. He was utterly true and genuine, translucent with the sheer Truth of God himself, the one point in human existence where the divine Light shines through to the world purely and truly, unimpeded and unclouded by any distortion or refraction. Far from being less human because of that, he was more human than any other, indeed perfectly human, for with him the divine Light which is
\end{quote}


\begin{quote}
We may express this today by saying that in Jesus Christ God's own transcendent Light in personal and concentrated form has moved directly into the physical world of luminous phenomena created by him and become uniquely man within the contingent structures and objectivities and patterns of existence shaped and governed by the primacy of created light in the universe.
\end{quote}


the source of all human life and light had its perfect way. He was so perfectly the man that he ought to have been that there was no gap in his nature resulting from a lapse from true humanity, as a result of which he was obliged to be what he was not but ought to be. The union between his human life and the humanising Light of the Creator was unbroken, so that it is through him that the eternal uncreated Light of God shines through to us.244

'Transparency' in this discussion functions as an analogy for theōsis.245 To experience theōsis is to become in a sense transparent. The goal of theōsis is to reflect God's uncreated Light fully and completely, without spot or blemish; to mirror God absolutely. This is not possible for the darkened sinful vessels that we are and consequently only in the incarnate Light of the Son is theōsis realised.

It is the living Light of God himself actively lived out among us as a human life, which continues to bear directly, personally, intimately upon the ontological depths of our human existence, searching, judging, cleansing, healing and renewing, and remains for ever the one light-bearing and life-giving Life for all mankind.246

The incarnate Son of God is the Light of God and the light of the world and it is only as one is united to this Light that one can apprehend it, reflect it, and be light oneself.247 'Since it is in this enlightening and

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244 T.F. Torrance, Christian Theology and Scientific Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 96. In case he is misunderstood Torrance adds, 'Jesus was not just the most perfect man, the most human being that ever lived, shot through and through with divine Light, but God himself in his divine Light living among us as man,' 97.

245 There is an interesting parallel in the doctrine of theōsis articulated by Jonathan Edwards in response to a clergyman's objection that he taught that believers could participate in the divine essence, not simply in the divine nature: 'A diamond or a crystal that is held forth in the sun's beams may properly be said to have some of the sun's brightness communicated to it; for though it hasn't the same individual brightness with that which is inherent in the sun, and be immensely less in degree, yet it is something of the same nature,' J. Edwards, Ethical Writings; The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 8, ed. P. Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 640 (see 636-640).


247 C.S. Lewis, 'The Weight of Glory,' in Screwtape Proposes a Toast and Other Pieces (London: Fontana, 1965), 106-107, presents the same thought in his discussion of the glory that is to be experienced when the believer is glorified:

And this brings me to the other sense of glory – glory as brightness, splendour, luminosity. We are to shine as the sun, we are to be given the Morning Star. I think I begin to see what it means. In one way, of course, God has given us the Morning Star already: you can go and enjoy the gift on many fine mornings if you get up early enough. What more, you may ask, do we want? Ah, but we want so much more – something the books on aesthetics take little notice of. But the poets and the mythologies know all about. We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, Even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words – to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it... if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day give us the Morning Star and cause us to put on the splendour of the sun, then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy.
saving Life of the crucified and risen Jesus that the eternal Light and Life of God himself are mediated to us in a form in which we can share in death as well as life, it is through union and communion with Jesus that we are enabled to see the invisible God and live.²⁴⁸

All the familiar themes of theōsis are represented here, this time illuminated by a theology of light. This is a remarkable description on Torrance’s part, one that cuts through much of the confusion and debate between Eastern and Western views of mystical knowing and light and brings to the fore the christological aspects of theōsis. Christ alone is the true human and he alone is able to participate fully in the divine nature, for he shares that nature in his hypostatic union. Through participating in the humanity of Jesus Christ the believer is also drawn into the Light and life of God, ‘deified’ without losing his or her created humanity in the process. To see God is to know God, and to know God is to know the incarnate Son who has made him known. ‘But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit’ (2 Cor 3.18).

§14.2.3 Mystery and Mysticism

When the themes of light, knowledge, the visio Dei, and theōsis are found in close proximity it is not unusual to find some appeal made to the concept of mysticism in order to account for the ultimate experience of God. While Torrance utilises each of these concepts he repeatedly rejects all allegations that his is a mystical theology. Torrance rejects mysticism in favour of a highly developed notion of participatory knowing and personal indwelling in which the categories of light, vision, sight, and knowing come to the fore. In place of mysticism Torrance adopts the category of mystery and uses the doctrine of theōsis in order to explain the spiritual aspect of personal participation in God (spiritual union).²⁴⁹


Because doctrines of theōsis deal with the communing of the creature with the Creator, some form of mystery or what is often termed mysticism is involved. This mysticism must, however, be defined carefully. It is wrong to conclude that Torrance is a ‘mystic’ or that his doctrine of theōsis parallels that of Eastern or Western mysticism directly. Certainly there are within his theology mystical influences and themes, with certain aspects of theōsis contributing in part to this. Torrance’s attitude to the mystical tradition includes positive and negative elements. Like Calvin, Torrance does see union with Christ as an implied ‘mystical union’ (unio mystica); however, such is his reticence over the word ‘mystical’ that he prefers to speak of the ‘mystery of union’ with Christ, a formula that he believes avoids unacceptable aspects of the notion of mysticism.\footnote{While Torrance never uses the term ‘mystical union’ in his work he does affirm what Calvin meant by the term. See J. Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.11.10 (and 2.12.7 within the context of a discussion on divorce based on Mat 19.4-6 ‘the two shall become one flesh’).}

In order to identify what Torrance rejects in the concept of mysticism, we may note his comments on Eastern apophaticism and on the Western mystical tradition. Torrance traces the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of apophaticism back to Neoplatonic and Pseudo-Dionysian philosophies in which ‘the human spirit “takes-off”, as it were, in a wordless and conceptless mystical vision of God.’\footnote{T.F. Torrance, Christian Theology and Scientific Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 104.} According to Hesychast teaching, as one example, unceasing prayer performed with the right bodily posture will eventually achieve ‘the union of the mind and heart’.

In time, such prayer led on to a visionary experience by which it became possible for select individuals, in this present life and with their bodily eyes, to see the divine light, which was taken to be identical with that light that surrounded Jesus at the moment of his Transfiguration. In the teaching of St Gregory Palamas, the light seen by Hesychasts was a manifestation of the ‘energies’ of God, which he...
took to be distinct from the divine ‘essence,’ and yet uncreated and eternal just like the ‘essence.’

For Orthodoxy, this vision of light forms the final goal of theosis. Having examined Torrance’s theology of light and cognitive union with Christ, it is clear that he rejects such an Eastern apophatic theology.

In its own way the Augustinian-Thomistic tradition of theology endorses some form of conceptless mysticism in its formulation of the ‘Beatific Vision’. The Beatific Vision, a mute or wordless vision of God, functions as the goal of theosis in many Western, especially Latin theologies. Aquinas rejected the necessity of a connection in the divine understanding (intelligere) and speaking (locutio). In response to the question posed by Peter Lombard as to how God and the blessed converse with one another, Aquinas gave the answer that they converse ‘wordlessly’ through intellectual vision alone. Having examined Torrance’s theology of the Incarnate Son as both Word and Light of God it is equally clear that Torrance rejects Latin forms of mysticism as well.

Within both Eastern and Western constructions Torrance locates the same problem, arrived at by different routes, of a wordless or mute God behind the God of the economy. To counter these constructions Torrance turns to Athanasius, Hilary, and Anselm who affirmed with Nicene theology that God’s being is intrinsically eloquent and not mute, for his Word dwells essentially in him. Here we have the first steps in holding

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255 This is another way in which the economic Trinity is to be read back into the immanent Trinity in basic conformity to Rahner’s trinitarian principle that ‘the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity.’ See K. Rahner, The Trinity, trans. J. Donceel (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 22.
together the twin themes of sight and sound, Light and Word. This means, in Torrance’s view, that the Light of God is not simply a mystical and mute experience but is intensely cognitive (cf. Jn 3.36; 6.30, 40; 12.39-40).

Torrance identifies the ascetics of the patristic period as one model of how this cognitive participation may be attained: by way of askesis or spiritual discipline.256 We see in this example an attempt to know God in a way that is worthy of him:

To know God and to be holy, to know God and worship, to know God and to be cleansed in mind and soul from anything that may come between people and God, to know God and be committed to him in consecration, love and obedience, go inseparably together.257 Torrance’s theology asserts that the only way to know God is to become like God.258 The way to become like God is to be united to the incarnate Son and through his humanity participate in the divine nature.

Characteristically it is to Athanasius that Torrance turns for the foundation of his doctrine of human participation in the divine; in particular, he looks to Athanasius’s treatment of the enousios logos and enousios energeia. Enousios logos refers to the Word/Reason inherent in the ousia, or being, of God; enousios energeia refers to the activity or movement of power inherent in the ousia, or being of God.259 God’s Logos inheres in his own being eternally, and that Logos has become incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ we have cognitive access into the being of God, into his divine intelligibility or Logos. Likewise, if God’s energeia, or ‘act’ inheres in his being, and that act has taken the form of

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256 This is both an important insight into Torrance’s thinking and in some senses a surprising one. Given Torrance’s aversion to mysticism he is clearly not advocating the early ascetic’s flights of mystical experience, but rather the rigorously practical way in which they applied themselves wholly to a vision or knowledge of God. It also highlights Torrance’s familiarity with the Eastern tradition of knowledge/vision of God and so, by extension, it supports the thesis that Torrance advocates a comprehensive doctrine of theōsis. See for instance: V. Lossky, The Vision of God, trans. A. Moorhouse (1963. Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary, 1973), 103-120; and G.I. Mantzaridis, The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition, trans. L. Sherrard (1963. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 75-85, 87-115.


Jesus Christ in the incarnation, so that he is identical with the action of God, then we know God in accord with the acts of his being, consistent with his activity in disclosing himself to us.\textsuperscript{260}

Two important implications follow: first, God’s being as \textit{Logos} means that God’s being is speaking being. Hence there can be no thought of knowing God in his mute being, for apart from his Word there is no such god (thus rejecting a tenet of Latin mysticism); and second, God’s \textit{energeia} or act inheres in his being and this means that God’s being is in his act and his act is in his being (thus rejecting a tenet of Eastern apophaticism).\textsuperscript{261} It naturally follows that what the Greek patristic theologians termed \textit{theopoiesis/theōsis} is essentially the consubstantial self-giving of God to humankind through Christ and in his Spirit.\textsuperscript{262} This leads Torrance to affirm:

In virtue of his divine reality and presence incarnate within mankind he acts upon people in an utterly divine and creative way, making them partake of himself through grace and thus partake of God. \textit{θεοποιησις} or \textit{θεωσις} was used to describe the unique act of God incarnate in Jesus Christ, but act which inheres in his divine being and is inseparable from it.\textsuperscript{263}

Thus we can see a basic difference between Torrance’s theology and Eastern Orthodoxy. The \textit{homoousion} means that God reveals himself not simply through his impersonal \textit{energies} but in a very real way through his personal \textit{essence}:\textsuperscript{264} in the incarnation God gives \textit{himself} in grace. Unlike Palamite divinization, \textit{theōsis} in the Nicene theologians represents communion through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. Torrance is insistent that in Jesus Christ we can know God. Torrance does not, however, contend that we may know all there is to know about God. Properly speaking we may

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{260} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Ground and Grammar of Theology} (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1980), 151-152. This is one of the reasons why Torrance rejects the Eastern Orthodox distinction between the essence and energies of God. The identity of the Being and Act of God in Christ Jesus will not allow this.
  \item \textsuperscript{261} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Ground and Grammar of Theology} (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1980), 152-153.
  \item \textsuperscript{264} See for instance Torrance’s critique of Palamism for its strong distinction between the procession and the mission of the Spirit which, ‘Drive[s] a wedge between the inner life of God and his saving activity in history,’ in T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 187.
\end{itemize}
apprehend God, but never comprehend him. In expressing this apophatic reticence in his theology, Torrance acknowledges the place of mystery in his theology.

Given that Torrance has argued that theologians must find a place in their inquiry into the knowledge of God for mystical theology one may be forger for thinking that Torrance adopts a notion of Christian mysticism. However, Torrance is not prepared to have his theology characterised as ‘mystical’ in any preconceived way:

I am not concerned at all with what textbooks on mysticism or mystical theology are concerned...what I am concerned with in theology is humility before God, not with some special or esoteric way of thinking!...the fact is that I do not work with any so-called mystical tradition. Nor do I operate with some mystical theology, but simply endeavour to try to show that at certain crucial and decisive points where humility in thinking, or, if you like, some form of apophatic thinking, is in place.

In responding to claims that he espouses a form of mysticism Torrance remarks, ‘I find the word ‘mystical’ rather strange, for I have very rarely spoken of mysticism or of mystical knowledge.’ How exact is Torrance’s definition of ‘mysticism’ and what is it he rejects so rigorously?

265 ‘Apophatic’ is used in a weak sense, not in the stronger or literal sense of much Eastern Orthodoxy. According to Lossky, knowledge (episteme) of God is limited and totally inadequate, hence a form of gnosis must be adopted, not as the result of human endeavour but as a divine gift received through a revelatory encounter. V. Lossky, Orthodox Theology: An Introduction, trans. I and I Kasarcod-Watson (1978. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Press, 2001), 13. Lossky identifies gnosis with revelation and argues the purpose of gnosis is deification (theosis), V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (1944. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 9. So, in order to know God, one must follow the way of theologia not oikonomia, that is, the way of gnosis. Lossky affirms that the content of gnosis which one acquires by going beyond everything that exists is in fact not knowledge but rather a ‘mystical union with God,’ 28. Pseudo-Dionysius describes this as ‘knowing nothing.’ According to Torrance, the goal of theosis is knowledge of God, not ‘unknowing’, hence his reluctance to entertain the idea of mysticism, especially when he adopts a doctrine of theosis.


269 T.F. Torrance, ‘Thomas Torrance Responds,’ in The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance, ed. E.M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 324. What Torrance takes Richardson to mean is that ‘mystical’ really means intuitive knowledge, or non-logical knowing that arises under the constraint of reality upon the mind, as was typified by
Mysticism can be characterised quite simply as a search for an experience of immediacy with God.\(^{270}\) One could go further and say that true Christian mysticism, if it is to be Christian at all, is a direct consequence of a doctrine of the Trinity.\(^{271}\) This form of mysticism would appear to be entirely congruent with Torrance’s doctrine of \textit{theosis}, in that the mystic is not content to know \textit{about} God but longs for communion \textit{with} the triune God.\(^{272}\) According to Louth, the very heart of mysticism is ‘the search for God, or the ultimate, for His own sake, and an unwillingness to be satisfied with anything less than Him; the search for immediacy with this object of the soul’s longing.’ \(^{273}\) Important in this definition is the essential place union with God plays. The French reformist theologian Jean Gerson (1363-1429) defines mystical theology as an ‘experiential knowledge of God attained through the union of spiritual affection with Him. Through this union the words of the Apostle are fulfilled: “He who clings to God is one spirit with Him” (1 Cor 6.17).’ \(^{274}\) Tamburello draws several points from this definition which are important for our study of

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\(^{271}\) This is the basic position of J. Houston in ‘Spirituality and the Doctrine of the Trinity,’ in \textit{Christ in Our Place: The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World: Essays Presented to Professor James Torrance}, ed. T.A. Hart and D.P. Thimell (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981), 48-69. B. Demarest, \textit{The Cross and Salvation} (Illinois: Crossway, 1997), 340-341, suggests that ‘Christians in union with Christ practice a true mysticism.’ A true biblical mysticism, Demarest contends, affirms a \textit{relational mysticism}, whereby believers enter into the Holy realm of the Triune God (Jn 15.9-10; 2 Cor 6.16b; Phil 2.1); a \textit{moral mysticism}, wherein the believer is turned from a sinful life to one of holiness and ethical conduct in union with Christ (Jn 12.46; 2 Cor 3.18; Phil 3.10; 1 Jn 2.10; 3.34), and an \textit{epistemological mysticism}, where the worshipper gains knowledge of God and his truth in fellowship with Christ. What can not be affirmed is any form of metaphysical mysticism in which the believer is absorbed into the divine. Torrance could accept all three aspects of mysticism Demarest outlines, while affirming a doctrine of \textit{theosis}.

\(^{272}\) J. Houston, ‘Spirituality and the Doctrine of the Trinity,’ in \textit{Christ in Our Place: The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World: Essays Presented to Professor James Torrance}, ed. T.A. Hart and D.P. Thimell (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981), 67, concludes that ‘A real knowledge of God can only be participatory knowledge...Since God exhausts all our definitions of himself, and indeed overturns them when we try to put him within them, we can only seek by his Spirit to ‘know him’ as the Reality and Substance that is.’


\(^{274}\) Selections from ‘\textit{A Deo exivit},’ \textit{Contra curiositatem studentium}’ and ‘\textit{De mystica theologia speculative},’ 64-65, cited in D.E. Tamburello, \textit{Union With Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard} (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 11. Gerson’s definition reflects a genuine medieval usage of the term and also brings out the focus on ‘union with God’ that is central to mysticism.
mysticism and theōsis. First, this definition of mysticism rejects any interpretation that would argue that ‘a soul loses itself and its creaturely being and receives true divine being, so that it is no longer a creature nor does it see and love God through creaturely existence.’\textsuperscript{275} This immediately rules out any notions of an ‘essential union’ between creature and Creator. Second, union with God always has a cognitive component. While the content of mystical union will always be experiential, it is an experiential knowledge that is in sight.\textsuperscript{276}

It is well known that the formative period for mysticism in Christian history was the first five centuries. It is not coincidental that the first five centuries were also the formative period for theology; mysticism and theology have often been bound up with one another, particularly within patristic theology. Athanasius\textsuperscript{277} and Gregory of Nyssa\textsuperscript{278} are prime examples of those who express both. Considering the importance Torrance affords Athanasius within the history of Christian thought, Torrance’s aversion to all forms of mysticism is somewhat surprising. One would have at least expected Torrance to side with an nuanced, but nonetheless mystical theology. It can be argued that Torrance’s theology can, at the very least, be regarded as containing within itself some dualism. By divorcing mysticism from the scope of Christian theology Torrance has divorced the head from the spirit and in so doing has tended to undermine his commitment to theōsis or the union and communion of God with humanity and humanity with God, emphasising cognitive union to the relative neglect of mystical and spiritual union.


\textsuperscript{276}Gerson argues that mysticism is not elitist and that church and sacraments are also necessary components of true union with God. D.E. Tamburello, \textit{Union With Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard} (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 11-12.

\textsuperscript{277}Athanasius initially leaned towards a certain Origenist cast identifying contemplation of God as the path to divinisation. This is evident in his early work \textit{Contra Gentee}. From the \textit{De Incarnatione} onwards Athanasius never spoke of divinizing contemplation again, as the concept of \textit{theoria} retreats into the background of his theological mysticism. Now he says only the incarnation can achieve divinization, and this led to his famous comment on \textit{theōsis} in \textit{De Incarnatione}, 54.

\textsuperscript{278}Gregory of Nyssa was the most ‘Athenian’ of the Cappadocians and he too presented a form of Christian mysticism that was rigorously pro-Nicene. In rejecting Platonism Gregory understood that the human soul cannot leave its nature as created and pass into the uncreated. In Nicene fashion, however, he did teach, in line with Athanasius, that this ontological barrier can be bridged only by the God-man in the incarnation. \textit{Theōsis} is thus the mystical apprehension of God, or uniting of the soul with the Divine, \textit{in Jesus Christ}. It is by grace not by nature that \textit{theōsis} is a possibility.
In light of the definitions of mysticism by Louth and Gerson, it is obvious that Torrance is not rejecting these forms of mystical apprehension. By rejecting mysticism tout court Torrance’s articulation of the doctrine of theosis and the entire Christian life, theology, and spirituality is weakened if not obfuscated. It is apparent that Torrance has adopted an inaccurate definition of mysticism, which leads him to an a priori exclusion of mystical elements within his own theology at precisely the points at which it should be evident.

Torrance speaks of knowledge of God that is sacramental in nature. By ‘sacramental’ knowledge Torrance means the truth of God which is communicated to us in the form of mystery (mystērion). Torrance writes,

‘Mystery’ of this kind expresses the objective depth of rationality ....mystery means that our knowledge contains far more than we can ever specify or reduce to clear cut, that is, delimited, notions or conceptions, and is concerned with a fullness of meaning which by its very nature resists and eludes all attempts to reduce it without remainder, as it were, to what we can formulate or systematize. Mystery of this kind elicits from us recognition, reverence, openness of mind, and wonder. However, Torrance fails to recognise that mystery of this kind is inherently Christian mysticism.

Torrance wants to preserve the ontological gulf between God and humanity and yet maintain the relational unity of the two in Jesus Christ (theōsis). This, however, is not achieved by a rejection of mysticism, but as is the case in Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa, by a rejection of non-Christian senses of mysticism. In rejecting forms of mysticism not

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281 The last paragraph of T.F. Torrance, Space, Time and Resurrection (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 193, reads:

If God really is God we cannot know him except in recognition of his absolute priority and actuality, and therefore not by stealing knowledge of him behind his back, as it were, nor by climbing up to some vantage point above him, but only through reverent submission of our minds to his uncreated Light and Majesty. Only the mind which surrenders in awe and wonder to the transcendent reality of God himself will be able to approach the resurrection in a way appropriate to its intrinsic significance, worshipping the risen Jesus Christ as the Lord of space and time.
compatible with the Gospel Torrance could have made use of 'mysticism' and all it stands for in the Christian tradition.

Like Barth, Torrance sees the mystery of God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ as the heart of Christian theology. According to Barth, God makes himself known as the One who is Unknowable. In line with Rahner, there are three fundamental mysteries of Christian theology: the mystery of the Trinity, the incarnation, and the divinization of humanity in grace and glory. We see in these three mysteries a direct parallel to the concerns of Torrance: the essence of Torrance’s theology may tentatively be stated as the mystery of the trinitarian God who loves us in Christ and calls us to participate in this mystery through Christ by the Spirit. For this reason the doctrine of theosis looms large in Torrance’s doctrine of reconciliation.

Yeung argues that a fuller treatment of the concept of mystery within Torrance’s theology would reduce his tendency toward over-intellectualism. While the charge of over-intellectualism may not in fact be accurate, Yeung’s call for a more sustained treatment of mystery within Torrance’s work is welcome, and his own work contributes to this lacuna, albeit Yeung does not distinguish between Torrance’s definition of illegitimate, namely Platonic (Mystik), forms of mysticism, from legitimate Athanasian mysticism that sees the path to wonder and awe following knowledge, not bypassing it (Mysticismus). This also prevents Yeung from appreciating the key role that theosis plays in Torrance’s theology.

282 ‘God himself veils Himself and in the very process - which is why we should not dream of intruding into the mystery - unveils himself,’ K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), 1/1, 192. Through the incarnation this unveiling through veiling takes place. One is reminded of Luther’s comments of the theology of the cross and the Deus absconditus. See G.O. Forde, On Being a Theologian of the Cross (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).
285 In thus modifying and guarding his language of mysticism we are reminded of Barth’s reticence toward mysticism as well when he states that we should never use the term mysticism ‘unless we state precisely what we have in view when we speak of ‘mysticism’ – and it would have to be a
§15 Conclusion: Reforming Theosis?

In a provocative essay entitled 'The End of Reformed Theology?' Bruce McCormack suggests that for a theology to be 'Reformed' it must be able to be illustrated through the Reformed Confessions, and not simply by appeal to the early church or Calvin. In his sights he has several of his 'friends' including Torrance, for he recognises that Torrance has sought to make union with Christ central to his dogmatics and has adopted categories of theosis in doing so. McCormack asks, 'Where is there in the soteriologies of T.F. Torrance, Colin Gunton, or Mark Achtemeier...any element that might be responsibly called 'Reformed'?' He continues that 'the odd appeal to a few passages from Calvin will hardly suffice for making this case...' He concludes:

It could be that Torrance et al. are right to lift up the theme of 'union with Christ' (construed along lines that stand in very close proximity to the Eastern theosis doctrine) and to make it central to their soteriologies. But my question is: How can the doctrine that emerges from this procedure be justifiably called 'Reformed'?

In response we may note several things. First, while there is certainly considerable logic to McCormack's argument, other essays of the same volume in which his comments appear point out that the Reformed tradition has no single confession which is binding on all the churches,

mysticism sui generis in this context,' K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), IV/3, 539.


287 B.L. McCormack, 'The End of Reformed Theology? The Voice of Karl Barth in the Doctrinal Chaos of the Present,' in Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity, ed. W.M. Alston and M. Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 51, fn.10. See A. Purves and P.M. Achtemeier, Union in Christ: A Commentary with Questions for Study and Reflection (Louisville: Witherspoon, 1999); and P.M. Achtemeier, 'The Union with Christ Doctrine in Renewal: Movements of the Presbyterian Church (USA),' in Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity, ed. W.M. Alston and M. Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 336-350; 346-350. It is significant that Andrew Purves (and his wife) were students of Torrance in Edinburgh and he and Mark Achtemeier dedicated their work Union in Christ to Torrance, while Mark Achtemeier's parents, Paul and Elizabeth, both studied with James Torrance in Basel under Barth, and thus T.F. Torrance came to know of Mark Achtemeier. See T.F. Torrance, 'Thomas Torrance Responds,' in The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance, eds. E.M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 309-311; 335-339.


nor is it a static tradition, but one which takes seriously *reformata sed semper reformanda* — 'Reformed but always needing to reform', the principle that the church should always be striving to conform to Scripture. While the *Westminster Confession* in particular is clearly prominent even it does not hold an exclusive place in Reformed theology. Second, Reformed theology holds up the Word of God as its supreme authority and thus appeal to Scripture always carries more weight than appeal to tradition. Third, Reformed theology is more than the sum total of its confessions as it includes the thinking of its church 'doctors', ministers, and churchmen and women. Finally, Torrance, as has been shown, does not simply call upon the early church or Calvin, but appeals to diverse sources, not least Scripture, and repeatedly draws upon the theology evident in his own Reformed tradition in Scotland.

However, there does remain the serious question of how accurately Torrance reads these traditions. That being said, in drawing on such a range of Reformed doctors and confessions Torrance certainly appears to meet McCormack's requirements for truly 'Reformed' theology. The charge of McCormack that it is hard to see how Torrance's doctrine of union with Christ is in any way Reformed because it is not in continuity with the Reformed Confessions and tradition is thus unfounded. Torrance has examined his tradition in depth, highlighted certain tendencies within it which he believes need to be reemphasised, and has reflected that in his theology.

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291 At best McCormack's treatment of Torrance is selective; while he does not locate Torrance's position in the Confessions he is wrong to infer that Torrance does not refer to the Confessions. It could simply be that McCormack lacked the space to work through Torrance's use of Reformed Confessions to prove his point. If he had perhaps he would have pointed to the *French (Gallican) Confession* penned largely by Calvin and appearing in 1559, the same year as his definitive edition of the *Institutes*. In that Confession justification is placed before regeneration/sanctification and omits any mention of union with Christ. McCormack might then have concluded that union with Christ is not central in Calvin's thought or the Reformed confessions. Clearly, no one confession can convey the entire scope of orthodoxy and that the *French Confession* was meant to supplement the *Institutes*. We also note that art. 36 of the *French Confession* does make mention of union with Christ in relation to the Eucharist, and in so doing shows that this Confession is not at odds with the *Institutes*. It is also evident that the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, although quite long, contains no section on the church and has little to say about the Holy Spirit, yet it would be amiss to suppose that meant Reformed theology has little to say of importance on ecclesiology or pneumatology! See P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. 6th edn. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 3.380, and 3.676-704.
Torrance’s doctrine of reconciliation thus provides a model of what a Reformed doctrine of theosis might look like. Torrance is convinced that a doctrine of reconciliation worked out around the theme of exchange and the broader concept of theosis is utterly compatible with Reformation thought. Many other contemporary Reformed thinkers disagree. It is instructive to contrast Torrance’s views with those who, while equally Reformed, disagree with his position.

One such example is Lewis Smedes (1921-2002), Professor Emeritus of Theology and Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. Smedes proves particularly useful for our purposes as he is a Reformed theologian, working in an Evangelical context, and has researched the concept of theosis in Athanasius and others, only to reject it. In his spiritual memoir we read:

[Athanasius] had one argument to support his view and he hammered on it repeatedly: Jesus had to be God in order to make us gods. Tell that to a Calvinist! Nothing we could say about ourselves could be more scandalous to a Calvinist than that we could get to be gods.

Smedes continues: ‘we can understand Athanasius only if we remember that he was giving a Christian answer to a question that only Greeks and other Easterners would have asked: How can we become immortal?’

Smedes followed up his doctoral work on theosis with what he considers to be a positive statement of union with Christ that does not fall into the ‘error’ of theosis. In his work Union With Christ Smedes makes it clear that what Paul presents through his ‘in Christ’ language is a ‘real union with Jesus Christ,’ not some ‘sacramental’, ‘transactional’, or ‘situational’ union. Smedes believes doctrines of theosis fall under what he terms a

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295 L.B. Smedes, My God and I: A Spiritual Memoir (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 83.


297 Smedes’ third category, ‘situation christology’ refers to what is traditionally known as the Christus victor model and is simply a variation on the transactional christology he has already presented,
sacramental christology’, whose focus on the incarnation over the passion, ‘this Christology,’ he concludes, ‘is sacramental insofar as it sees the union of God and manhood in Christ as the answer to man’s need. Sacramental christology looks to a finite life lifted by God to the level of God as the source of our salvation.’

Smedes identifies ‘sacramental christology’ and ‘sacramental union’ with the conflation of human nature with the Divine, as evident in such writers as Teilhard de Chardin. While not rejecting all aspects of this christology, Smedes does reject the doctrine of deification at its heart. Smedes does not recognize the historical life of Jesus Christ to stand at the centre of such a union; instead nature and super-nature occupy that position. Obviously Smedes is equating doctrines of theōsis with what Torrance himself rejects – the ‘divinization’ of human nature which results in the loss of the self in the divine, and thus a purely physical and mystical theory of atonement.

What distinguishes Torrance’s use of theōsis from Greek philosophy and what makes it distinctly Reformed, is his combination of the essential truths of what Smedes has called ‘sacramental christology’ with a ‘transactional christology’, something Smedes equates with Calvin’s and Barth’s theology. Central to a transactional christology is what Christ has done for us in the incarnation, which Torrance signifies through his

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298 Smedes states that these categories are arbitrary. For that reason they do not conform to the similar labels applied by Strong, Erickson, and others in their theology. ‘Sacramental christology’ in this context is actually a rather obscure and misleading title and it is unfortunate Smedes decided to use it. Cf. B. Demarest, The Cross and Salvation (Illinois: Crossway, 1997), 317-319, for a standard treatment of ‘sacramental union’ in which ‘Proponents of this view claim that persons are united with or incorporated into Christ in a substantial sense by partaking of the sacraments.’ (317).


use of 'exchange' language. Union with Christ is indispensable for Christian existence, and from it follow the benefits of Christ.

As long as such so-called 'sacramental' and 'transactional' christologies remain separate, then doctrines of theōsis will suffer from misinterpretation, and will be rejected by those of the Reformed tradition. However, the achievement of Torrance’s theology is to bring these two christologies together into a coherent unity. While painting with very broad strokes, Torrance redirects Reformed theology to speak of human participation in the divine nature as union and communion with Christ in his human nature, as participation in his incarnate Sonship, and so as sharing in him the divine life and love.

As far as Torrance is concerned, '[Reformed theology] interprets 'deification' precisely in the same way as Athanasius in the Contra Arianos.' Citing Calvin, Torrance argues that it is only through 'real and substantial union' with Christ in his human nature that we partake of all his benefits, and it is only in him that we are really made to partake of the eternal Life of God himself. The movement from union to communion, henosis to theōsis, is not one in which the distinctions between the believer and God are dissolved. In communion with the triune God we relate to the Father in his distinct role as our heavenly Father, to the Son in his distinct role as our Saviour and Lord, and to the Holy Spirit in his distinct role as the Spirit who empowers us and continually applies the benefits of our salvation. At this point Torrance goes no further when he states, 'We are unable to describe this participation in positive language any more than we can describe the hypostatic union in positive language – refusal to do so does not by itself import that a real and creative and therefore an ontological relation is not envisaged in this participation.'

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303 ‘He had come deliberately to share with us our life and death in order to make us share with him his eternal life in God,’ T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 57.
304 T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 186. Torrance’s construction of a Reformed doctrine of theōsis posits an ontological, not a metaphysical union. A metaphysical union is the underlying idea of a pantheistic concept of communion in which the
Despite the radical distinction between divine and human being in the Reformed tradition, we have seen that room is still left for a real communion between the two. According to Torrance, this is effected through *theōsis*, the participation of human being in the divine being through the Son.

As both God of God and Man of man Jesus Christ is the actual Mediator between God and man and man and God in all things, even in regard to space-time relations. He constitutes in Himself the rational and personal Medium in whom God meets man in his creaturely reality and brings man without, having to leave his creaturely reality, into communion with Himself.\(^{305}\)

The language of leaving behind creaturely reality when a person is in communion with God is largely foreign to the Western tradition as Smedes arguably illustrates. However, it is certainly the language of the East, from which Torrance has drunk deeply, and as we have seen, it is also compatible with the Reformed tradition within which Torrance stands.

For Torrance *theōsis* is not so much the ‘divinization’ or ‘deification’ of humanity, as popularly understood, but the re-creation of our lost humanity in the dynamic, atoning interaction between the divine and human natures within the one person of Jesus Christ, through whom we enter into the triune communion of God’s intra-trinitarian life.\(^{306}\) Torrance states that ‘our “deification” in Christ is the obverse of his “inhominization”’.\(^{307}\) As far as Torrance is concerned this is what distinguishes *theōsis* in Reformed thought from other expressions of deification or divinization.

Contrary to the assessment of *theōsis* in Smedes’ work, Torrance is able to affirm the eternal distinction between God and creation both in the


incarnate Christ (hypostatic union), and in our participation in Christ through the reconciling exchange. This leads Torrance to incorporate theōsis into his Reformed theology. Theōsis is the work of the triune God in graciously allowing human persons to participate or partake of the divine nature. It is technically understood as participation in the Triune communion or perichoresis. Through being united to Jesus Christ, the God-man, we are united to his divinized humanity and through that relationship we enjoy fellowship with God. Torrance has written that the goal of the incarnation is that we may be gathered up in Christ Jesus and included in his own self-presentation before the Father and in that relationship to partake of the divine nature. But significantly, Torrance acknowledges the truth inherent in the doctrine of theōsis,

the staggering thing about this is that the exaltation of human nature into the life of God does not mean the disappearance of man or the swallowing up of human and creaturely being in the infinite ocean of the divine Being, but rather that human nature, remaining creaturely and human, is yet exalted in Christ to share in God’s life and glory.

The present chapter has highlighted the unique role the eternal Son plays in the process of theōsis along with the participation of believers into Christ’s humanity and through him to communion with the Father by the Spirit. Torrance often speaks of this as the ‘wonderful exchange’. While the present chapter has tended to focus on individual believers, Torrance’s vision of theōsis is inherently corporate, involving the work of the Holy Spirit at each step; the details of which are the concern of the next chapter.

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Chapter Four

Community and Communion

'Human beings, who count for nothing among beings, and who are dust, grass, vanity, once adopted as children by the God of the universe, become the intimate friends of this Being, who is of an excellence and greatness such that one can neither see Him nor hear Him nor comprehend Him. What thanksgivings worthy of such a favor can one find? By what word, by what thought, by what impulse of spirit can one exalt the superabundance of this grace? Humankind transcend their own nature: from mortal they become immortal; from perishable, imperishable; from fleeting, eternal; in a word, from human beings they become gods. Indeed, made worthy of becoming children of God, they will have in themselves the dignity of the Father, enriched with all the paternal benefits. O munificence of the Lord most rich!...How great are the gifts of unutterable treasures!'

• Gregory of Nyssa 1

'Deification means more than seeing God, rather it means seeing through the eyes of God.'

• Emil Bartos 2

'Through Holy Communion, Christ enters into the depths of man's existence with the offer of His divinising grace.'

• Georges I Mantzaridis 3

§16 The Eternal Spirit

Throughout Torrance's articulation of reconciliation, the role of the Holy Spirit has been mentioned frequently but not specifically analysed. The present chapter examines the role of the Holy Spirit as it relates to Torrance's use of theōsis, a role that is constitutive of theōsis in epistemological and ontological terms. Torrance's pneumatology deals with both the human person as an individual and, significantly, human persons in relation both to God and to the fellow humans in the body of Christ. Consequently Torrance develops a pneumat-ecclesiology in which both community and communion are emphasised and the church is understood as the communion of theōsis.

1 Gregory of Nyssa, Beat. 7 (PG 44:1280b-c).
Pneumatology is fundamental to the discussion of theosis as it is in this that the reality of the believer's participation in the divine nature emerges. Torrance's pneumatology provides a basis for this, yet due to his focussed attention on other issues, it never received the detailed treatment one may have hoped for. Central to the present study is the relationship between the Spirit and Christ, which Torrance develops around the theme of the mutual mediation of these two persons of the Trinity; the relationship between the Spirit and the believer, developed primarily in the motif of communion; and the relationship between the Spirit and the church, most fully expressed within a theology of the sacraments. The Holy Spirit equips and enables the incarnate Son to make the wonderful exchange for us; the Holy Spirit is the bond of love who unites believers to the incarnate Son and enables them to be drawn into the life of God; and the Holy Spirit is the bond of communion who constitutes the church as the locus of theosis. Through this pneumatologically-oriented ecclesiology Torrance's doctrine of theosis justifies trinitarian prayer and worship: true worship, as understood by Torrance, is the gift of participating in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father by the Spirit - a most fitting goal of theosis.

Pneumatology is perhaps the least examined aspect of Torrance's entire theology, and yet it constitutes one of the more significant features of

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his work, leading one scholar to remark: ‘The Spirit is the hero behind the curtain of Torrance’s theological stage.’ For others the curtain is still very much drawn. Yeung concludes his study with the strange assertion that, ‘It seems that Torrance does not yet have a full doctrine of the Holy Spirit,’ and later, ‘Torrance definitely rejects the charge of binitarianism but that is without doubt the way towards which his theology leans.’

While this statement was made prior to the publication of Torrance’s 1996 work, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, Torrance’s other major monograph, *The Trinitarian Faith*, first published in 1988, was interacted with by Yeung, and yet he appears not to have understood how profoundly Torrance’s pneumatology is integrated with the rest of his theological science. No reading of either major monograph of Torrance’s provides any evidence of binitarianism. Yeung errs in thinking that because Torrance presents a *christologically conditioned* pneumatology, particularly in his treatment of epistemology, his theology of the Holy Spirit is somehow radically deficient. Torrance’s purpose is to give the Holy Spirit a place of significance along with the incarnation of the Son in Christian theology. The Holy Spirit is constitutive for it is by the Spirit that we participate in the Son and through him in God. The question is not, ‘Does Torrance have a robust pneumatology?’ but rather, ‘How should a robust pneumatology be expressed in a scientific dogmatics?’ While Yeung’s critical comments are mistaken, he is right to suggest that Torrance’s pneumatology is not as thoroughly developed as it could be.

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8. This charge of Yeung’s is all the more surprising given his statement in *Being and Knowing: An Examination of T.F. Torrance’s Christological Science* (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996), 169, fn.65, that he is following closely chapter 6 of Torrance’s work *The Trinitarian Faith*, a chapter in which Torrance shows through the patristic theologians why and how the Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father and the Son!
10. In an early section Yeung’s work his thesis is that, ‘sharing in the Son’s communion with the Father in the Spirit’ amounts to Torrance’s doctrine of knowledge of God. In his focus on epistemology Yeung reduces Torrance’s doctrine of union, communion, participation, and *koinonia* to simply ‘knowing’ and so blinds Yeung to the wider applications of those terms to what we understand as *theosis* and all it entails. See J.H-K. Yeung, *Being and Knowing: An Examination of T.F. Torrance’s Christological Science* (Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996), 155-185.
11. See the discussion on Torrance’s use of the *an- and enhypostasis theologoumenon* for example in Chapter Two, 129-133.
and that at key points where an exposition on the role of the Spirit is called for, in \textit{theōsis} for example, little exists. However, lack of a developed pneumatology is a different claim from the allegation that Torrance’s theology is binitarian.

Although Torrance’s theology is rigorously trinitarian, as with his christology, he has not produced a separate monograph on pneumatology, preferring to interweave it throughout every major \textit{locus} of his theology.\textsuperscript{12} The intrinsic trinitarian relations between the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father need not occupy our attention, or the many other aspects of pneumatology that Torrance deals with.\textsuperscript{13} The preceding analysis of Torrance’s doctrines of creation, anthropology, incarnation, and reconciliation holds equally for his pneumatology, and we have pointed to the constituent role of the Holy Spirit already at many points throughout the previous discussion.

In order to further clarify how Torrance uses a doctrine of \textit{theōsis} it must be repeated that the work of the Spirit is never independent of the Son. Torrance draws upon the work of Athanasius to affirm that the only correct way to gain a knowledge of the Holy Spirit is through a knowledge of the Son.

[\textbf{U}nless we know the Holy Spirit through the objectivity of the \textit{homoousion} of the Son in whom and by whom our minds are directed away from ourselves to the one Fountain and Principle of Godhead, then we inevitably become engrossed with ourselves, confusing the Holy Spirit with our own spirits, and confounding the one Truth of God with notions of our own devising.\textsuperscript{14}]


\textsuperscript{14} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 227.
To go back to Basil’s distinctions, the Spirit perfects what the Son has moulded and so the two work together.\textsuperscript{15} Through the inner linking of the work of the Spirit (perfecting), and the work of the Son (moulding), the specifically personal nature of humanity’s subject-being and personal mode of rationality arises.

Through Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son or Word of God, and in the Holy Spirit, it is possible for man to have direct access to God, to meet and know him personally, to hear him and speak to him face to face or person to person, and thus to experience in himself the transforming impact of God’s personal Reality and Being.\textsuperscript{16} By linking the Spirit’s work with the Son in this trinitarian fashion, Torrance thrusts us back to christology as the proper place to examine the nature of human being and person.\textsuperscript{17} Through the incarnation Christ perfects human nature and heals it in soul and body as he is decisively and perfectly sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Here we come full circle to theological anthropology again to see that salvation understood from the standpoint of the Spirit must be expressed in inherently relational terms in which Christ is central.\textsuperscript{18} Once again we are reminded that incarnation proleptically conditions creation.\textsuperscript{19} Through the vicarious life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, humanity is made to participate in the divine life in the Spirit through the Son. Through the incarnation divinity and humanity were united thus enabling the fullness of the Spirit’s presence to sanctify human nature. ‘This is the new spiritual and ontological condition of people which the New Testament refers to by the expressions “in Christ” and “in the Spirit”.’\textsuperscript{20} It

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18] See Chapter One, 53-59.
\end{footnotes}
is this new ontological level of human existence made possible by the incarnation and the pouring out of the Spirit that led the Greek fathers to assert a doctrine of theosis in relation to John 10.34: ‘the Scripture calls ‘gods’ those to whom the Word of God came.’ ‘Such was the exalted status,’ writes Torrance, ‘they felt obliged to accord to man ‘in Christ’ and ‘in the Spirit.’”

The Spirit thus comes ‘as the Spirit of a Manhood wholly offered to God in perpetual glorification and worship and praise.’ Worship is epiclesis and paraclesis, the invocation of the Paraclete Spirit and the coming of the other Paraclete to help us. In our worship the Holy Spirit comes from God, uniting us to the response, obedience, faith, and worship of Jesus Christ (also our Paraclete), and returns to God, raising us up in Jesus to participate in the worship of heaven and in the eternal communion of the Holy Trinity.

Aware of the dangers inherent in identifying the Holy Spirit with the human spirit, Torrance insists on the radical objectivity of the Spirit. Torrance defines pneumatology as ‘the objective reality and personal Being of the Spirit...’ How then can the Spirit be present in creation without confusing God’s Spirit for the human spirit? Only through the mediation of Son and Spirit can these be distinguished. God became human without ceasing to be God in order to enable believers to participate in the divine nature without ceasing to be human. In the incarnation God drew so near to humanity that he entered within our creaturely life, and the completion of the atoning work of Christ led to an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon human flesh which created the

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24 This is echoed many times in Torrance’s theology but is concisely stated in Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 233-235.

church. The church is thus the sphere within which reconciliation is actualised and God makes himself present. Torrance’s doctrine of theōsis would be incomplete, and incoherent, even anti-Christian, if the objectivity of the Spirit was not maintained by it.

According to Torrance, the persistent error of both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism lies in confounding the Holy Spirit with the human spirit on the one hand (homineque), or with the spirit of the church on the other (ecclesiaque). Both views must be rejected. Based on his understanding of the objectivity of the Spirit, Torrance maintains that God is present to believers now by his Holy Spirit and by the Holy Spirit God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, as he often phrases it.

Colyer remarks, 'In Torrance’s theology, the Holy Spirit is as profoundly, personally, and intimately present to us and all of creation as in any form of panentheism, but in a way that acknowledges the majesty, objectivity, and freedom of the Spirit... God became incarnate without ceasing to be God and now, after Pentecost, God is present to us in a real way by his Spirit without reducing his majesty or being to the creaturely realm.

Consistent with Nicene theology Torrance understands theōsis as an affirmation of the immediate personal and ineffable presence of the Holy Spirit, in and through whom we are united to Jesus Christ, and through Christ with the Father... Explaining the central role of the Holy Spirit to the process of theōsis Torrance observes:

By coming into man the Holy Spirit opens him out for God. But at the very heart of this movement is the act of God in which he became man in order to take man’s place, and give man a place within the communion of the divine life...Hence when we speak of the Spirit as pouring out the love of God in our hearts, we are to think of his activity in strict correlativity to the atoning substitution in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – that is to say, we are to think

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of the work of the Spirit not simply as the actualizing within us of what God has already wrought for us in Jesus Christ once and for all, but as opening us up within our subjectivities for Christ in such a radical way that we find our life not in ourselves but out of ourselves, objectively in him.\textsuperscript{31}

Torrance outlines the goal and purpose of creation as it relates to the vital role of the Holy Spirit. In a lengthy citation he argues:

Let it be repeated that the God who has revealed himself to us in the Gospel as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not a God who lives for himself alone, but who lives by his self-sufficient divine Life in love for others and has poured out his love without reserve in the gift of his only begotten Son to us as our Saviour, and in the Holy Spirit who shed abroad that very love in our hearts. This does not imply...that God is conditioned by, far less constituted through, his relation to us who are quite other than he is, for he is already concerned with Others eternally and inherently in himself, in the three-fold otherness of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in their Love for one another and communion with another. It is from the free ground of that transcendent otherness in himself in his Triune Being, that God freely and spontaneously creates others outwith [sic] himself for fellowship with himself and brings then into actual communion with himself. This free-flowing unconditioned outgoing movement of his Being means that God refuses to be shut off from us in his unapproachable Majesty, infinite otherness and incomprehensibility. He makes himself really accessible to us, and does so not only in communicating himself to us in the incarnation of his Son, but in imparting to us his Holy Spirit in such an utterly astonishing way as to actualise among us his self-giving to us as the Lord and at the same time to effect our receiving of him in his self-giving.\textsuperscript{32}

Modern charges against a doctrine of theosis claim that it is a Platonic accretion which ultimately confuses human with the divine and vice versa. Torrance’s theology, in direct contrast to such claims, declares that because of the utter objectivity of the Holy Spirit, theosis can in no way be construed as confusing, mixing, or melding divinity with humanity in either Christ or the Christian.

As in his doctrines of incarnation and reconciliation, Torrance does not start his pneumat-o-ecclesiology afresh but proceeds from within the Reformed tradition, especially as influenced by the work of John Calvin. Thus some context must be provided to identify Torrance’s own

\textsuperscript{31} T.F. Torrance,\textit{ Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 238 (italics in original).

\textsuperscript{32} T.F. Torrance,\textit{ The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 150
pneumatology. Following the lead of Calvin, 'the theologian of the Holy Spirit,' Torrance seeks to build bridges between Eastern and Western theologies in order to achieve a more ecumenical, and more biblical, expression of the body of Christ: his use of *theōsis* is a key to this.

Calvin defends the complete Deity of the Holy Spirit using two main lines of evidence: the first is that the deity of the Spirit is evidenced in his sovereign work, the second is that it is affirmed in Scripture. But how did Calvin distinguish the Spirit from the Father and the Son? After cautioning on the inadequacy of human comparisons, Calvin makes the following distinctions: 'to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity.' This formulation becomes important for Torrance's theology where the Holy Spirit is the agent of human participation in God. If a trinitarian foundation is not kept in mind then the work of the Spirit becomes isolated from that of the Son; either assuming a place of sovereignty over the Son, or an ontological submission under the Son. In Torrance's theology neither of these options is presented.

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35 The Spirit's sovereign work includes: (A) the Spirit's activity in the creation account of Gen. 1.2; (B) the Spirit shared with God the sending of the prophets; (C) the Spirit's manifold divine activities in creation, redemption, wisdom, speech - and through him we enter the fellowship of God to enjoy these; and (D) the Spirit shares in God's power and resides hypostatically in God. J. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I.13.14.


37 'I really do not know whether it is expedient to borrow comparisons from human affairs to express the force of this distinction...thus it is that I shrink from all rashness here: lest if anything should be inopportune expressed, it may give occasion either of calumny to the malicious, or of delusion to the ignorant.' J. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I.13.18.

There is in Calvin’s thought a strong emphasis on the work of the Spirit in the renewal and sanctification of believers summarised in the statement: ‘the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.’\textsuperscript{39} Thus Calvin set the agenda for the theological discussion to follow. In the third book of his 1559 Institutes he prefaced his treatment of the ‘Mode of attaining the Grace of God’ with a remark about the Holy Spirit as the active agent of God to apply the benefits of Christ to the individual believer and to the body of believers, the church. One of Calvin’s great legacies to Protestantism was his emphasis that the work of the Spirit is inseparable from the work of the Son and the Father. Torrance rigorously adopts this in his theology.

According to Torrance, and the wider Reformed tradition within which he stands, the believer is incorporated into the mission and person of Christ in a profound way by the Holy Spirit. Everything that is Christ’s as the ‘man’ for us becomes ours through our spiritual union with Christ. Christ’s resurrection, for instance, is spoken of as his justification (1 Tim 3.15), because in resurrection he was vindicated and justified by the Spirit. Christ’s resurrection is also interpreted as his adoption by the Spirit, as for instance when we read that Christ was a descendant of David as to his human nature but declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection (Rom 1.4). The resurrection is viewed as Christ’s sanctification (Rom 6.9-10) by the Spirit, as he died to sin once and for all and was raised to newness of life with God by the Spirit. Finally, Christ’s resurrection is his glorification (1 Cor 15.20, 42-44), when, by the Spirit’s power, his bodily existence was transformed into one of glory.\textsuperscript{40}

This christological focus and the Pauline language of ‘in Christ’ and ‘with Christ’ help our understanding of the two aspects of the work of the Spirit. First, in relation to Christ, the Spirit is the one who empowers, enables, bonds, and mediates the presence and power of God. Second, in


\textsuperscript{40} See our earlier discussion in Chapter Three, 202-221, and on an ordo salutis in Torrance’s work, 218, fn. 223.
relation to the believer the Spirit places us 'in' or 'with' Christ, so that his justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification become ours. According to Torrance and Reformed theology more generally, union with Christ thus provides the framework from within which the work of the Spirit is to be considered.\footnote{See Chapter Three, 171-190. For contemporary proposals in Reformed thought explicitly influenced by Torrance's theology consult P.M. Achtemeier, 'The Union with Christ Doctrine in Renewal: Movements of the Presbyterian Church (USA),' in Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity, ed. W.M. Alston and M. Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 336-350.}

The Holy Spirit is central to Torrance’s doctrine of the\(\text{o}\)\(\delta\)\(\i\)\(\sigma\)\(\i\)\(\i\)\(s\)\(is\) but only when understood within a truly trinitarian framework. It is not, as Yeung suggests, that the Holy Spirit is less significant than the Son or the Father in Torrance’s theology, but that the 'deifying' activity of the Spirit has a christological focus: to incorporate the believer into Christ and through Christ to bring the believer to participate in the divine nature. Having said this, it is evident that Torrance only spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit in the process of the\(\text{o}\)\(\delta\)\(\i\)\(\sigma\)\(\i\)\(\i\)\(s\) in the ongoing lives of believers in specific and thus limited ways.

By treating pneumatology and ecclesiology together in this chapter we do not intend to imply that Torrance only thinks of the Holy Spirit in relation to the church, nor even that he exclusively thinks of the Spirit in this way. By treating pneumatology and ecclesiology together the way in which the Holy Spirit and the church function in close reciprocity in Torrance’s use of the\(\delta\)\(o\)\(s\) is highlighted. This chapter expressly limits itself to an investigation of the specific work of the Spirit post-Pentecost\footnote{T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 245-246.} and in relation to the believer’s the\(\delta\)\(o\)\(s\) and its outworking on several levels: the Holy Spirit in relation to Jesus Christ; to believers; and within the church.

\section*{§16.1 The Mutual Mediation of Son and Spirit}

In Scripture and in the early church the Holy Spirit emerges most fully in relation to Christ, and thus for Torrance, a proper christocentrism allows
for and sponsors a robust pneumatology. Basing his pneumatology, like Calvin, largely on Greek patristic insights, Torrance contends that the creative and redemptive work of the Spirit is to be thought of in terms of his inseparable relation to Christ. This is why the Spirit is spoken of as 'the Spirit of Christ' since he is by nature closely related to him. 'Not only does the Spirit have koinonia kata phisin with the Father and the Son, but he is peculiarly closely related to the nature of the Son, and it is in this connection that his operations are to be discerned and understood.'

Torrance finds confirmation of this throughout the Gospels, where the Spirit is intimately involved with every stage of Jesus' earthly career: virgin conception (Mat 1.18 par.), baptism (Mat 3.16, par.), temptation (Mk 1.12 par.), ministry (Lk 4.14; Mat 12.31 par.), cross (Mk 14.36; Heb 9.14), resurrection (Rom 8.11), and Pentecost (Acts 2.4). The Spirit is not an addendum to theology as he is active before and after the cross, empowering and defining who Jesus is as the Son and empowering and actualising the words and works of Christ in the church. This emphasis in Torrance leads one commentator on Torrance to declare:

In and through the incarnation of the Son of God the being and action of the Holy Spirit is revealed in two dimensions. Thus the church in its own worship and doctrine traced out the two dimensions in terms of two relations: the relation of the Holy Spirit with the Triune life and also in relation to creation.

Torrance uses this twofold relation to great effect to highlight the identity and mission of the Holy Spirit, explaining that the Spirit makes theosis a reality in the life of the believer.

Torrance goes back to Basil the Great for his definition of the distinction between the three persons of the Godhead. The Spirit is distinguished as 'the perfecting cause' (he teleiotike aitia), the work of the Father as 'the originating cause' (he prokatarktike aitia), and the work of the Son as

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44 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 221. Torrance is drawing specifically upon St Basil's De Spiritu Sancto.

‘the moulding cause’ (*he demiourgike aitia*).\(^{46}\) The Spirit is transcendent over creation but is also free to be immanent within it. The Spirit as the ‘perfecting cause’ brings to completion the creative purpose of God for human persons in the Son, thereby linking ‘the creature in an enduring ontological relation to God.’\(^{47}\) The Spirit is thus the quickening Spirit, the Lord who is *autozoe*, the Author of Life.\(^{48}\) This means that the created being, while having no inherent qualities that would place it in ontological union with God, nevertheless, by the work of the Spirit, acquires ontological communion with the triune God. In every operation of the Spirit the Father and the Son are also present and so Torrance comments, ‘The special activity of the Spirit as Creator may be described as holding contingent reality *within* the embrace of his presence, thereby imparting to it the grace of continuance and consummating its relations with the ultimate source of its being and order in the Father and the Son.’\(^{49}\) Thus, it is in the role of the Holy Spirit that Torrance identifies the point of contact in Christ Jesus with God (Father and Son) and between God and humanity. Pneumatology must be our focus if we are to know how *theōsis* is incorporated throughout his theology.

Approaches to the theology of the Spirit have tended to bifurcate, as Rowan Williams has pointed out.\(^{50}\) On the one hand, the Spirit may be regarded as an epistemological bridge between Creator and creature or; on the other, the Spirit may be seen as an ontological link between the triune God and the believer. Torrance’s theology develops both themes, epistemological and ontological, and sees both as essential to a doctrine

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of *theōsis*. Eugene Rogers has illustrated the point that in twentieth-century theology, this divide between epistemology and ontology has continued, even within Calvin studies. Eugene Rogers has illustrated the point that in twentieth-century theology, this divide between epistemology and ontology has continued, even within Calvin studies. Eugene Rogers has illustrated the point that in twentieth-century theology, this divide between epistemology and ontology has continued, even within Calvin studies.51 German-Swiss Calvin studies (what Rogers calls 'continental Calvin studies') were largely preoccupied with the epistemological role of the Spirit, emphasising his role in revelation (Barth-Brunner), or in his relation to Scripture (Wilhelm Niesel), while what he terms 'Francophone scholarship' has stressed Calvin’s support for the participationist or transformative view, as recent studies on *theōsis* in Calvin highlight. In this latter field Rogers notes 'the exception proves the rule: The Anglophone author most open to ontic language in Calvin’s doctrine of the Spirit may be Thomas Torrance, in dialogue with Orthodox theology.'52 Having already considered Torrance’s reading of Calvin’s theology we need not rehearse those themes again.53 So we find within Torrance’s pneumatology both elements: the epistemological and the ontological, the noetic and the ontic.54 Torrance considers the Spirit to act as both the epistemological and the ontological bridge between God and humanity, and vice versa. It is beyond our scope to analyze the intra-Trinitarian relations of the Holy Spirit, though Torrance’s theology is highly suggestive in that area.55 Our immediate concern is with the relation between the Holy Spirit and creation, and more specifically, with the salvation of men and women understood as *theōsis*, which Torrance sometimes terms the ‘mutual mediation of the Son and the Spirit’. Some recent theological works have developed these

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53 See Introduction, 6, 37; Chapter One, 58-68, 89; Chapter Two, 103-105; and Chapter Three, 171-190, 192, 214.


same themes. For example, Badcock in *Light of Truth and Fire of Love*, concludes:

Perhaps the single most important claim in all that has been said concerns the reciprocal relations between christology and pneumatology. This reciprocity, which emerges from the New Testament and which has been rediscovered across a range of recent theological writing, amounts to a total interpenetration of each by each, a *perichoresis* that has enormous implications for how Christian faith is to be understood.\(^56\)

To understand Torrance’s theology we must appreciate that while the missions of the second and third Persons of the Trinity are distinct, they are never separated.\(^57\) According to Torrance, ‘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.’\(^58\) As Colyer has warned, ‘failure to take note of this can lead to serious misunderstandings of Torrance’s position.’\(^59\) This doctrine of mutual mediation applies to the extent that the work of the Spirit may be understood as correlative to the traditional Reformed view of Christ’s threefold Office as Prophet, Priest, and King.\(^60\) In regard to the prophetic office, both Christ and the Spirit are referred to in the New Testament as the ‘quickening Spirit’ and as ‘Advocate’ (Rom 8.2, 1 Cor 15.45, Jn 14.16, 1 Jn 2.1). In this twofold advocacy and intercession the work of Christ is not only fulfilled in a single act of redemption at the cross but is also applied in time to those who believe in him. In regard to the priestly office, the Spirit applies the blood of Christ to us through baptism, but this cannot be separated from Pentecost, the


\(^{57}\) G.W. Deddo, ‘The Holy Spirit in T.F. Torrance’s Theology,’ in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance*, ed. E.M. Colyer (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 81-114, makes this point clearly and constructs his brief exploration around it. We could of course extend this claim to all three persons of the Trinity and echo, as Torrance does, the Augustinian dictum ‘*opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt.*’


occasion on which the risen Christ baptises his church. In regard to the kingly office, the Spirit works as the power and operation of God, effectively applying Christ’s victory over the powers to us, and so delivering us from bondage into the freedom of the ‘sons’ of God.

According to Torrance, the Holy Spirit is not given to us as an empty sign, ‘naked’ or ‘isolated,’ but, comes to us as the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and is thus ‘charged with all the experiences of Jesus’.\(^{61}\) This explains the sending of the Holy Spirit once the vicarious humanity of Christ had been taken up into union with the triune God in the ascension. In Torrance’s theology it is imperative that the Spirit could not be sent until after the ascension. In his own words,

> Only with the enthronement of the Lamb, only with the presence of our Surety and the continual intercession of our High Priest before the face of the Father, only with the taking up of the glorified humanity of Christ our Brother into the unity of the blessed Trinity, could the Holy Spirit be released in all his sanctifying and renewing agency to dwell with man. This culminates in the decisive move:

> Then he came down freely upon the Body that had been prepared, the church purchased by the blood of Christ, and lifted it up, unhindered by guilt and sin or the divine judgment, to participate freely in the very life of God.\(^ {62}\)

The Holy Spirit is thus the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of redemption, the Spirit of glory 

\textit{because} he is the Spirit of Christ.\(^ {63}\)

Torrance makes explicit the inseparability of the Spirit from the Son in a direct discussion of \textit{theōsis}. According to Torrance \textit{theōsis} is the expression used in the Greek fathers for the consubstantial self-giving of God to humankind through Christ and in his Spirit.

\textit{[The Holy Spirit]} is not divine because he participates in God, for he is himself fully and wholly God, of one and the same being with the Father. In virtue of his divine reality and presence incarnate within mankind he acts upon people in an utterly divine and creative way, making them partake of himself through grace and thus partake of God. \(\text{θεοποιητικός} \text{ or } \text{θεωκλής} \ldots \) in the nature of the case we are not

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\(^{63}\) T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 248.
saved or renewed by the activity of Christ without being united to him and partaking of him.\textsuperscript{64}

Partaking of Christ is made possible because of Christ's union with humanity in the incarnation, and by the believer's union with Christ, all of which is made possible by the Spirit.

Christ alone is Theos (\(\Theta\varepsilon\Omega\sigma\)), true God of true God, he alone is properly (\(\kappa\upsilon\lambda\rho\omega\varsigma\)) Son of the Father, but through his divine activity (\(\Theta\varepsilon\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\sigma\tau\iota\omicron\omicron\omicron\gamma\nu\sigma\)) we are adopted and made sons of God in him, and in that respect, as those who through union with Christ receive the grace and light of his Spirit, are said to be theoi (\(\Theta\varepsilon\omicron\omicron\lambda\)).\textsuperscript{65}

Thus theosis is able, within Torrance's theology, to stand for salvation in all its tenses, applications, stages, and contours. Torrance, following his Greek patristic mentors and before them, Jesus himself (Jn 10.34, cf. Ps 82.6), is able to assert that believers are gods. This bold assertion is only comprehensible within a trinitarian context.

It is precisely because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ that he can be identified as the Spirit of 'Manhood' by Torrance - 'the Spirit comes as the Spirit of Manhood wholly offered to God in perpetual glorification and worship and praise.'\textsuperscript{66} The mutual mediation of Son and Spirit is applied to believers so that they have the Spirit of Sonship/Manhood applied to them in order to enable them to live an obedient, humble life of faithful service to God. To sever the Spirit from the Son is to strip the Spirit of not only his identity but also his unique work. It is only in and by the Spirit of Christ that a believer can participate in the divine nature, for that is precisely what the Spirit does, both with Christ the Son by nature, and with believers, sons and daughters by grace. As Torrance makes clear, 'The Holy Spirit is God in his freedom not only to give being to the creation but through his presence in it to bring its relations with himself to their end and perfection.'\textsuperscript{67} That end and perfection is union with the humanity of Christ and through that union a communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

\textsuperscript{64} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 139.

\textsuperscript{65} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 139.

\textsuperscript{66} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 248.

\textsuperscript{67} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 248.
This union and communion establishes an ontological relation between all humans and Christ, as well as fulfils cosmic redemption and sanctification. Hence, 'the creative work of the Spirit is, so to speak, proleptically conditioned by that of redemption.'\textsuperscript{68} Once again we find the familiar themes of Torrance's doctrines of creation, anthropology, and christology reworked and restated, this time from the perspective of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not operating on some independent plane from the Son or the Father; neither is the Spirit merely applying the results of an already accomplished work of the Son. The Spirit is crucial to Jesus' incarnate existence - his life, death, and resurrection - and is now at work in the world to further the mission of the Son.

We may observe the parallel between Torrance's doctrine of the Spirit and certain Eastern Orthodox understandings.

According to the Eastern view, the descent (\textit{katabasis}) of the divine person of Christ makes human persons capable of an ascent (\textit{anabasis}) in the Holy Spirit. It was necessary that the voluntary humiliation, the redemptive \textit{kenosis} of the Son of God should take place, so that fallen humans might accomplish their vocation of theosis, the deification of created beings by uncreated grace.\textsuperscript{69}

According to Eastern Orthodoxy, doctrines of \textit{theōsis} cannot be expressed on a christological basis alone, but demand a pneumatological development as well. The goal of \textit{theōsis} is not the cancellation of sin, although this is a necessary outcome; it is, more profoundly, creatures' worship of God, defined in trinitarian terms as the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father.\textsuperscript{70} It is the Holy Spirit who effects \textit{theōsis} with all its constituent parts and cognates: justification, sanctification, adoption, glorification, communion, participation, and perfection. Eastern Orthodoxy 'teaches that that which is common to the Father and the Son is the divinity which the Holy Spirit communicates to humans within the church, in making them partakers of

\textsuperscript{68} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 217, cf. 221.


\textsuperscript{70} While this is the specific terminology of J.B. Torrance, it is consciously constructed along Cappadocian lines and is faithful to an Orthodox understanding of worship which T.F. Torrance ascribes to as well. See J.B. Torrance, \textit{Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace} (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), 9, 15, 20-21, 30, and 41.
the divine nature. Deification is the highest gift and blessing of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{71} Torrance’s pneumatology is in fundamental agreement with this, for after discussing the mutual mediation of Christ and Spirit, he immediately enquires as to its implications for the church’s trinitarian worship.\textsuperscript{72}

So central is the theme of pneumatology throughout Eastern Orthodox thought that, echoing the words of St Seraphim of Sarov, Lossky affirms ‘the true end of the Christian life is the acquiring of the Holy Spirit.’\textsuperscript{73} According to Lossky, visions, fasting, vigils and good works, while essential, do not constitute the goal of Christian life; they are but indispensable means for the attainment of that end, the means by which we acquire the Holy Spirit in his fullness.\textsuperscript{74} Lossky describes the \textit{locus} of attaining the Holy Spirit in his fullness as the church:\textsuperscript{75}

The deification or \textit{theōsis} of the creature will be realized in its fullness only in the age to come, after the resurrection of the dead. This deifying union has, nevertheless, to be fulfilled ever more and more even in this present life, through the transformation of our corruptible and depraved nature and by its adaptation to eternal life. If God has given us in the Church all the objective conditions, all the means that we need for the attainment of this end, we, on our side, must produce the necessary subjective conditions: for it is in this synergy, in this co-operation of man with God, that the union is fulfilled. This subjective aspect of our union with God constitutes the way of union which is the Christian life.\textsuperscript{76}

Through praxis (\textit{praxis}) and contemplation (\textit{theōria}), the power of divine love is communicated to the human by the Holy Spirit, ‘creating a gift, a divine and deifying energy in which we really participate in the nature of


\textsuperscript{72} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 248-249.

\textsuperscript{73} V. Lossky, \textit{The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church} (1944. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 196.

\textsuperscript{74} Lossky explicitly rules out any conception of merit in the Eastern Orthodox notion of the way of union in \textit{The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church} (1944. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 197. Western detractors are not so confident.

\textsuperscript{75} V. Lossky, \textit{The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church} (1944. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 216.

\textsuperscript{76} V. Lossky, \textit{The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church} (1944. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 196.
the Holy Trinity, by becoming partakers of the divine nature. Finally, Lossky asserts, 'All the conditions necessary for attaining this final end are given to Christians in the church. But union with God is not the result of an organic or unconscious process: it is accomplished in person by the co-operation of the Holy Spirit and our freedom.'

This fundamental vision of the mutual mediation between Christ and the Spirit, operative within the church, is employed by Torrance. Others in his Reformed tradition had previously made this point. Jonathan Edwards prefigured some of the concerns of Torrance in his own formulation of theōsis. Edwards thought that traditional theology did not do justice to the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation when it confined the work of the Spirit to the application of the benefits from the Son, for this was effectively an ontological subordination of the Spirit to the Son. In his introduction to Edwards' Treatise on Grace, Paul Helm suggests that 'the Holy Spirit is not the agent of application, He is what is given to the Church.' He Spirit is, as Edwards later wrote, 'the sumnum of all good...the fullness of God.' According to Edwards, human beings are incorporated into God's life through the power of the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit of God, in acting in the soul of a godly man, exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature. Holiness is the proper nature of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit operates in the minds of the godly, by uniting himself to them, and living in them, and exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties.

One scholar of Edwards, McClymont, concludes that, 'this in effect is divinization, seen from the human side. The life of the Holy Spirit is, so to

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speak, expanded to include the sanctified thoughts, affects and actions of the saints. Edwards bears testimony to the same point as Torrance, that the mutual mediation of Christ and the Spirit means that what is Christ’s by nature is given to believers by grace. The unitive operation of the Spirit in the incarnate Son is now operative in human beings, and it is this latter union which Edwards describes as deification.

The culmination of the Spirit-empowered mission of Christ is Pentecost. This means, as Badcock has made clear, that ‘there can be no adequate pneumatology where the centrality of Jesus is lost from sight, and therefore no theology of the Spirit or of the spiritual life in which the historical context and content of the central Christian story as presented in the New Testament is relinquished’. Badcock then asserts: ‘The spirit was not, in the Christian sense, until Jesus had been “glorified” (John 7.39) – a glorification that in the New Testament is inseparable from the passion.’ Pentecost plays a considerable role in Torrance’s discussion for it is the historical climax of the incarnation and the occasion on which the risen and ascended Lord bestows upon his church his new life. ‘In other words,’ as Pinnock phrases it, ‘something happened through the total journey of Jesus that literally changed the world and opened the door wide to union with God’. He adds, ‘With the glorification of Jesus a process began which will end in the divinization of the world.’ Torrance’s theology echoes these same themes, albeit without the implication of a universal that takes place automatically.

Thus something decisive happened on the Day of Pentecost, a new coming of the Holy Spirit in power in order to do for humanity what

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85 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 240-249.
humanity could not do for itself. Pentecost is as new and distinct, and
indeed as unique, as the incarnation itself. Pentecost commenced a new
mode of the Spirit’s entry into the lives of men and women. This was
made possible by the incarnation and atonement, for in the incarnation
human and divine nature were inseparably united in the eternal Person of
God the Son. In him, therefore, Torrance would say that the closed circle
of the inner life of God was made to overlap with human life, and human
nature was taken up to share in the eternal communion of the Father, the
Son, and the Spirit.

While much theology has concentrated on the descent of the Spirit, fewer
theologians (in modernity at least) have developed the theme of the
ascent of the Spirit back to God. Torrance presents it in these terms:

By his very nature the Holy Spirit not only proceeds from the Father
but lifts up to the Father; he is not only the Spirit sent by Christ but
the Spirit of response to Christ, the Spirit in whom and by whom and
with whom we worship and glorify the Father and the Son. Not only is
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 and witness
by whom the Church lives and fulfils its mission to the glory of God.88

This movement back to God is clearly an aspect of *theōsis* in Torrance’s
theology. We have already mentioned Torrance’s call for:

...a reconsideration by the Reformed Churches of what the Greek
fathers called *theosis*. This is usually unfortunately translated
deification, but it has nothing to do with the divinization of man any
more than the Incarnation has to do with the humanization of God.
*Theosis* was the term the Fathers used to emphasize the fact that
through the Spirit we have to do with God in his utter sublimity, his
sheer Godness or holiness; creatures though we are, men on earth,
in the Spirit we are made to participate in saving acts that are
abruptly and absolutely divine, election, adoption, regeneration or
sanctification and we participate in them by grace alone. *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 Holy God, where he lives and moves and has his being
in the uncreated but creative energy of the Holy Spirit. By *theosis* the
Greek fathers wished to express the fact that in the new coming of
the Holy Spirit we are up against *God* in the most absolute sense,
God in his ultimate holiness or Godness.89
Torrance’s explanation of the redemptive significance of Pentecost has certain parallels with the theology of recapitulation developed by Irenaeus.⁹⁰ The other Paraclete could not be sent until Christ had completed his earthly mission of representing fallen humanity, healing sinful human nature, and effecting union and communion between God and humanity. Once Christ took his place at the right hand of the Father his journey of atonement was complete, for he had finished the constitutive work of recapitulation and become the first-fruits of a new humanity. At that time he sent the Spirit at Pentecost to draw all people to himself.

In the introduction to his early work on the Reformed Catechisms, The School of Faith, Torrance emphasises that the Spirit actualises within the believer subjectively what Christ has accomplished objectively.⁹¹ This is a natural and logical extension of the mutual mediation of Son and Spirit into the creaturely realm. The work of the Spirit must be understood as correlative to the union of God and humanity wrought in the incarnate life of Jesus Christ. As the Spirit unites the divinity and humanity of Christ, so the Spirit unites believers to God. Thus Torrance asserts:

The Reformed doctrine of the Communion of the Spirit is not a doctrine of communion in spirit or even simply a doctrine of communion in the Spirit, but a doctrine of Communion in Christ through the Spirit or, to put it otherwise, of union with Christ through the Communion of the Spirit.⁹² Communion thus stands for a corporate dynamic of mutual participation through the Spirit in Christ 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.’⁹³ This is a fundamental insight which Torrance builds upon when

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articulating the role of the Spirit as the agent of participation of the believer in Christ and through Christ with the Father.

§17 The Spirit as Agent of Participation

All conceptions of salvation seek to account for how the human is made right with God. Central to the process of Christian transformation, according to all traditions, is the work of the Holy Spirit precisely because it is spiritual growth. Torrance’s own position on the growth of the believer into full participation with the divine nature through Christ by the Holy Spirit attempts to bring together both Eastern and Western conceptions of spirituality and growth in holiness. By adapting doctrines of theosis from Eastern Orthodoxy and combining it with a Western, Reformed spirituality, Torrance’s theology holds out significant promise of explaining how the believer actually becomes deified or progresses in theosis. As we shall see, because Torrance strongly emphasises the objective elements of salvation his articulation of the subjective application of the benefits of Christ to the believer remains largely undeveloped. Thus his theology promises more than it delivers as it contains little by way of clearly articulated practical application.


See the insightful study of S.M. Buckles, ‘The Perichoretic Ministry of the Holy Spirit in Formation and Transformation of Persons in the Thought of James E Loder and Thomas F Torrance,’ Doctoral dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, May 2001. Buckles clearly presents the trinitarian foundation of Torrance’s theology in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. However, despite looking at the theme of spiritual growth in the theology of Torrance, theosis is not in Buckles’ sights and thus an otherwise useful study proves to be a little deficient.

This is not to imply that his theology is impractical, as the rest of this chapter will show, but rather, that he has not elaborated on many of these points in any detail. Compare this with, for instance, the ‘stages of justification’ in Stâniloae, of preparation, regeneration, and progression outlined by
That said, a work of the Spirit is certainly decisive for Torrance’s account of theosis. ‘The counterpart to the doctrine of the Incarnation and saving work of Christ,’ Torrance asserts, ‘is the doctrine of union with Christ and of participation in Him and all His benefits – that takes place through the Communion of the Holy Spirit...’97 After all, the Spirit is not an intermediary force that unites the believer to the Son but is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, who alone can effect the union between God and humanity. This union is understood by Torrance as theosis, as Colyer affirms:

Torrance is also similarly concerned to reject any notion of a created medium between God and humanity by affirming the direct creative activity of the Holy Spirit as God and Lord, and to restore what the Greek fathers called theosis (deification), though understood in terms of humanity being made free for God by God (including knowledge of God that cannot be separated from soteriology) and not in terms of the divinization of humanity.98

Based upon the mutual mediation of Son and Spirit,99 there is both a God-humanward movement and a human-Godward movement and both are mediated by Jesus through the Spirit. This means, as Deddo explains, that ‘the Spirit not only brings to us the objective effects worked out in the vicarious life of Christ, but also the subjective effects worked out in his humanity. That is, the Spirit enables us to share in Jesus’ own faithful response to the Father.’100 Torrance’s doctrine of human response as previously analyzed provides a foundation for what is developed here by way of the Holy Spirit.

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98 E.M. Colyer, The Nature of Doctrine in T.F. Torrance’s Theology (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 147. Note the link between knowledge of God and salvation.
101 See Chapter Two, 134-147.
Through the Spirit we share in Christ’s response to the Father.102 The Spirit empowers the believer to cry ‘Abba, Father,’ in the same way that comes naturally to the Son of God; for to be ‘in the Spirit’ is to be ‘in Christ’.103 Deddo notes that according to Torrance, ‘our whole lives in every part are constituted a participation: a dynamic life of union and communion with God.’104 Torrance insists that our holiness or sanctification is realised in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Our repentance, faith, and obedience are actualised in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Every part of our relationship with and response to God is thus achieved in, through, and by the Son and the Spirit.105 Not only is the Holy Spirit instrumental in the justification of the sinner in Christ, but now, also, the Holy Spirit is central to the sanctification of the would-be saint. Critically, however, this is also located in Christ. Here we have, in effect, the other side of redemption: ‘the side of the subjectification of revelation and reconciliation in the life and faith of the church. That means the Spirit is creating and calling forth the response of man in faith and understanding, in thanksgiving and worship and prayer.’106 As we shall see, worship and prayer are the climax of Torrance’s vision of theōsis in the present in-between time of the church.107

Torrance’s doctrine of theōsis is again thoroughly patristic, particularly Athanasian, in its pneumatological orientation, especially in three areas. First, theōsis is the special work of the Holy Spirit in the triunity of God, 


103 See the discussion below on adoption.


107 See the discussion further in this chapter, 325-333. On the relation of time to the church see T.F. Torrance, Royal Priesthood (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1855), 43-62.
understood as the *Spiritus Creator*. Like Athanasius, Torrance follows the traditional teaching of the church in ascribing 'the creative work of the Spirit in renewing or sanctifying the creature, and consummating (or bringing to its telos) the relation of the creature to the Godhead.'

Second, Torrance contends that the Spirit is ineffable and couched in mystery, a mystery that cannot be fully illuminated without overstepping the bounds of godly reverence. Third, the work of the Spirit is always associated with the work of the Son. Because the work of the Spirit is not to be conceived independently of the Son, the work of the Spirit in creation can only be understood within the context of his sanctifying, renewing, or perfecting operation. For Athanasius, as Torrance affirms, 'the creative work of the Spirit is, so to speak, proleptically conditioned by that of redemption.' It is within the context of the *Spiritus Creator* that Athanasius and Torrance deal directly with a doctrine of *theōsis* and in turn the theme of the *Spiritus Redemptor*. On one occasion when Torrance uses the technical vocabulary of *theōsis*, he does so in relation to the active role of the Holy Spirit, commenting, 'To be concerned with the Spirit, to know him, to be acted on by him, is immediately to be concerned with the Being or *ousia* of God the Creator. That, as I understand it, is the import of the patristic notion of *theōsis* or "deification".'

As we saw in Chapter Three, Torrance mentions the role of the Holy Spirit in his relation to Light, a key patristic image or cognate of *theōsis*. In a discussion on the hiddenness and self-effacing character of the 'invisible Spirit of Truth', Torrance argues that the Spirit is not directly known in his own person (*hypostasis*): 'He is the invisible Light in whose shining

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111 See Athanasius, *Ad Ser.* 1.18; 1.22ff; 3.1.
114 See Chapter Three, 221-226.
we see the uncreated Light of God manifest in Jesus Christ, but he is known himself only in that he lights up for us the Face of God in the Face of Jesus Christ'. The Holy Spirit has a 'distinctive, transparent and translucent hypostasis.' He continues: 'Through the presence of the Holy Spirit we are certainly put in sanctifying and enlightening touch with the dynamic being and act of the All-Holy and Almighty God resulting in a transcendental determination of our being for God – the experience which the Greek Fathers spoke of as theosis.' Torrance goes on to argue that the goal or content of this theosis is that we are 'enabled to apprehend [God], yet only in such a way that what he is as God...is completely veiled from us.' This is strikingly parallel to certain features of an Orthodox articulation of apophatic theology. Here again Torrance stands in continuity with the Greek fathers, though not uncritically so.

Controlling Torrance's discussion of theosis and the work of the Holy Spirit is the consistent assumption that the being and act of God belong inseparably together. In the giving of the Holy Spirit God's being and act are made visible and knowable as God gives himself, his self-revelation and self-communication in the Holy Spirit. This is the other side of the unknowability of God. While God is ultimately unknowable, in his outgoing movement in the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit 'he takes us into communion with himself, making himself open to our knowing of him and making us open to him and receptive of his self-revealing to us'. While Torrance accepts an apophatic reticence in his theology he is not prepared to adopt the Orthodox distinction between

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the essence and energies of God which teaches that the believer never comes into contact with the energeia of God and vice versa. Such an Orthodox understanding actually undermines a doctrine of theōsis. It also reduces the act of God to something other than a revelation of his being, thus demoting Christ and the Holy Spirit to intermediaries of God, not God himself.

The Holy Spirit, Torrance contends, is the direct parousia of the divine ousia of God Almighty. Torrance marvels at God’s freedom to remain the transcendent God and at the same time to become incarnate for our sake in Jesus Christ and to impart God’s very self to us in sending the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is free to be present to us and actualise God’s relation to us, but also free to be with and in us and actualise our relation to God and thereby bring our lives as God’s creatures to their goal of participation in God. This participation is made possible by the relation between the Holy Spirit within the human and God the Holy Spirit, the ‘transcendental determination’ of which Torrance often speaks. It is this analogia relationis that makes possible a real knowledge of and communion with God and it is this relationship which Torrance defines in part as theōsis. In The Christian Doctrine of God he writes:

Through the presence of the Holy Spirit we are certainly put in sanctifying and enlightening touch with the dynamic Being and Act of the All-Holy and Almighty God resulting in a transcendental determination of our own being for God – the experience which the Greek Fathers spoke of as theosis (θεωσία) – and are thereby enabled to apprehend him.

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122 This is quite explicit: ‘To know God kata physin, in accordance with his own nature, is to know him under the impact of his distinctively divine energeia, that is, to know him through a living empirical relation determined by theōsis,’ T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 248. Thus, the divine energeia is not impersonal for Torrance as it is in Eastern Orthodoxy but, the very ‘nature’ of God.


125 See Chapter One, 83-86.

126 T.F. Torrance, The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 151. Earlier, in terms of the homoeousion of the Holy Spirit Torrance states that, ‘emphasis was laid also upon the redemptive mission and the saving efficacy of the Holy Spirit as the Lord and Giver of Life, whose renewing and sanctifying operation in the faithful was identical with the direct act of God himself, that is as θεωσία,’ 97.
Torrance qualifies this statement and adopts the apophatic reticence in regard to how much of God we can truly know, in his remark that we can comprehend God,

Yet only in such a way that what he is as God (πτι ἐστι Θεός) is completely veiled from us. Even in his self-revelation to us God reserves the hiddenness of his Being and does not come under the control of our knowing of him – before him all our human forms of thought and speech break off in wonder and adoration.127

Torrance is asserting that human persons can participate in the divine nature; a relational knowing and experiencing of the Triune relations. So the distinction between the economic and ontological aspects of the Trinity is employed with a different nuance than in the Eastern Orthodox use of the theologia and oikonomia. Torrance affirms that in the Son and Holy Spirit one comes to ‘see,’ ‘hear,’ and ‘know’ God as he is in himself, but they do so in a creaturely way that is at once a revelation of the ‘hiddenness’ of God. This means that God is always greater (Deus semper major).128 Given Torrance’s theological method of cognitive stratification,129 he contends that this allows us to affirm simultaneously the knowability of God in the incarnate Son through the Holy Spirit and at the same time to stand with our hands over our mouths and fall on our knees to worship and adore that which will forever be beyond our comprehension.130

128 ‘In and through the presence of the Holy Spirit supervening upon the revealing and saving events of his incarnate Son, God really does impart himself to us and actually makes himself known to us within the conditions of our creaturely forms of thought and speech, but without any compromise of his sheer Godness or any diminution of the Mystery of his transcendent Being,’ T.F. Torrance, The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 151, (italics mine).
Due to the heuristic force of the *homoousion*, both in terms of the Son and the Holy Spirit, Torrance can identify the economic Trinity with the God who is the same in his very nature, in the ontological Trinity.\footnote{For an analysis of the economic and ontological Trinity in recent thought, specifically Torrance's work, see P.D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2002), especially 167-196; 317-330 and S.J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 200-215.}

In this way the *homoousion* is found to have a critical significance in regard to what may and what may not be read back from God's revealing and saving activity in history to what he is antecedently, eternally and inherently in himself. It does tell us that what God is antecedently, eternally and inherently in himself he is indeed toward us in the incarnate economy of his saving action in Jesus Christ on our behalf, but it relates that economy ontologically to God in the ineffable Mystery of his Being who remains transcendent over all space and time, so that a significant distinction and delimitation between the economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity must be recognised as well as their essential oneness.\footnote{T.F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 97.}

As a result of the *homoousion*, we meet with the immanent Trinity (theologia) when we encounter Jesus Christ and the Spirit in space-time (oikonomia). Neither God nor human nature is changed by this fellowship (koinonia): however, as the one Person of Christ remains the same in the incarnation despite the union of the two natures (*henōsis* hypostatikē), so in the union (*henōsis*) of humanity and God in salvation neither is changed ontologically but each relates to the other in a 'real' way.\footnote{T.F. Torrance, 'Incarnation and Atonement: Theosis and Henosis in the Light of Modern Scientific Rejection of Dualism,' *Society of Ordained Scientists*, Bulletin No. 7, (Edgeware, Middlesex, 1992), 8-20.} For human persons this means they become more fully personed through participation in the divine nature.

Anything short of a real participation in the divine nature is not *theōsis*, according to Torrance. The Spirit's total objectivity safeguards Torrance from presenting what he calls a doctrine of 'divinization'. *Theōsis* is a reality in the life of the believer but not one that threatens the Creator-creature distinction from either direction. 'Divinization,' as Torrance employs the word here, posits a direct participation of the believer in the essence of God, and this is what Torrance rejects. *Theōsis* however, in line with its biblical and patristic roots, posits participation by the believer...
in the divine nature, a relational union mediated by the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In one of Torrance’s most crucial passages on the topic a variety of concepts are used to describe theosis and explain how it is that the Spirit at once both opens up God to the world and the world to God. (Aspects of theosis are indicated parenthetically):

The presence of the Holy Spirit to the creation imports an openness on the part of God’s creation toward himself, for through the Spirit God is able to take possession of his creatures, to sustain them from below, and to be present within them in such a way as to lift them up to the level of (1) participation in God where they are opened out for (2) union and (3) communion with God far beyond the limits of their creaturely existence. To be (4) ‘in the Spirit’ is to be in God, for the Spirit is not external but internal to the Godhead. But since it is only the Spirit of God who knows what is in God and it is he who unites us to the Son of God in his oneness with the Father, through the (3) Communion of the Spirit we are exalted to (5) know God in his inner trinitarian relations as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When this actually takes place, however, we are restrained by the sheer Holiness and Majesty of the divine Being from transgressing the bounds of our creaturely being by inquiring beyond what is given through the Son and received in the Spirit, and therefore from intruding upon the mystery of God or thinking presumptuously and illegitimately of him. When God is present to us in his Holy Spirit we are on holy ground like Moses at the Burning Bush where he was bidden to take the shoes off his feet. Before the Face of God we are constrained by the Holy Spirit to (5) think of him only in a reverent and godly way worthy of him, in which (6) worship, wonder and silence inform the movement of our creaturely spirits to the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit, answering to the movement on God’s part from the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit.134

Through the activity of the Spirit, who is, as Torrance points out, internal to the Godhead, we are united to the Son of God in his oneness with the Father, and through the communion of the Spirit we are exalted to know God in his inner trinitarian relations as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,135 an experience which transcends our ability to comprehend. It is this relational transcendence which the Spirit mediates even now, as evidenced in such texts as Rom 8.26-27. So the Pauline citation is the source of the apophatic reticence that Torrance maintains when he writes

about the consummation of *theōsis*. Our knowledge of God is always provisional and partial and appropriate to that of a creature attempting to apprehend but never comprehend the divine being.\(^{136}\)

According to Torrance the double movement of the Spirit parallels that of the Son but in a reciprocal fashion, not as a separate process:

When we consider this two-way activity of the Spirit in its coordination with the two-way activity of Christ, as we are bound to do in view of their oneness in Being and Act, we must think of the Spirit as participating in the vicarious and intercessory activity of Christ. Thus we must think of the presence of the Spirit as actualising within us the intervening and reconciling work of Christ when as the Son of God he assumed our wayward and disobedient humanity and through his own obedient life and atoning sacrifice offered himself to the Father in our place and in our stead, and thereby restored it in obedient sonship to the Father as our Father as well as his Father.\(^{137}\)

A few lines later Torrance summarises what he really means by the use of another of his conceptual equivalents for *theōsis*, that of ‘adoption’:

...when the Holy Spirit is sent to us by the crucified, risen and ascended Lord to dwell in us, he (2)unites us so intimately to Christ that he not only makes the intercessions of Christ echo inaudibly in our hearts, but as the Spirit of the Son makes us cry with him ‘Abba Father’ as those who are (7)adopted in Christ to be (8)joint-heirs with him.\(^{138}\)

In these passages Torrance is placing himself squarely within the patristic matrix of theology and asserting a thoroughgoing doctrine of *theōsis*. Torrance argues that *theōsis* is centred in the incarnation of the eternal Son and with him, the vivifying, recreating, sanctifying, and glorifying work of the Holy Spirit. In Christ and by his Spirit the believer is able to cry to God, not as a stranger but now, through the Spirit and in Christ, to their ‘Abba, Father,’ as they have now become children of God, joint-heirs of Christ, participants by grace in the divine nature.

In her study on participation in Calvin’s theology Canlis notes that ‘Calvin’s genius was to perceive that without a genuine role for the Holy

\(^{136}\) Torrance is fond of repeating the phrase of Basil’s, ‘We confess that we know what is knowable of God and yet what we know reaches beyond our comprehension,’ (*Epistulae*, 235.2.).


Spirit, you cannot help but have a fusion, or divine overwhelming of some sort'. Calvin’s doctrine of participation in God or union with God was made in response to the view of Osiander that the believer is united with or participates in the Divine Logos, not the incarnate Word. Calvin’s doctrine of participation, by positing a crucial role to the Holy Spirit was, consciously, a doctrine of human participation in the Trinity. Canlis concludes:

If in Melanchthon’s causal scheme we are too far away from God, in Osiander’s we are too close. We will see how Calvin approaches a very similar doctrine of indwelling and of union as Osiander, but strictly adheres to a trinitarian structure. He knew that the secret to our union was neither mechanistic imputation nor fusion, but rather participation in the Trinity.

Torrance, too, wishes to find a balance between positing a mixture or absorption of divine and human natures in salvation and the opposite tendency which regards the being of God as unknowable; hence only God’s (impersonal) energies are able to be encountered. The first is too close, the second too distant. Torrance adopts the language of the ‘blessed exchange’ to indicate the principle that in Christ God has given us access to the divine life. However, this exchange does not operate without the work of the Holy Spirit:

A significant part of this ‘blessed exchange’ throughout Christ’s life, ministry, death, and resurrection, Torrance contends, is that ‘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’.

In short, through the Son and in the Spirit the believer is enabled to participate in the divine nature. This, for Torrance, is what the doctrine of theosis means in the Christian church.

Deddo correctly summarises Torrance’s soteriology when he asserts: ‘The Spirit is the communion of the Father and the Son, so for us to have the

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142 Succinctly, ‘to be “in the Spirit” is to be in God, for the Spirit is not external but internal to the Godhead,’ T.F. Torrance, The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 153.
Spirit is for us to share in the Son's union and communion with the Father. Thus salvation consists in being drawn up in the Son into the very Triune life by the power of the Spirit. A shorter but no less precise statement would be that salvation, as Torrance understands it, may be explicated as *theosis*.144

§17.1 The Spirit of Truth

In Chapter Three Torrance’s doctrine of cognitive (epistemological) union was examined and linked to his doctrine of *theosis*.145 Cognitive union is dealt with quite comprehensively in Torrance's treatment of the 'Spirit of truth', and it is worth rehearsing his basic moves in this context. The recovery of true knowledge of God in Christ who is the Logos is a fundamental feature of Torrance’s doctrine of redemption,146 and mediation of the true knowledge of God in and through the Logos involves pneumatology as well as christology.147 As in Barth, so for Torrance, salvation results in true knowledge148 so that for Torrance *theosis* is epistemological as well as ontological.

We cannot underestimate the epistemological importance of the Holy Spirit in Torrance’s theology.149 The Holy Spirit does not bring witness to

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145 See Chapter Three, 167-171, and 221-235.


147 This is developed in T.F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church. Vol. 2: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel* (London: Lutterworth, 1980), 88-92, where ἐν Πνεύματι is used to illustrate the role of the Spirit in knowledge of God.


himself but to Christ, and this, according to Torrance, is the force of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (*aletheia*),\(^{150}\) because:

...there is *aletheia*, for truth is the unveiling of what was hidden, the manifestation of the divine Reality – that is why He is called the Spirit of truth: it is through his agency that Jesus Christ is revealed as the Son of the Father...he does not show us Himself, but shows us the Face of the Father in the Face of the Son...yet because it is through Him that the Word of God was made flesh and through Him that the Word continues to be heard and believed, because it is in his Light that we see Light and by his creative operation that we know the unknowable and eternal God...he is Himself God of God, the Holy Spirit of one substance with the Father and of one substance with the Son, who confronts us in His own person with the ultimate Godness of God...He utters the Word but does not utter Himself, and therefore He directs us through Himself to the one *Logos* and *Eidos* of Godhead in Jesus Christ in accordance with whom all our knowledge of God is formed in our minds...\(^{151}\)

The Spirit's presence is the presence of the very being of God himself within human experience and human knowledge, and creates a relation to God in Christ which is required for true knowledge to exist.\(^{152}\) In a succinct statement Torrance summarises the role of the Holy Spirit in *theosis* as follows:

The Spirit of God the Father and the Son is God in his freedom personally to meet and be with man, to address him in his Word, making himself known to him and creating in him capacity to respond as a rational subject and agent to himself. It is through this interpersonal mode of his presence to man that the Spirit makes man's being open for fellowship with God, and thereby brings his creaturely relations to their true end and fulfilment in God. He is essentially the living Spirit who, coming from the inner communion of the Holy Trinity, creates communion between man and God.\(^{153}\)

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When speaking of the relationship between Christ and the Spirit Torrance argues that until the historical actions of God in Christ are interpreted by the Spirit, revelation has not yet occurred. Torrance draws one corollary from this axiom:

The Christ who is the whole fact of faith is thus the Christ of the Gospel period extended into a further period through the Holy Spirit. The whole Christ is thus not the bodily Christ but the Christ of actual event carried out into the actual experience and faith of the Church by the indwelling mind of Christ, the Holy Spirit, who indwells the believer.

This leads Torrance to the concise statement: 'The significant thing about the Lordship of Christ, the Deity of Christ, is that it may be confessed by people only in the power of the Holy Spirit.' Word and Spirit are kept in the closest proximity as they mutually condition one another, both in revelation and reconciliation.

Torrance forcefully presents the idea that God can only be known by encountering him and his saving work in space and time. The ascension connects us to the incarnation, and to the historical Jesus, and so to a Word and act of God inseparably implicated in our space and time. Thus all true knowledge of God is mediated through the historical Jesus. But the obverse is also true: that through the historical and crucified Jesus we truly meet with the risen and ascended Lord; we meet with God in his transcendent glory of majesty, and we really are gathered into the communion of the Son with the Father, and of the Father with the Son, and are raised up through the Spirit to share in the divine life and love that have overflowed to us in Christ Jesus. Thus, within the heart of his theological construction of the atoning and reconciling work of Christ,

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155 T.F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1938-39 (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 49. From this Torrance explains the reason why the risen Christ had to ascend before the Holy Spirit could be sent – so that the Christ of history could be accurately interpreted and experienced. Here the motif of Word and Spirit, so prevalent in Reformed theology, is reasserted. 'The Holy Spirit did not come to bring a special revelation,' Torrance writes, 'the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has not a special content of its own; its content is the Person of Christ, Christ clothed with his own Truth. Thus the Holy Spirit, if I may say so without being misunderstood, is Jesus' other Self,' 49.


Torrance returns to the theme of theosis to clarify his point. It is Torrance’s contention that we can only think of these two aspects of the ascension through the Spirit. The Spirit becomes the crucial epistemological linchpin of his soteriology. The Holy Spirit links the historical Jesus with the ascended Lord and it is through the communion of the Spirit that we can identify the historical absence and actual presence of Christ. Torrance then summarises his position with a direct statement on theosis: ‘Through the Spirit Christ is nearer to us than we are to ourselves, and we who live and dwell on earth are yet made to sit with Christ “in heavenly places”, partaking of the divine nature.’

Torrance insists that God’s self-revelation and self-communication in the incarnation cannot be understood apart from God’s self-giving to us in the Spirit. Hence revelation and reconciliation are correlative. It is in and through the Holy Spirit that ‘we are united to Christ the incarnate Son of the Father, and are made through this union with him in the Spirit to participate, humans though we are, in the Communion which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit...are in themselves.’ This is one of the uses Torrance makes of koinônia, a fundamental facet of his doctrine of theosis, the communion created by the Spirit in which men and women may participate ‘in the relation of the Father and the Son, which takes place through the Holy Spirit...’ In a summary statement of the Holy Spirit’s role in theosis he insists that,

The Holy Spirit interiorizes the knowledge of God within us, but He does this by actualizing within us God’s own witness to Himself. The Holy Spirit is the eternal Communion of the Father and the Son and therefore when He is sent into our hearts by the Father in the name of the Son we are made partakers with the Son in His Communion with the Father and thus of God’s own self-knowledge.

This description of theosis thus summarises the pneumatological work of God in reconciliation in terms of both epistemology and ontology.

Earlier we noted Yeung’s conclusion that ‘It seems that Torrance does not yet have a full doctrine of the Holy Spirit,’ and that, ‘Torrance definitely rejects the charge of binitarianism but that is without doubt the way towards which his theology leans.’\(^{162}\) What leads Yeung to this conclusion is his belief that ‘[Torrance] emphasizes intellectualism so much that his view of the function of the Spirit is more or less limited to the rationality of God.’\(^{163}\) While it might be expected that Yeung would focus his attention on the Spirit’s role in communicating knowledge of God, to limit the function of the Spirit in Torrance’s theology to epistemology as he does is a gross reduction. Despite the fact that Torrance’s soteriology is heavily weighted on epistemological issues he does provide a detailed defence of the Holy Spirit’s identity and mission. ‘What the Holy Spirit is toward us in the divine acts of recreation and sanctification in Christ, he is inherently in himself in God,’\(^ {164}\) writes Torrance. It is because of the absolute divinity of the Holy Spirit that true knowledge of God can be revealed to men and women through the Son and in the Spirit. However, this assertion has often been misapplied in theology, especially since the Enlightenment, for it became common to confuse God’s Holy Spirit with the human spirit, and thus his utter objectivity was denied. Torrance’s stress on the objectivity of the Holy Spirit coupled with his stress upon both epistemology and ontology seeks to counter many of these post-Enlightenment problems.

Several questions must be asked at this point: Is Torrance’s use of theōsis too cognitive? Does it restrict the Eastern, ontic experience to a Western, noetic abstraction? Is his doctrine of humans as ‘embodied minds’,\(^ {165}\) too limited and restrictive to encapsulate the biblical doctrine of salvation? Has Torrance merely repeated, in a new key, a traditional

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Western preference for knowledge over being? In short: Is his theology merely a repetition of the 'Latin heresy' after all? In reply to each question we must say 'no'. Any reading that does restrict Torrance's theology to epistemic concerns is a misunderstanding. Torrance has consistently embraced intuitive knowledge, personal knowing and the notion of indwelling in his epistemology. Intuitive thinking is essentially rational because God is rational, but it is also a relational form of knowing, not the mechanical model of knowledge developed in the wake of Newton and Locke. This relational knowledge leads Torrance to a rigorous development and defence of trinitarian theology, thus once again keeping epistemology and ontology together.

What is it that the Holy Spirit brings a knowledge of? In short, Christ is the content of the Spirit’s revelation and through Christ the triune nature of the Godhead is revealed. The Holy Spirit is necessary in order to mediate knowledge of the Son’s reconciliation and this knowledge is trinitarian in nature, from the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit. Through the gift of the Spirit of Christ, who is also the Spirit of God, we are drawn into a holy communion in which God by the Spirit, 'is made present to us within the conditions of our creaturely existence in such a healing and creative way as to open our hearts and minds to receive and understand his self-revelation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. While Torrance's soteriology does tend to overemphasise issues of epistemology, it does not do so at the expense of ontology as the mutual mediation of Christ and Spirit highlights.

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166 On the Latin Heresy see earlier, Chapter Three, 175, fn. 50.
167 See Introduction, 9, 17; Chapter One, 72, fn. 121; Chapter Two, 125; and Chapter Three, 169-170.
§17.2  The Communion of the Spirit

It is Torrance’s contention that the Greek patristic theologians’ doctrine of the Holy Spirit profoundly altered the notions of person, reason, ontology, and epistemology. In Nicene theology a ‘profound epistemological inversion’ took place, one that was governed by the ‘transcendental determination’ of humanity to an objective other, primarily in God but also in fellow humans. Contrary to the Greek view of humans as the embodiment of an immortal soul, Torrance maintains that the patristic theologians’ conception of the human person is as an indivisible union of body and soul created by God and for God through his Spirit. Accordingly the real intent of what the Nicene theologians called *theōsis* or *theopoieis* is not the deification or divinization of humanity, but the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit through whom we participate in the revealing and saving activity of God in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. By rejecting the language of ‘deification’ and ‘divinization’ here in favour of *theōsis* and *theopoieis*, Torrance once again makes it clear that no confusion or mixture of natures is in view.

The way the believer is incorporated into Christ by the Spirit is through adoption. While Torrance does speak of adoption and sonship on a number of occasions there is no fully developed doctrine of adoption worked out in his theology. It seems that most of what can be said regarding our adoption as ‘sons’ has already been said in relation to the vicarious humanity of Christ. While Christ alone is the Son, believers incorporated into him by the Spirit become ‘children of God’ (Rom 8.14, 17). As children of God believers participate in the divine nature by grace - by adoption - while the Son, Jesus Christ is divine by nature.

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Adoption is used by Torrance as a cognate for *theōsis*; so for instance, we read, 'Athenasius pointed to the very heart of the matter in the incarnation of the Son of God, which by its very nature involved the union of God and man in Christ, and at the same time our “deification” or adoption as sons of God in Christ.'\(^{173}\) Adoption is important for a doctrine of *theōsis* as the constant reminder that the union between believers and Christ is not one of nature but of adoption by grace enabled through the gift of the Spirit who comes to dwell in us as he dwells in God.\(^{174}\) However, Torrance is quick to insist that we are incorporated into Christ’s *humanity*; this means that, 'Since this takes place in Christ, the incarnate Son, however, it involves a somatic and not just a spiritual union in and with him.'\(^{175}\) It is this that makes the church the body of Christ. Torrance affirms the teaching of Athanasius that as Christ is the true vine and we are the branches, we have bodies that are ‘connate (ὁμογενή)’ with the Lord’s Body, receive out of his fullness and have that body as the root of our resurrection and salvation.\(^{176}\)

Our adoption into Christ is more specifically an adoption into the perfected *humanity* of Christ, in which he makes our humanity in him partake of the Holy Spirit with which he has been anointed and sanctified as man for our sakes, and thereby unites it through himself with the Godhead.\(^{177}\) In obvious reliance upon Torrance’s theology one of his students remarks:

Christ consecrated a way into the holy company of God through the purification of his blood enabling us, in the name of Christ, not only to

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\(^{173}\) T.F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988, 1995), 264. Torrance then cites passages from Athanasius including *De decr.* 14, 31; *Con Ar.* 1.9, 37ff, 45ff, 2.47, 53, 59, 63ff; and *De syn.* 51.


worship God in truth but to draw near to God, crying ‘Abba, Father.’ We come to God only as God’s children, or not at all, and that alone in the power of the priestly Sonship of Jesus Christ, in his revealing of the Father as our Father, and in his offering of us in his own humanity to share in his divine Sonship.\textsuperscript{178} This does not mean we are made divine; rather, as Torrance allows Athanasius to remind us, ‘our being in the Father is not ours but is the Spirit’s who is in us and abides in us...It is the Spirit, then, who is in God, and not we viewed in ourselves.’\textsuperscript{179}

The Spirit is Christ’s \textit{Alter Advocatus}, even Christ’s \textit{Alter Ego}\textsuperscript{180} ‘who seals our adoption as children of God in Christ and so unites us to Christ that we come to share by grace in Christ’s own filial relationship with the Father realized vicariously within Christ’s earthly human life on our behalf.’\textsuperscript{181} The language of adoption reminds us that the purpose of life is a transforming relationship with God in which the Spirit calls and enables us to become children of God in and alongside the Son and to join in his self-surrender to the Father. With a direct allusion to the language of Torrance, 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.’\textsuperscript{182} Pinnock, like Torrance, recalls that this is what the church fathers meant by the doctrine of \textit{theōsis}.\textsuperscript{183}

Not only is adoption important in the theology of the early church upon which Torrance draws but also, closer to home, it is important to the

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Reformed tradition within which Torrance writes. Writing prior to Torrance, McLeod Campbell beautifully describes adoption as ‘orphans who have found their lost father’. The logic is that believers participate in Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, and so participate in that filial relationship in the Son (Jn 8.19). It is the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son which is communicated to humanity through the Spirit of the Son (Rom 8.29). It is in this sense that Torrance defines salvation as ‘sonship’. In similar fashion Walls writes:

Through the Holy Spirit the innermost mystery of the life of God the Holy Trinity is opened in sheer unmerited gift to us. We become the adopted sons in the Son of God. We become this not by mere imitation but by sharing in this new form of being – being as communion, being constituted by self-giving. So in our created way we reflect and share in the divine nature (2 Pet 1.4). This is eternal life, this is salvation: to be brought within the unbroken circle of God’s being in communion. Just as God’s being is a consummated distinction in a union of mutual life, so this too is the work of the Holy Spirit in the church as communion of persons.

Such is precisely the vision to which Torrance subscribes.

Our adoption depends thus, on the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ ‘who for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might become rich’ (2 Cor 8.9). In relation to adoption Torrance explains that ‘He the Son of God united himself with us in our actual human condition so intimately and profoundly that through his healing and sanctifying of

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184 While there is no discrete chapter on adoption in J. Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21, ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), adoption is integral to many aspects of his theology such as prayer (3.20.36-38), election (3.24.1), and the sacraments (4.15.1; 4.16.24; 4.17.1). See especially 2.12.2. Cf. 2.6.1; 2.7.15; 2.11.9; 3.2.8; 3.2.11; 3.2.22; 3.14.18-19; 3.17.5-6; 3.20.1; 3.20.36. Adoption is discussed more fully in Calvin’s Commentary on Matthew (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 183-184; Calvin’s Commentary on Galatians (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 120, and Calvin’s Commentary on James (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 298. Reformed confessions see particularly The Beic Conffession, Art. 15, and The Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 33. In modern Reformed theology adoption tends to be subsumed under the doctrine of justification, for instance in L. Berkof, Systematic Theology, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1996), 514-516. Other Reformed treatments of adoption can be found in J. Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), 132-140; and W. Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 738-745. Torrance moves the doctrine of adoption out of a discussion of justification into the broader context of participation.


our human nature in himself we may be made with him sons of God.\textsuperscript{187} On this basis Christ acts with us, for us, and on our behalf towards the Father in all our distinctive experiences as children of God:

such as confession, penitence, sorrow, chastisement, submission to the divine judgement, and faith, obedience, love, prayer, praise, adoration, that we may share with him what he is in his ascension and self-presentation before the Father as the beloved Son in whom he is well pleased.\textsuperscript{188}

Collectively, the children of God form the church, the body of Christ, within which theōsis becomes a reality made possible by the Holy Spirit. For this reason our attention must turn to the church, the communion of saints, for a more specific application of theōsis in Torrance's theology.

\section*{§18 The Church as a Communion of Theōsis}

According to Torrance a doctrine of the church is only understandable in relation to Christ, the Head of the body, and the Holy Spirit, the one who animates the body and plays a vital part in bringing it into existence.\textsuperscript{189} The mutual mediation of Christ and Spirit is extended into ecclesiology, constituting the church as the communion of theōsis in Torrance's theology. Union with God, most comprehensively subsumed under a doctrine of theōsis, is realised by the Spirit through the church's sacraments and ministry, culminating in worship.

Kārkkäinen reminds us that, 'Ecclesiologies have traditionally been built on either of the two classical rules, that of Ignatius of Antioch or of Irenaeus'. He explains:

Ignatius suggested the ecclesiality of the church could be secured by reference to Christ's presence: 'Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the universal church.' According to Irenaeus what is decisive is the


\textsuperscript{188} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West} (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 136.

\textsuperscript{189} While Torrance does not consider Pentecost as the birth of the church but its re-birth, not its beginning but its transformation, he does consider it to be the birth of the Christian church and so in this chapter all references to 'church' refer more technically to what Torrance terms the 'Christian Church.' See T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 204; and \textit{Royal Priesthood} (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), 23-42.
presence of the Spirit of God: 'Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is
the church, and all of grace'.

Rather than affirm one model and deny the other, Torrance shows how
Ignatius and Irenaeus shared a common conception of the church but
approached it from two complementary perspectives. Building on their
work, Torrance's ecclesiology is christocentric, pneumatological, and
trinitarian. Torrance affirms the christological grounding of the church
(Ignatius), but essentially follows the Irenaean conception of the church
as the communion of saints, and thus christology and pneumatology
must be seen as mutual and not as exclusive.

In the whole relation of Spirit and Body we have to remember the
inseparable relation in the Bible between πνεῦμα and λόγος, where the basic conception is of the living Breath of God uttering his
Word, so that reception of the Spirit is through the Word.

Torrance repeats a familiar Reformed emphasis upon the mutual
mediation of Word and Spirit, derived principally from Calvin, who writes,
'Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the
sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not
to be doubted, a church of God exists [cf. Ephesians 2:20]. Thus
Torrance combines the 'two-hands' theology of Irenaeus with Calvin's
'marks' of the church in his construction of a pneumatico-ecclesiology.
The trinitarian renaissance that has affected every major locus of theology has more recently been applied to ecclesiology. In particular, relational or community-centred themes have become the focus of the new work. Torrance’s ecclesiology is an anticipation of many of these newer insights. As the body of Christ the church has a christological basis, and as the fellowship of the saints it has a pneumatological foundation. Torrance develops both themes in his theology using them to argue that the church is the sphere of God’s deifying activity of believers in which the Spirit unites us to Christ and through Christ with the Father so that this community becomes ‘the place in space and time where knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit becomes grounded in humanity, and union and communion with the Holy Trinity becomes embodied within the human race.’

Torrance works out a self-consciously corporate vision of salvation where the Spirit unites us to Christ through incorporation into his body,
the church.\textsuperscript{199} It is the Holy Spirit who actualises our union and communion with God through Christ in the structure of our physical, personal, and social being. Torrance contends, 'The work of the Spirit in relation to redemption has to be considered also from the other side, not only from the side of the objective work of Christ but from the side of the subjectification of revelation and reconciliation in the life and faith of the church.'\textsuperscript{200} Torrance views the work of the Spirit as creating and calling forth from humanity a response of faith and obedience, worship and prayer. The central purpose of the church is to glorify God through the progressive 'deification' of his people: that is – the church exists for \textit{theōsis}, 'so that through union with [Christ] in Spirit and Body the Church participates in the divine nature and engages in Christ's ministry of reconciliation.'\textsuperscript{201}

Within his discussion of \textit{koinōnia} of the Spirit Torrance remarks, 'In a profound sense atonement is the insertion of the hypostatic union into the very being of our estranged and fallen humanity. That insertion of oneness by atonement results in \textit{koinōnia}, in the Church as the communion in which we are made partakers of the divine nature.'\textsuperscript{202} Here, relatively early in Torrance's writings, we have a direct attestation to \textit{theōsis} which is intimately linked to the communion-fellowship making work of the Spirit, seen supremely within the context of the church. \textit{Theōsis} is objectively secured by Christ and subjectively applied by the Spirit in the church 'as the Church continues in the fellowship of Word and Sacrament'.\textsuperscript{203} Or, as Torrance remarks in \textit{The Trinitarian Faith},

Through the incarnation and Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes to us from the inner communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, creates

\textsuperscript{203} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Conflict and Agreement in the Church. Vol. 2: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel} (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 91. This is not to imply that the Spirit did not also have a crucial role in the objective work of Christ or that Christ has no role in the subjective work of the Spirit.
union and communion between us and the Holy Trinity. In other words, the Spirit creates not only personal union but corporate communion 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 body.\textsuperscript{204}

Torrance’s ecclesiology at this point shows a marked similarity to distinctively Eastern forms of thought. As is evident in the East, the church is necessary since all the conditions required for believers to attain union with God (\textit{theōsis}) are received through the church.\textsuperscript{205} Writing in 1967 Nikos Nissiotis states, ‘If there is one thing on which all the different church traditions agree today it is undoubtedly the christocentric approach to theological and ecclesiological subjects.'\textsuperscript{206} Nissiotis went on, however, to state, ‘It is not sufficient to confess God’s unique revelation in Christ and our reconciliation with Him. The christocentric approach cannot be valid unless it is thought out in connection with the work of the other two persons of the Trinity, who are revealed through Him and with Him.'\textsuperscript{207} According to a plethora of contemporary thinkers, including Nissiotis, what is required is a pneumatological christology which results in a reconstituted pneumatological ecclesiology. As the title of Nissiotis’ article suggests, what is required today is ‘pneumatological christology as a presupposition of ecclesiology’.

Torrance offers a thoroughly trinitarian vision of ecclesiology which is grounded in a pneumatological christology. Within the \textit{ecclēsia} gathered by the Spirit around Christ believers are conformed to the image of the Son and made partakers of the divine nature. By linking pneumatology to ecclesiology Torrance stands in the biblical tradition of Pentecost.\textsuperscript{208} While

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\bibitem{204} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 9.
\bibitem{205} For a detailed example see E. Bartos, \textit{Deification in Eastern Orthodoxy: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae} (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 252-328.
\bibitem{208} N.A. Nissiotis, ‘Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology,' in \textit{Oecumenica: An Annual Symposium of Ecumenical Research} (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967), 243, reminds us that:

\begin{quote}
A pneumatological Christology is based on the Christ-event, but sees it as possible only through the act of the Spirit, who makes the word of God Incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. It
\end{quote}
christology is the point at which God and humanity meet, a truly Christian theology must move immediately from this vertical point to the horizontal - namely the historical context here and now by which the relationship between God and humanity becomes a reality. Hence a truly pneumatological christology will also be a christological ecclesiology, or alternatively; a pneumato-ecclesiology, one in which God conforms the believer into the image of Christ from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. 'It is then that the true nature of the Church becomes manifest,' writes Torrance, 'as the work of the three divine Persons, as the holy place appointed by God where diseased and sinful men are healed and saved through encountering the ultimate objectivity of God himself in Incarnation and Atonement.'

Salvation, as understood by the term theōsis, occurs in Christ, by the Spirit, within the church. It is an eschatologically oriented salvation initiated in history to be completed in the eschaton. Salvation must be seen to be constituted by Christ and the Spirit and worked out in relationship to God in the first instance, and the body of Christ in the second. Torrance develops these themes in his ecclesiology, and in the process provides resources contributing to the further development of a communio-ecclesiology in both Reformed theology and wider ecumenical discussion. The fact that this aspect of his theology has not been widely recognised attests to the long way Protestant theology still has to travel in understanding how pneumatology is constitutive of christology and ecclesiology. A pneumatologically constituted ecclesiology cannot be construed apart from a christological and a trinitarian orientation: 'The foundational triad is the relationship between Christ and Spirit, Christ and

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Adopting a foundational triad in this way will help the West to avoid a ‘Christomonism’ (Nissiotis) which results in a hierarchical church, and in the East a ‘Spritomonism’ (Kärkkäinen) where Christ as the foundation of the church and head of his body is eclipsed.

Torrance’s ecclesiology is constructed on a pneumatological and christological foundation, as one would expect. The result, however, is surprising. Torrance accomplishes in ecclesiology what he does with his christology, trinitarian theology, and scientific theology as a whole: he builds bridges to various traditions while retaining the essentials of his own Reformed tradition. Torrance’s pneumato-ecclesiology upholds the affirmation that the Spirit is the divine agent who unites the believer to Christ and through Christ to the Father. As such the Spirit applies the benefits of salvation to the believer in space-time. Torrance, however, does not get caught up in Western individualistic notions of salvation or pietistic notions of church, avoiding both in a realistic appreciation of koinōnia and community. Torrance also avoids the temptation to identify Christ with the church as an institution and so he does not view Christ’s authority as invested directly in church hierarchy. In the first approach the Spirit is reduced to the agent of Christ for individual salvation only, while in the second the Spirit is invoked as a guarantee of a pre-existing order de jure divino of the church institution. Torrance’s pneumato-ecclesiology thus draws heavily on Protestant soteriology, Reformed ecclesiology, and certain Eastern Orthodox perspectives on both. Within such a framework the theme of the church as the locus of theōsis becomes evident and requires a more direct examination.


§18.1 Church as Locus of Theosis

Because the church is the body of Christ and the communion of the Spirit it constitutes the locus of theosis, leading Torrance to proclaim that the church 'partakes of the divine nature.' The church is the earthly, historical reflection of the Divine perichoresis, 'the heavenly Communion of Love with the Trinity.' This is reflected in the ministry and sacraments of the church.

In rejecting all accounts of the church as an extension of the incarnation, or of the institutional church acting as the dispenser of grace, Torrance focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit in ecclesiology where he wishes to employ the doctrine of theosis. Torrance maintained in his early ministry the utter supremacy of Jesus Christ and the church as the Body of Christ, drawing somewhat narrowly on the Filioque, and arguing that the Spirit reveals Christ; therefore the revealing work of the Spirit is bounded throughout the history of the church by the particularity of the incarnation. Thus the doctrine of the church must be formulated as a correlate of the doctrine of Christ. A result is that the church is the body of Christ, not the body of the Spirit - the approach, according to Torrance, of both Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism, albeit in different ways. On the contrary, the doctrine of the Spirit holds an indispensable place, for the church is a communion of love, a fellowship of people living the reconciled life. 'The Church is thus the way in which

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216 It is narrow because Torrance had not, at this early stage of his career, come into sustained contact with Eastern Orthodoxy and had not yet sought to integrate his own Reformed theology with distinctive Eastern Orthodox emphases such as he does in later works such as Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches, vols. 1 & 2 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985, 1993); Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994); and The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).

the communion of the Spirit functions within the social relations of creation by creating a supernatural fellowship, in their midst through which, while still within creation, they share in the divine life and love poured out upon them from above in and through Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{218} As such the church is the sphere within which \textit{theōsis} takes place in time-space.\textsuperscript{219} We read, `...this participation of the Church in Christ, is the special work of the Holy Spirit, for it is His work to pour out into the church the life and love of God, and at the same time to create within the Church real reception and participation in the life and love of God in Christ.'\textsuperscript{220}

Because of Torrance's stress upon the priority of grace, the Christian experience of \textit{theōsis} is not fundamentally an exercise in self-purification, as it tended to be viewed by non-Christian Neoplatonists.\textsuperscript{221} Instead, it is an act of the triune God in transforming men and women into the \textit{imago Dei}. This transformation affects more than the mind; it affects the whole person, even the body.\textsuperscript{222} 'To believe in the church as communion of persons reflecting in created human society the life of the blessed Trinity means to move from the Aristotelian idea of an individual as a self-enclosed centre of a unit of existence, to open outward-going relational existence of persons,'\textsuperscript{223} writes Walls. This captures the fundamental ecclesiology which Torrance constructs. In similar terms Grenz writes:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{222} A failure to adequately realize this is a weakness of an otherwise good survey by P.D. Molnar, 'The Eucharist and the Mind of Christ: Some Trinitarian Implications of T.F. Torrance's Sacramental Theology,' in \textit{Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology}, ed. P.L. Metzger (London: Continuum, 2005), 175-188.
\end{itemize}
Although present in other dimensions of social life, the focal point of this relationality in the present age can only be the community of Christ, which is to be the highest form of human fellowship this side of the eschaton. As the eschatological community, the fellowship of those who seek to reflect in the present the future fullness of relationality, the church of Jesus Christ is the prolepsis, the historical foretaste and the sign of our human destiny to be the image of God. As through the power of the Spirit we live in love – as we give expression to true community – we reflect the character of God as love, we live in accordance with our own essential nature, that is, in accordance with the destiny for which God created us. And through this process, we find our true identity in relationship with each other by the Spirit who binds us together.\(^{224}\)

As the body of Christ and the communion of saints, the church is the place created by the intersection of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of union with Christ. The vertical dimension relates to communion with God and the horizontal relates to communion with each other. As such ‘the Church is the atonement becoming actual among men in the resurrection of a new humanity corresponding to the resurrected Body of Jesus.'\(^{225}\) This is part of the transformation into Christ-likeness (Christification), the sanctification of the believer, or the\ösis.\(^{226}\) The process of the\ösis is also the church’s means of mission in the world as it lives the resurrected life of Christ.\(^{227}\) That is to say:

[The existence of the Church as Church is grounded in the work of the Saviour in abolishing the sin and guilt which have estranged the human race and in overcoming the enmity and disunity between man and God; and the being of the Church consists in the redeemed life of those who being reconciled to God in Christ are therein also reconciled to one another, and are compacted together into one living community in which each member is what he is through the common participation of all in Christ and in mutual sharing in the life of others in love.\(^{228}\]

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\(^{226}\) In relation to the growth and development of the church Lee writes, ‘Torrance understands the Church as “the new humanity in germ” which continually expands and grows correlatively to the anabatic movement of Christ,’ K.W. Lee, *Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 272. Lee, however, fails to identify the place the\ösis occupies in Torrance’s ecclesiology.

\(^{227}\) ‘The involvement of the Church in the suffering of mankind must never be allowed to stifle that supreme note of resurrection triumph or to smother the eschatological joy at the astounding events that have broken into history and pledged for mankind the final day of regeneration,’ T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 105.

By showing how persons commune with God or the way in which God incorporates creatures into the inner divine life, even if only briefly, Torrance demonstrates a personal engagement with theosis as a practice and not simply as a theory. This is most clearly evident in his doctrine of the church, as one would expect. Central to Torrance's pneumatoecclesiology is the role the Spirit plays in bringing true knowledge. Thus the church as 'social coefficient of knowledge' must be examined before we consider how Torrance's sacramental theology also contributes to a doctrine of theosis in his works.

§18.1.1 Church as ‘Social Coefficient of Knowledge’

Knowledge of God has to do not only with the ability of human beings to be able to think and rationally reflect; it also has to do with the context within which thinking and reflection takes place: the church. Torrance considers human persons to be onto-relational, so that the context in which thinking takes place reflects the context in which being occurs. For the believer this context is the church. Torrance refers to this epistemic context as the ‘social coefficient of knowledge’, the context in which knowledge and participation is made real. The church is 'the interpersonal community of ongoing symbiosis between God and the world. Much of his argument relates to epistemology and is not directly relevant to our current interests, other than to identify that the context of the church, sacraments, and persons in communion has a very real place in his theology. Theosis is not an individual affair, but a personalizing activity in which human beings become human persons in relation to the

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229 See Chapter One, 81-82; 87.


231 Torrance defines 'social coefficient of knowledge' as 'the capacity of a society or a community to be affected and modified through its advance in knowledge of what is independently real,' T.F. Torrance, Reality and Scientific Theology (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), 103.

triune God and to one another, first in the covenant of Israel, then in the church.

Torrance writes, 'the Church constitutes the social coefficient of our knowledge of God, for in the nature of the case we are unable to know God in any onto-relational way without knowing him in the togetherness of our personal relations with one another.' As Colyer explains:

Part of the Church's role in this very openness correlated with the ineffable transcendence of God even in self-revelation is thus to lift the horizon of humanity and human culture beyond the creaturely to the transcendent majesty and reality of God. In this way the Church embodies the all-important social coefficient of knowledge of God, providing 'the semantic focus within which faith and intuitive contact with God may spring up and yield ever-deepening understanding of him.'

These onto-relations are established and sustained by the Spirit of God, as is the communion of saints, the church. Hence the Spirit plays a crucial role in the so-called 'social coefficient of knowledge'. And so,

...if the Word of God is to enter the forum as speech to man through the medium of human words it must be directed to man in community, and if that Word creates reciprocity between God and man it must create a community of such reciprocity within human society as the appropriate medium of its continuing communication to man.

This reciprocity is established by the Holy Spirit within the church as the social coefficient of knowledge. As Luoma notes,

the Holy Spirit is, then, viewed as the Constitutor of the Christian communion, that is, as its ontological foundation in the Godhead. But his task is not only to call forth a community of believers and sustain it in his power but also to serve as an epistemological factor that grants knowledge of God by showing the way to the Son...The epistemological role of the Holy Spirit, then, is to act within the Church so that the compulsion, true objectivity, and consideration of an independent reality might become real.

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236 T. Luoma, *Incarnation and Physics: Natural Science in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126. This also explains why Torrance rejects a traditional notion of natural theology. According to Torrance, knowledge of God is only through the church because this is the exclusive context within which the Spirit works to reveal God by producing in us the ability to apprehend God through the creation of a reciprocal relation between ourselves and God.
It is this feature of Torrance’s thought that encourages Anderson to regard his theology as ‘practical’, and to comment that, ‘contrary to models of theology which suggest that theology is done primarily within the academy, a model of practical theology which focuses on ecclesial praxis points towards the fact that ecclesial praxis is the place where theology is done.’ Anderson then cites Torrance from Reality and Evangelical Theology:

The implication of this is that we may know God and interpret his self-revelation only in the attitude and context of worship and within the fellowship of the church, where to the godly reason God is more to be adored than expressed. It is only as we allow ourselves, within the fellowship of faith and through constant meditation on the Holy Scriptures, to come under the creative impact of God’s self-revelation that we may acquire the disciplined spiritual perception or insight which enables us to discriminate between our conceptions of the Truth and the Truth itself.

In the church the Spirit of God is active in creating a community of reciprocity called into being by the Word of God and sustained in a covenantal relation with God. Knowledge of God is not a human invention nor is it a collection of philosophical maxims applied a priori to God. Instead, the church as Christ’s body and the communion of the Spirit is the place in which God is revealed and men and women are opened up to a knowledge of and relationship with the triune God. The Spirit takes on the role of Revealer and the church is thus saved from captivity to subjectivity.

According to Torrance, the sacraments, priesthood, and ministry form the indispensable outward form by which ‘divinization’ occurs and are the indispensable means by which the social coefficient of knowledge is realised. As such the sacraments and ministry constitute the actual outward means towards theōsis in Torrance’s theology and now require examination.


§18.2 Theοsis and the Sacraments

According to Torrance there is, technically, only one sacrament, the Lord Jesus Christ. The sacraments of baptism and the eucharist thus point away from themselves toward Christ, the true mystērion. Because Christ alone is the true mystērion, sacraments may only be called a mystery in a secondary sense. For this reason Calvin and others in the Reformed tradition, Torrance included, prefer the terms mystērion and seal over res and signum in reference to the sacraments.239 This is the ‘depth dimension’ of the sacraments to which Torrance often refers.240 Baptism is the sign of initiation into Christ, while the eucharist is the sign of the continual feeding upon Christ until he comes again. Together, they witness powerfully to the reality of union with Christ and the ongoing transformation of the believer into christlikeness. As such, both baptism and eucharist form the central ecclesial acts in which believers participate and thus theοsis occurs.

Torrance’s doctrine of union with Christ relates that the benefits of Christ are applied to the believer in the church, through faith, and by means of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.241 He finds support for this in the 1559 Institutes, where Calvin writes, ‘For all the gifts of God proffered in baptism are found in Christ alone.’242 As Hunsinger points


241 In Lee’s study he remarks that ‘Torrance’s central theme of union with Christ is magnificently applied to his doctrine of the Sacraments – Baptism and the Eucharist,’ K.W. Lee, Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 276-277.

out, the baptismal gifts Calvin identified were forgiveness of sins, dying and rising with Christ, and communion with Christ himself (Institutes, 4.15.1,5,6) although, communion with Christ 'was in effect the one inestimable gift that included within itself the other two benefits of forgiveness and rising with Christ from the dead'. 243 He continues: 'Only by participating in Christ through communion could the divine gifts set forth in baptism be truly received'. 244 Hence salvation is conceived as participating baptismally and eucharistically in the incarnate Christ by the Spirit. This is how union with Christ is initiated in the life of the individual believer and theōsis is personalised.

Hunsinger highlights the fact that within Calvin's thought, and Reformed theology after him, there is an inherent tension concerning what he terms the 'complex temporality of salvation'. 245 He argues that there are two differing ways of speaking of salvation: 'either salvation must be spoken of as essentially in the perfect tense, or else also in the present tense alongside the perfect tense'. 246 He elaborates on his point:

If salvation is essentially in the perfect sense, then its present and future tenses must be seen as modes of receiving and participating in the one salvation already accomplished in Christ. If on the other hand, salvation occurs essentially also in the present tense alongside the perfect tense, then its present and future tenses must somehow supplement and complete a process that Christ initiated in his earthly existence, but did not entirely fulfil. 247

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245 G. Hunsinger, 'The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper,' Scottish Journal of Theology 54 (2001), 156. Examples are provided from the Institutes to show how this tension exists as an ambiguity in Calvin's thought.
Framing the two views in terms of their relation to the perfect tense is helpful. As Hunsinger states, 'Either salvation is a perfect actuality in Christ to be received and partaken of for what it is, or else it is an existential possibility that becomes fully actual and complete only upon the church's reception.' It is clear that the entire tenor of Torrance's theology places it firmly within the first model, that salvation must be spoken of essentially in the perfect tense as it is based on the completed work of Christ, a work into which we enter. How then does Torrance integrate this objective aspect of salvation in the perfect tense with what was mentioned earlier, the progressive growth or maturing of the believer? In short, through an emphasis upon participation in the vicarious humanity of Christ and his sanctification. In addressing this issue, Hunsinger considers that Torrance's thought is 'surely the most creative Reformed breakthrough on the sacraments in twentieth-century theology, and arguably the most important Reformed statement since Calvin.' High praise indeed. Hunsinger finds Torrance's sacramental theology attractive precisely because of its consistent christocentric soteriology.

Throughout our study much has been made of the term communion (κοινόνια) and its cognates. The New Testament principle is that union, fellowship, participation, and communion are achieved by Christ in the Holy Spirit. As has been pointed out, 'The principal theological use concerns the communion with God which — through participation in Christ

248 Other scholars of Torrance have identified the usefulness of the perfect tense for his theology as well, for instance K.W. Lee, Living in Union With Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 312.

249 G. Hunsinger, 'The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper,' Scottish Journal of Theology 54 (2001), 157. The second view would tend to favour an Arminian theology for 'In the latter case, the act of reception is constitutive of salvation, in the former, strictly speaking, it is not. In the former case, the act of reception becomes the mode of participation in a salvation complete and perfect in itself,' 157.

250 Hunsinger points out that Barth himself 'powerfully urged the first option. For a discussion unsurpassed in its incisiveness, whether in Barth's own corpus or elsewhere, see his Church Dogmatics I/2...pp250-7,' G. Hunsinger, 'The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper,' Scottish Journal of Theology 54 (2001), 157, fn.4.


the redeemer and mediator, and in the Holy Spirit the sanctifier – makes believers 'partakers of the divine nature' (theias koinônoi physeōs; 2 Peter 1.4). In line with Torrance’s thought, Wainwright explains that baptism brings a person ‘into Christ,’ and through the eucharist they ‘participate’ in the body and blood of Christ. Hence, ‘a sacramental sharing creates a fellowship among the participants.' Theosis is progressively realized through the corporate relationship with Christ made visible through the sacraments. Thus Torrance incorporates a thoroughly sacramental view of theosis into his ecclesiology and soteriology. This also reflects his clearly defined theology of the mediation and high priestly ministry of Christ.

The sacramental context provides a prime example of how theosis occurs, of how the transcendent God can be experienced, participated in, and known by finite human persons. In his sacramental theology Torrance affirms the close unity-in-distinction between human activity and divine presence as he works within a thoroughly Reformed theology which integrates act and passivity, human giving and receiving, justification and sanctification, in one sacramental movement. Torrance argues that ‘The holy sacraments, Baptism and Eucharist, are also acts of human response to the proclamation of the Gospel, dramatic answers given to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ.' He reminds us that ‘...they are above all divinely provided, dominically appointed ways of response and obedience of a radically vicarious kind.' Torrance stresses the vicarious humanity of Christ and human inclusion in God’s activity (theopolēsis), which allows an active participation by the believer in Christ’s vicarious work. Baptism and the eucharist are kept in the closest

256 T.F. Torrance, The Mediation of Christ, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 89. This is in contradistinction to a Lutheran view of the sacraments, as developed for instance by the other major contemporary pupil of Barth, Eberhard Jüngel. For a comparison of Torrance and Jüngel’s sacramental understandings see, R. Spjuth, Creation, Contingency and Divine Presence: In the Theologies of Thomas F. Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel (Lund: Lund University Press, 1995), 121-140.
proximity by Torrance’s argument that strictly speaking there is only one sacrament (Christ) and baptism and eucharist belong to one indivisible whole. ‘It is the sacrament of the *Word made flesh*, of the *Christ-event*, which includes the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.’\(^{258}\) Both baptism and eucharist have to do with incorporation into Christ; baptism is all-inclusive and final while the eucharist is the continual renewal of that incorporation in time.\(^{259}\)

Torrance’s ecclesiology is of importance here because the church is not only the place where Christ comes to us but the place in creation where Christ through the Spirit actualises an ‘abiding communion’ with us.\(^{260}\) The church thus takes on a sacramental being as the body of Christ in which a real communion between believers and Christ through the Spirit is experienced. This communion is experienced in two ways: firstly, in an outward form of communion through the sacraments; secondly, through an inward and invisible communion in the Holy Spirit.\(^{261}\) In an article on Orthodoxy Torrance explains that the vertical *koinōnia* with Christ ‘is our participation in the Holy Spirit, in which we come under the direct impact of God’s uncreated energies.’\(^{262}\) The mediation of redemption is not just the interrelation between a transcendental constitution ‘from above’ with a historical movement ‘from below’; it is above all the offer and realization of immediate communion with Christ; a unity the Spirit communicates mainly through Word and sacrament.\(^{263}\) In all of God’s

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\(^{263}\) This point was made by R. Spjuth, *Creation, Contingency and Divine Presence: In the Theologies of Thomas F. Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1995), 162. G. Hunsinger correctly points out in ‘The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001), 159, that:

What Torrance accomplishes is in effect, to bring Calvin and Barth together into a brilliant new synthesis. Like Calvin (but unlike Barth), Torrance sees baptism and the Lord’s Supper as forms of God’s Word, establishing and renewing the church in its union and communion with Christ. Like Calvin, that is, he sees the sacraments as vehicles of testimony that impart
activity through the Spirit, Torrance maintains, there is an immediate presence and activity of God. Torrance criticises any tendency to distinguish God's immediate presence by making differentiations between God's being (essentia) and his divine energies (energeia), or what he calls the introduction of 'an economic reserve.' Torrance affirms an immediate divine presence of the Holy Spirit through ecclesial acts. It is these ecclesial acts of baptism and the Lord's Supper to which our attention must turn.

§18.2.1 Baptism

The magisterial reformers and contemporary Reformed thought emphasise that the sacraments initiate and sustain the faith and spiritual growth of the believer in Christ. By the Spirit the believer is baptised into the community of faith, united to Christ, and set upon the path of glorious transformation. In order to penetrate this theological nexus Torrance develops a doctrine of baptism which revolves around three main movements: first, the objective (extra nos) elements with an emphasis on the vicarious humanity of Christ; second, the subjective (in nobis) elements which centre on the believer's participation in the vicarious humanity of Christ; and third, the eschatological orientation toward which the sacraments point. Utilising insights from Hunsinger we may recognise that Torrance's doctrine of baptism is based on an essentially perfect tense, participated in by the believer in the present tense, but will be fully consummated in the future tense. As with the rest of his theology, Torrance's doctrine of baptism is inherently christocentric and works within a trinitarian framework.

The very Christ whom they proclaim (by the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit), as opposed to Barth, who insists on seeing them 'ethically' as no more than a grateful human response to a prior divine grace not mediated or set forth by the sacraments themselves... However, like Barth (but unlike Calvin), Torrance has an unambiguous grasp on how salvation must be spoken of essentially in the perfect tense.


265 T.F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 40. This doesn't preclude Torrance from using the term 'energies' when referring to the action of God. However, his use of this term is always strictly personal.

Torrance finds the origin of Christian baptism in the Old Testament rite of proselyte baptism; it is not that Christian baptism depends on proselyte baptism, but simply that it provides an explanatory key to it. In proselyte baptism three main elements were involved: circumcision, the sprinkling of sin-offering water, and immersion. Behind this rite lay the ‘powerful theology’ of participation in the Exodus redemption out of Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and of sanctificatory cleansing in the establishment of the Covenant at Mt Sinai.\textsuperscript{267} When Torrance turns specifically to the New Testament rite of baptism (\textit{baptisma})\textsuperscript{268} he turns to John the Baptist. John’s baptism represented a process of initiation into the eschatological community of the Messiah and so Torrance considers it beyond doubt that ‘John the Baptist supplied the church with its ritual act, the rite of initiation by water into the messianic Age and Community, into the New Covenant...’\textsuperscript{269} Because Jesus was baptised by John, this is paradigmatic for Christian baptism, so baptism involves not just immersion into water from below but also immersion into the Spirit from above.\textsuperscript{270} Torrance sees this vividly portrayed at Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out in baptism upon the church and immediately the apostles summoned men and women to be baptised in water.\textsuperscript{271} When the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are taken with full seriousness, he maintains, the rite of baptism highlights the language of both descent and ascent - descent into Christ’s life and death and ascent into Christ’s resurrection and ascension.


\textsuperscript{268} On the difference between \textit{βαπτισμὸς} and \textit{βαπτίζω} see T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 293-295. The first refers to a repeatable rite of ablution or ceremonial cleansing while the latter is the word exclusively used in the New Testament and refers to the reality signified in baptism - the unique saving event in Christ on which the rite rests.


Torrance develops his doctrine of baptism around the three themes or movements already identified: perfect (past), present, and future tenses, or alternatively: objective, subjective, and eschatological dimensions. The first in order of chronology and importance is the past aspect, or more accurately the perfect tense of baptism (and salvation). Christ’s baptism becomes ours, because his is a vicarious life, death, and resurrection. Christian baptism has an objective dimension and a subjective dimension, corresponding with Hunsinger’s perfect tense and present tense respectively.272 Objectively, we are baptised into Christ and his action for us. Considered from the perfect tense, Christ has achieved salvation completely and our baptism or response adds nothing to salvation: 

...our part is only to receive it, for we cannot add anything to Christ’s finished work. Rather does he act upon us through his Spirit in terms of his atoning and sanctifying incorporation of himself into our humanity in such a way that it takes effect in us as our ingrafting into Christ and as our adoption into the family of the heavenly Father.273

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273 T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 88. He says more fully (87-88): ‘As an ordinance, then, baptism sets forth not what we do, nor primarily what the Church does to us, but what God has already done in Christ, and through his Spirit continues to do in and to us.’ This raises the vexed question of the propriety of infant baptism. It is beyond the scope of the present study to investigate infant baptism except to note Torrance’s affirmation of it. Because baptism is the sacramental rite of entry into the New Covenant community ultimately represented by the perfect work of Christ, it is a sacrament of promise to which both adults and infants are called. In point of fact, according to Torrance and the Reformed tradition with him, ‘infant-baptism is then seen to be the clearest form of the proclamation of the Gospel and of a Gospel which covenants us to a life of obedience to the Father,’ T.F. Torrance, Conflict and Agreement in the Church. Vol. 2: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 125. What then of the role of faith in regard to baptism? Torrance insists that baptism is not the sacrament of what we do but of what Christ has already done and which we could not do for ourselves. Therefore, ‘Baptism is the divinely given ordinance which directs us and our children not to something which only becomes real when we believe, but into the saving act of God’s love which He has already fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ, and into which we enter as the great inheritance offered to us in the Gospel,’ 129. Therefore baptism is the attestation of God’s faithfulness, not our faith; it is the sign and seal no: of our decision but of the prior decision of Christ.

It is questionable whether Torrance’s affirmation of infant baptism and his arguments for it are convincing. At this point of his argument Torrance opens himself up to the charge often levelled unfairly, at other parts of his theology, that he so emphasises the perfect tense of salvation that he undermines the present tense, the actual subjective participation of the believer in the completed work of Christ. This is one point where Torrance and Barth part company sharply, for Barth, as is well known, fully supported believers’ baptism as the normal and normative form of baptism because it is the sign and seal of the believers incorporation into the community through faith. See K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), IV/4. Hunsinger provides several theses towards ecumenical consensus and by working through Barth’s sacramental theology (and Torrance’s elsewhere) argues that while believer’s baptism is normal and normative infant baptism is nonetheless permissible, by co-ordinating it, proleptically and communally, with believer’s baptism. See G. Hunsinger, ‘Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness,’ International Journal of Systematic Theology 2 (2000), 265. It is not clear that Torrance would accept his ‘ecumenical consensus’.
Subjectively, we are baptised in the Spirit. The present tense manifests and fulfils the perfect tense:274

Thus we have to say that the great baptismatic event includes the once and for all Baptism of Blood on the Cross and the once and for all Baptism of the Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost. There is One Baptism, and One Body, common to Christ and His Church, but each participates in it differently – Christ actively and vicariously as Redeemer, the Church passively and receptively as the redeemed Community.275

So Torrance's baptismal theology contains the now thoroughly familiar theme that the entire incarnation may be identified with Christ's saving activity, and more than this, that the Trinity is intimately involved in our salvation, a salvation inaugurated experientially through baptism. Baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Spirit (Mat 28.19) is highly significant. We are not only baptised into Christ's death, argues Torrance, but into his life as well - a life lived in obedience to the Father and empowered by the Spirit. Torrance concludes: 'The significance of this will be apparent if we say that while Baptism is usually spoken of only as the Sacrament of our incorporation into Christ, it is ultimately grounded upon the fact that in Jesus the Son of God incorporated Himself into our humanity.'275 Torrance's now familiar appeal to a doctrine of theösis considers it as ultimately a reality in the incarnate Christ. Through Christ we participate in his communion through the Spirit with the Father. Baptism is the initial sacrament of this participation. It is baptism into Christ, and specifically, a participation in Christ's vicarious baptism.277


277 This explains the title of one of his major essays on the topic, 'The One Baptism Common to Christ and His Church,' in T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 82-105,
Because of his emphasis on the perfect tense of salvation Torrance is not averse to using the language of 'baptismal regeneration'. However, Torrance is quick to assert that this does not mean the believer is regenerated through his or her baptism itself, nor that one is regenerated through the right administration of this sacrament (ex opere operato). 'It is not of course the rite of Baptism which regenerates, but in Baptism our regeneration in Christ is declared, and shown forth, and promised: it is sacramentally enacted as an image and likeness of the birth and resurrection of Christ.' This is not, however, to be read as implying a mere symbolic representation. In the act of baptism the reality of regeneration is made ours, it is a manifestation of what has already taken place.

Torrance argues in the strongest possible terms that there is no additional act of salvation outside of what Christ has achieved in his incarnation. In baptism the believer is brought into a new relationship – the relationship or communion between the Son and the Father, and it is that communion that we are able to share by the Spirit. Baptism thus serves as the liturgical mediation of forgiveness.

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278 T.F. Torrance, Conflict and Agreement in the Church. Vol. 2: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 111. 'It is therefore only with the greatest reserve that we can speak, as the New Testament does occasionally, of faith or of Baptism as saving us,' 127.

279 Technically we are baptised, baptism is administered to us in the name of the triune God; that is why our part is only to receive. T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 88; The Meditation of Christ, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 90, 'Granted that [sacraments] are responses which we are commanded to make in our worship to God, they are nevertheless not sacraments of what we do but of what Christ Jesus has done in our place and on our behalf.'


By using the language of baptismal regeneration Torrance opens himself up for serious misinterpretation. In order to counter any possible misunderstandings Torrance makes certain qualifications clear: the concept of regeneration is applied first of all to Christ, who in his spiritual birth and his resurrection from the dead is the one in whom the regeneration of our humanity has already taken place. In addition, regeneration is applied to Christ’s Second Advent when he will return in power to judge the quick and the dead. Therefore baptism as the sacrament of regeneration is the ordinance of promise given by Christ to his church in its life between the two Advents. As Torrance states in his essay ‘The One Baptism Common to Christ and His Church’, salvation comes to us ‘more by way of realization or actualization in us of what has already happened to us in [Christ] than as a new effect resulting from [his finished work]’.

On the basis of the perfect salvation secured in the assumption of human nature, Christ’s one baptism becomes ours, as we participate in it through the Spirit. As such ‘our baptism involves a twofold movement of simultaneity – from Christ to us and from us to him.’ Because Christ’s work of reconciling humanity to God is now complete, believers now participate in that one completed salvation. This is the present or subjective aspect of baptism. ‘In baptism, the perfect tense of our salvation in him becomes present to us for what it is – by making us present to itself; its objective reality becomes, as it were, subjectively accessible and actual.’ This explains the importance of Torrance’s doctrine of baptism for a doctrine of theōs/s. ‘Baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit initiates people into the sphere in which all the divine blessings of forgiveness of sins, resurrection and eternal life

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are bestowed and become effective...\textsuperscript{289} This has both subjective and objective implications, but which is to take priority? While Torrance acknowledges both aspects are involved in a doctrine of baptism, he sides with Athanasius, as one would expect, and considers the fundamental meaning behind baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity to be 'understood as partaking through the Spirit in the one unrepeatable baptism of Christ which he underwent, not just in the Jordan River, but throughout his life and in his death resurrection [sic], on our behalf'.\textsuperscript{290}

Torrance directly relates baptism to the doctrine of \textit{theōsis}:

> the central truth of baptism, therefore, is lodged in Jesus Christ himself and all that he has done for us within the humanity he took from us and made his own, sharing to the full what we are that we may share to the full what he is. \textit{Baptism is the sacrament of that reconciling and atoning exchange in the incarnate Saviour.}\textsuperscript{291}

Baptism, for Torrance, is our participation in the incarnate Son's \textit{theopoíēsis}. It is our subjective participation in the objective work of Christ, both of which were secured by the Holy Spirit, the One Spirit common to Christ and the church. Because baptism is into Christ, the God-man and Saviour, it has an ontological implication. 'It is,' writes Torrance, 'to have our frail transient existence taken up into Christ himself in such a way that, without any loss to our creaturely reality but rather with its perfecting through his Spirit, it is united to God and established in union with his eternal reality.'\textsuperscript{292} Once again \textit{theōsis} is clearly in view, for the creature, without ceasing to be created, participates in the divine nature by grace and adoption through the Son in the Spirit. These are the benefits which the believer enjoys in Christ through baptism. Because baptism inaugurates \textit{theōsis} in the believer, the first act in the believer's historical existence, it is impossible to...

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{290} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (1988. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 293. The citation continues, 'That vicarious baptism was the objective truth behind the \textit{εν βαπτισμα} of the Creed in which its depth of meaning was grounded.' Cf. \textit{The Mediation of Christ}, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 90-91.
\end{itemize}
separate the individual from the community. While believers are baptised individually, they are baptised into the one body of Christ and together share in him and his benefits.

Living communion with the triune God is achieved through the vicarious life of Christ. Our subjective participation in that life by the Spirit does not add to the work of salvation but is, instead, the application of salvation to the believer, hence the stress upon the perfect tense. 'Christ's self-communication involves at least three things simultaneously: our receiving of him into our hearts, our participating in him personally, and our communion with him eternally.'\textsuperscript{293} This leads Hunsinger to suggest tentatively that reception is oriented to the past, participation to the present, and communion to the future: 'Reception of Christ means acknowledging who he is and what he has done for our sakes. Participation in Christ means being clothed and renewed by his perfect righteousness. Communion with Christ is eternal life itself.'\textsuperscript{294} While this is not the language that Torrance uses it is in line with his thought. Torrance characterises baptism as the sacrament which reflects our once-and-for-all union and communion with Christ while the eucharist reflects our continuous union and communion with him. Baptism thus reflects the theme of Christ's complete substitution while the eucharist reflects the theme of Christ's complete representation.\textsuperscript{295}

Not only does baptism refer to the perfect tense, as Hunsinger puts it, but it also has a future tense or an eschatological orientation. The depth dimension of the sacraments is both retrospective and prospective because they involve participation in Christ, the God-man, in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. 'Because the Church is the Body of the risen and ascended Christ who will come again, all that is said about one baptism for the remission of sins is proleptically conditioned by the

\textsuperscript{293} G. Hunsinger, ‘The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,’ \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology} 54 (2001), 164. Hunsinger is using the term 'participation' to refer to the ontic sense of 'real union;' and 'communion' to refer to the noetic sense of cognition and volition. Whilst useful categories, they are not those utilised by Torrance.


future.\textsuperscript{296} To be united to the crucified and risen Christ through the baptism of his Spirit, necessarily carries with it sharing with him in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.\textsuperscript{297} Through baptism we enter into union and communion with Christ, the dead-but-now-risen One. Through baptism we have the assurance that in the eschaton we too shall be resurrected to experience the future and final form of theōsis, a form that we know and experience provisionally now, but that will openly embrace all things in the form that is yet to come.\textsuperscript{298}

Theōsis concerns the whole of salvation, retrospective and prospective elements included, precisely because it is participation in Christ. Baptism functions as a sign and seal of the reality of Christ’s once-for-all salvation so Torrance writes:

Through his incarnation the Son of God took up into himself our physical existence enslaved to sin, thereby making our corruption, death and judgment his own and offering himself as a substitute for us, so that through the atoning sacrifice of his own life, he might destroy the power that corruption and death have over us. Through the resurrection of our physical human nature in himself Christ has set us upon an altogether different basis in relation to God in which there is no longer any place for corruption and death.\textsuperscript{299}

Mortality, corruption, sin, and enslavement have been overcome by Christ and through baptism into Christ the believer is incorporated into his Body, his work, himself. Torrance is simply highlighting how, through baptism, what Christ has done for us is actually made a reality in us. By reminding us of the eschatological nature of baptism the sacrament assures us that in our union with Christ through one baptism and one Spirit, the one church cannot but look through its participation in the saving death of Christ to its participation in his resurrection from the dead, when ‘at the return of its risen Lord and Saviour...its whole existence will be transformed and it will enjoy to the full the sanctity and


eternal life of God himself. Here we see Torrance articulate a concept of *theōsis* which enables him to unite the various aspects of salvation into a coherent theology in which the great regeneration (*palingenesia*) points forward to the reality of which baptism into Christ by the Spirit speaks - full creaturely participation in the triune God.

The vicarious humanity of Christ is integral to Torrance’s theology of baptism as everywhere else in his theology. ‘It is that element,’ concludes Hunsinger, ‘that holds together the present tense of salvation with the perfect tense so that the finished work of Christ is properly manifest as the dimension of depth in the sacrament of baptism.’ By virtue of our participation in and communion with Christ, we are drawn into the eternal communion of the Holy Trinity. Torrance explicitly identifies the profound reciprocity in word and act fulfilled in Christ and in the Spirit. In Christ God breaks through to humanity and becomes himself human, affecting a binding relation with his own being. In the Spirit ‘the self-giving of God actualises itself in us as the Holy Spirit creates in us the capacity to receive it and lifts us up to participate in the union and communion of the incarnate Son with the heavenly Father.’

Because the goal of Christian life is *theōsis*, baptism represents the sacrament which by the Spirit binds the believer to the incarnate Christ and to his vicarious baptism. Hence baptism is administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, leading Torrance to maintain the doctrine of *theōsis* in his discussion of baptism because God has ‘opened his divine being for human participation’.

§18.2.2 Eucharist

Like baptism, the eucharist is also a sacramental means of *theōsis*, the incorporation of the believer into Christ and of communion through Christ.

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by the Spirit with the Father. As with baptism, the key note is on the once-and-for-all, objective work of Christ into which the church enters. Further, like baptism, the eucharist points to the true *mystērion*, Jesus Christ. Through the sacraments the church participates in the person and work of Christ in such a way that his work becomes ours; the wonderful exchange elaborated in Torrance’s doctrine of reconciliation takes on a sacramental cast. Torrance explains this by highlighting the asymmetrical participation of Christ and the church in the Lord’s Supper: ‘In the upper room Jesus and his disciples all shared the loaf, and all drank of the cup, but in different ways: Christ actively and vicariously as Redeemer, the disciples receptively and obediently as the foundation of the redeemed community.’ Torrance’s sacramental theology is an attempt to explicate the *actio* of Christ and the *re-actio* of the church in such a way that the *actio* of Christ retains priority and is the objective grounding of the secondary, but no less important, subjective participation or *re-actio* of the believer (church) in his vicarious humanity. As such,

...the mystery of the Eucharist is to be understood in terms of our participation through the Spirit in what the whole Jesus Christ, the incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended Son, is in himself, in respect both of his activity from the Father towards mankind and of his activity from mankind towards the Father.

The twofold movement of God-humanity and humanity-God realised in the incarnate Christ is applied to the sacraments, and the resultant doctrine reflects closely what Torrance has already worked out in his doctrines of incarnation and reconciliation.

Hunsinger considers Torrance’s sacramental theology to be strongest at the point at which it maintains the ‘Protestant principle’ of salvation in and by Christ alone, while still upholding a form of ‘Catholic substance’ in which baptism and the Lord’s Supper are specific sacramental forms of

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the one saving act of God in Christ through the Spirit. Torrance's construction of salvation in the perfect tense does not diminish the ongoing importance of the eucharist but explains more clearly how salvation is mediated to believers. The eucharist is a mediating form of saving action, not a constitutive form. Like preaching, the eucharist is secondary and derivative in relation to the finished work of Christ and as such, the sacraments manifest, attest, mediate and participate in the one central form of salvation, for Christ's finished work allows of no supplementation. Hunsinger explains this point well:

In its perfection, however, the finished work of Christ (opus perfectus) does allow for secondary forms of self-manifestation, self-attestation and self-mediation (i.e. Word and Sacrament) which participate in the central form without becoming confused with or changed into it (operatione perpetuus). Thus Torrance makes sense of the real presence of Christ in the eucharist for it reflects the twofold movement evident in the incarnation itself and in the high priestly work of Christ.

With Calvin, Torrance affirms the view of the sursum corda, that we are elevated by the Spirit to participate in the incarnate Son's self-offering to the Father, but he goes beyond Calvin in affirming that at the same time Christ in and with the bread and wine is present to the church by the same Spirit, in the vicarious humanity of his body and blood. This twofold movement by the Spirit through Christ to the Father and

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310 Torrance works out this twofold movement in T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 117-118, emphasising that in the Lord's Supper the command to do this 'in anamnesis of me' is done in holy analogue to and in union with what Christ has done for us in his self-offering and self-consecration to the Father, through the Spirit.


from the Father through Christ in the Spirit is what Torrance refers to as the ‘dimension of depth’ in the eucharist.\textsuperscript{313} The bread and wine are the visible means through which we ‘see’ God in Christ.

Drawing on Calvin’s doctrine of the \textit{sursum corda}, ‘The Lord’s Supper is a communion with the risen and ascended Christ through the Spirit which He pours upon His Church...\textsuperscript{314} In this sacrament the church experiences the prelude to the new creation as it takes place between the times. The eucharist is the great unveiling of the new age in our midst through the Spirit. This means that ‘we have to distinguish in a doctrine of “the real presence” between the Eucharistic Parousia of Christ and His final Parousia in judgment and new creation.’\textsuperscript{315} It is here that ‘memorialist’ and ‘mystical’ views go astray according to Torrance. The first involves an ‘un-christological’ separation between the sign and the thing signified and treats the sign as a symbol of what happened historically in the past,\textsuperscript{316} while the other involves an ‘un-christological’ confusion between the sign and the thing signified through a doctrine of transubstantiation.\textsuperscript{317} This is one reason Torrance rejects certain notions of deification, especially deification through the liturgy, as it posits a union with the \textit{divine} nature of Jesus Christ rather than with his \textit{human} nature; Torrance calls this the


\textsuperscript{315} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Conflict and Agreement in the Church. Vol. 2: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel} (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 139. See T.F. Torrance, \textit{Royal Priesthood} (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), 23, ‘The Church has its existence and mission between the penultimate event and the ultimate event, that is, in “the last times that are fully inaugurated by the descent of the Spirit (Acts 2.17)...”

\textsuperscript{316} This does not imply that Torrance has nothing to say about the role of \textit{anamnesis} in the Lord’s Supper. Rather, as we read in T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West} (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 119:

The Eucharistic \textit{anamnesis} is thus not merely something which we do by way of remembrance in consciousness, word and deed of the historical self-offering of Jesus Christ once and for all on the Cross, but is something we do in and through the real presence of the whole Christ who constitutes himself, in his sacrificial death and justifying resurrection, its objective effectiveness and eternally enduring reality, so that the bread which we break and the cup of blessing which we bless are communion (\textit{koinonia}) in the body and blood of Christ and the eucharistic offering of Christ to the Father which we make through him is communion (\textit{koinonia}) in his own sacrificial self-offering to God the Father.

\textsuperscript{317} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West} (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 123.
problem of 'Apollinarianism in the liturgy'. Instead, 'The Eucharist involves at its very heart the sursum corda, of our union with Christ in history and yet out of history is a reality that utterly transcends all our categories of space and time.'

Following Calvin, Torrance applies a christological analogy to the Supper: 'In participating in [Christ] we become conformed to Him so that we participate also in our own way in the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. Thus the mode of sacramental relation reflects the mode of hypostatic union in Christ.' To be one with Christ is to be caught up into the Triune perichoresis to share in the very life of God.

Sacramental union is thus another of Torrance's conceptual equivalents for theósis: partaking of the divine nature through the Son in the Spirit.

There can be no doubt that as yet we walk by faith and not by sight, nevertheless the significance of eucharistic communion lies in the fact that by the act of the eternal Spirit the believing Church is given to

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318 See T.F. Torrance, 'The Mind of Christ in Worship: Apollinarianism in the Liturgy,' in Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 139-214. A recent commentator concurs: 'Once regarded in terms of participation through and with Christ in the worship which he offers to God on behalf of all humankind, the Eucharist or Mass came to be regarded as the regular means whereby the faithful receive divine grace and are 'deified' through union with Christ in his divine nature,' G. Redding, Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ in the Reformed Tradition (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 72.


320 T.F. Torrance, Conflict and Agreement in the Church. Vol. 2: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 139 (171). As believers participate in the mystery of Christ they must raise up their minds and hearts above and beyond their senses and their abilities to provide in rational categories an explanation of the act of communion in the Body and Blood of Christ 'for it is by its very nature a union wrought by the Spirit and therefore far transcends the capacities of our minds to grasp.' 142. This explains why Torrance offers no reflection on how the outward elements are related to the body and blood of Christ or of how the baptismal waters are related to Christ's cleansing and sanctifying of us by the Spirit.

321 This is, in fact, the meaning of the eucharist: 'Thus the celebration of the Lord's Supper means that we through the Spirit are so intimately united to Christ, by communion in his body and blood, that we participate in his self-consecration and self-offering to the Father made on our behalf and in our place; and appear before the majesty of God in worship, praise and adoration with no other worship or sacrifice than that which is identical with Christ Jesus our Mediator and High Priest,' T.F. Torrance, The Mediation of Christ, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 92.

step over the eschatological boundary, and to partake of the divine nature.\textsuperscript{323}

How close is the union which believers have with God in \textit{theōsis} by means of the Lord’s Supper? Torrance answers, ‘No union, save that of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, could be closer, without passing into absolute identity, than that between Christ and His Church as enacted in the Holy Eucharist.’\textsuperscript{324} The union is, accordingly, ‘ontological’, and even, using the language of Calvin, ‘substantial’\textsuperscript{325} Once again we find at the heart of Torrance’s theology a commitment to \textit{theōsis}, worked out around the twofold mediation of Christ by the Spirit, this time worked out through a sacramental theology in which we step over the eschatological boundary to partake of the divine nature.\textsuperscript{326}

According to Torrance, ‘the key to the understanding of the Eucharist is to be sought in the \textit{vicarious humanity of Jesus, the priesthood of the incarnate Son}.\textsuperscript{327} This priestly intercession is also twofold: first, Christ interceded for us in the incarnation by his sacrificial life and death on our behalf, and second, he continues to intercede for us in his resurrection and ascension by offering himself, and believers in union and communion with himself, to the Father. Thus by establishing complete kinship with us, Jesus Christ acts as our High Priest both in vicarious receiving and in


\textsuperscript{326} This union is so close that a doctrine of \textit{theōsis} is asserted because in the eucharist believers participate in the perfect intercession of Christ as our High Priest before the Father in the Spirit as represented by the body and blood of Christ. As Kärikäinen remarks, ‘...the celebration of the Supper is much more than just ‘remembering’ a deceased person. It becomes a spirited event where the celebrants rather than the elements are to be transformed into the image of the one who was crucified and rose from death through the power of the Spirit,’ V-M, Kärikäinen, ‘The Spirit and the Lord’s Supper,’ in \textit{Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission}, ed. A. Yong (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), 140. Cf. W. Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology}, vol. 3, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 324.

\textsuperscript{327} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West} (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 110 (italics in original).
vicarious offering. In the incarnation God comes to us in Christ and participates in the depth of the human condition, redeeming humanity in his perfect life and death. By his incarnation he has bound himself to believers and believers to himself, removing all sin and corruption and endowing believers with divine holiness. The second aspect of his work is the God-ward response of humanity offered vicariously 'as our own act towards God'. Hunsinger's analysis of Torrance's eucharistic theology is expressed in aphoristic form:

[With the Incarnation, heaven participates in earth that earth might participate in heaven. God participates in human flesh that human flesh might participate in God. Holiness participates in corruption that corruption might be uncorrupted by participating in holiness. Christ binds us to himself in his incarnational self-giving unto death in order that he might bring us into living union and communion with himself in his eternal self-offering to God.]

Torrance's sacramentology is a further articulation of theosis when understood in light of his entire theological writing. As baptism is the initiation of Christian life the Lord's Supper is the continual renewal of our communion with Christ in the church. It is a feeding on Christ, a strengthening and sustaining sacrament of Christ's presence. It is interesting to note that the fathers spoke of the eucharist as a pharmakon or medicine. The eucharist is the service of healing where the Lord bids believers to partake of his very being, to become one with him. The reference to pharmakon in the fathers is accompanied by the

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328 In his explanation of this Torrance draws once again upon Athanasius when, in Contra Arianos, IV.6, he writes, 'he became Mediator between God and men in order that he might minister the things of God to us and the things of ours to God,' see T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 110.


332 This is discussed in both Pentecostal and Roman Catholic traditions in V-M, Karkkainen, 'The Spirit and the Lord's Supper,' in Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission, ed. A. Yong (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), 142-144.
classical theme that 'the unassumed is the unhealed'.\footnote{333} Through the incarnation God in Christ healed the human condition. The eucharist is an expression of that healing, as believers are united to Christ and to his perpetual intercession on our behalf before the Father.

As we feed upon Christ, the bread of life who comes down from above, eating his flesh and drinking his blood, thereby receiving his eternal life into our actual life, and living by Christ as he lives by the Father who sent him, he unites us and our worship with his own self-consecration and so offers us to the Father in the identity of himself as Offerer and Offering. That is to say, we worship the Father through the priesthood of the Son in such a way that it is Christ himself who is the real content of our worship, worship in which the life of Christ so forms itself that it is a form of the life of the Son ascending from us to the Father.\footnote{334}

This perpetual offering of our worship to the Father by the Son in the Spirit does not diminish the perfect tense of salvation but shifts the focus to the perpetual validity of that eternal and perfect salvation. In Torrance's estimation Christ presents us continuously to the Father in a way that calls for 'our continuous living communion with him as the Son'.\footnote{335} Without the flesh and blood of Christ there would be no offering acceptable to the Father and so this offering which the Spirit unites to Christ in our eucharistic worship parallels and complements the uniting work of the Spirit of Christ with the believer.

'This is the Church of the triune God,' Torrance writes,

embodying under the power of the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, the divine koinonia within the conditions of human and temporal existence. For the church to be in the Spirit in an objective and


\footnote{334} T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 111. Torrance then cites Gal 2.20, a favourite verse of his: 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, not yet I, but the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.'

ontological sense, is to be in God. It belongs to the nature and life of the Church in space and time to partake of the very life and light and love which God is.\textsuperscript{336} In the mystery of the Holy Spirit we are brought into such a communion with the Father through the Son and in the Spirit, that we are made to participate in the real presence of God to himself.\textsuperscript{337} Participation in the sacraments is thus a participation in the divine nature, a mystery of the faith that unites the believer to Christ by the Spirit, and by the same Spirit and through the same Christ, enables the believer to commune with God. In short, the vision of sacramental participation in God Torrance articulates is consistent with a concept of the\textit{osis} inherent in the rest of his theology.\textsuperscript{338}

Given such a sacramental vision of union with God, the\textit{osis} acts as a controlling motif in Torrance's theology. The Holy Spirit is seen as the mediator of the\textit{osis} in all its forms: union, communion, and participation. In this context, as in all others for Torrance, the\textit{osis} is mediated by the Holy Spirit, is grounded in Christ as its definitive object, and our sacramental participation in salvation is affirmed in fully christocentric, trinitarian, and eschatological terms. Through the divinely appointed means (Word and sacrament), the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ (and with one another as Christ's body), and it is this union which initiates and sustains the process of the\textit{osis} in the believer. While believers currently await the consummation of the\textit{osis}, they already share, in part, eternal life with the Holy Trinity.\textsuperscript{339}


\textsuperscript{338} This is made explicit in T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West} (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 121.

\textsuperscript{339} This paragraph was a deliberate adaptation and alteration of thesis 51 in G. Hunsinger, 'Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness,' \textit{International Journal of Systematic Theology} 2 (2000), 266. I am indebted to this article for its insights into both Barth's sacramental theology and the insights into koinonia relations which Hunsinger brings out. A 'koinonia-relation' is: a relation of mutual indwelling between two terms (e.g. between Christ and the church). Term a dwells in term b, even as b dwells in a, with the result that they coexist in a unity-in-distinction. In such a relation neither a nor b loses its identity, but rather the distinctive identity of each is sustained, fulfilled and enhanced. The two terms are thus related without separation or division (unity) and without confusion or change (distinction), (248-249). Hunsinger adds a third element to the equation, the principle of asymmetry. 'The asymmetrical ordering principle
Kärkkäinen speaks of a ‘pneumatological anaemia’ in relation to the eucharist, \(^{340}\) specifically, a lack of reflection on how the Spirit mediates the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. This pneumatological anaemia is not shared by Torrance, for his sacramental theology is permeated by the identity and mission of the Spirit who mediates the presence of God in Christ to believers.\(^{341}\) This does not mean that Torrance explicitly describes how the real presence of Christ is present in the eucharist any more than Calvin does. For Torrance, the eucharist is, like the mystery of the Trinity or the mystery of the incarnation, more the place for adoration than explanation.\(^{342}\) Missing in Torrance’s theology of the sacraments are not the foundational principles upon which a doctrine of theosis may be built - they are clearly present - but the substance of what theosis may mean in practice for the church.\(^{343}\) Nevertheless, Torrance’s sacramental theology is consistent with what has been developed elsewhere in his theology.

§18.3 Approaching God in Worship

Because Christ is the true Man, the last Adam, the Word and Light, his life forms the paradigm for ours. The role which Torrance, drawing on the Epistle to the Hebrews, consistently emphasises is Christ’s High

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\(^{341}\) Much of Torrance’s sacramental theology is developed in both G. Redding, Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ in the Reformed Tradition (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), and L.J. Vander Zee, Christ, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship (Grand Rapids: IVP, 2004).


Priesthood. Christ is our *leitourgos* (Heb 7.28; 8.1-3), who, as the term suggests, completes the work (*ergon*) of the people (*laos*).\footnote{344} Salvation consists in being incorporated into Christ by the Spirit in order to participate in the Son’s worship of the Father. Consequently Christ is not only the initiator of salvation but also the model and the perfector of it. His bodily resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father means that he continues to serve as Priest on our behalf. This is his ‘Royal Priesthood’\footnote{345} into which believers progressively participate. It is this which provides the context in which Torrance speaks of the church’s response in faith, sacraments, evangelism, ministry, prayer, and worship; a response which is essentially eucharistic. A brief examination of Torrance’s articulation of the Royal Priesthood of Christ and the derivative priesthood of the church highlights a final area in which an understanding of *theōsis* informs his theology.

Torrance deals very little with the actual response of a believer to God, an omission which has the effect of weakening the import of the participatory nature of salvation he constructs. While the theology of the identity of the Holy Spirit is rigorously maintained, Torrance does not go on to suggest in detail ways in which the mission of the Spirit is equally crucial. There is no extended treatise on ministry, mission, or the spiritual disciplines such as we may find in the practical theology of the Orthodox, Catholic, or Evangelical traditions. It is not that Torrance is unconcerned about such things - clearly he is\footnote{346} - but rather the theological foundation has been provided and he considers that he can add little in theological terms.\footnote{347} Because of his emphasis on the vicarious humanity of Christ and our incorporation into his human life, Torrance’s work is largely concerned with establishing the God-human relationship in

\footnote{345} See T.F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), where this theme is thoroughly developed.
\footnote{346} As a pastor, preacher, son of a missionary and self-proclaimed disciple of Jesus Christ, Torrance’s commitment to ministry, mission and spiritual disciplines is unquestioned. It is the absence of these themes in his work which is observed here.
Christ, from which the believer’s relationship is derived. Lee remarks in the conclusion to his study:

Christ’s incarnational union with us is hypostatic and ontological, whereas our union with Christ is quasi-hypostatic and eschatological. Torrance maintains an analogical relation which enshrines an asymmetrical ontological difference *(inconfuse et inseparabiliter)* between what is Christ’s and what is ours. It applies to the relation between the Word of God and the word of man; transcendent Rationality and contingent rationality; reality and signs; revelation and the Bible; Word and decision; election and faith; real presence and sacramental elements; Christ the Head and the Church as his Body; Christ’s ministry and our ministry; Christ’s Priesthood and our priesthood; Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice and our eucharistic sacrifice; Christ’s *Kerygma* and our proclamation; Christ’s *actio* and our *re-actio*. Since the two poles are ontologically healed and united in hypostatic union, their relations are to be controlled and interpreted by the first order, i.e. hypostatic union.  

Lee has identified the central aspect of Torrance’s theological method. Christ is all in all and Torrance wishes the church to understand that reality in all its profundity. It is this which accounts for Torrance’s emphasis on the vicarious humanity of Christ and the concept of reconciling exchange which works its way through his theology. It is also this that accounts for his acceptance of *theōsis*, for this concept escapes the captivity into which many other theories of the atonement fall and retains the mystery of salvation central to Christian soteriology.

In terms of ministry Torrance believes that the church participates in the ministry of Jesus Christ. This does not mean the church has an identical ministry to Christ, for then the church would replace Christ and thus undermine the Gospel. On the other hand the ministry of the church is not *other than* the ministry of Christ or separable from it; something Torrance considers endemic in ‘sectarian’ views of the church. This apparent conflict between the ministry of the church and the ministry of Christ is resolved by referring to the relation of the church to Christ as one of Head to body, Lord to servant, King to herald, Householder to steward; from beginning to end it is a relation of subordination and obedience as the church participates in Christ’s ministry as Prophet, Priest, and King. As Torrance presents it, ‘The ministry of the church is

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related to the ministry of Christ in such a way that in and through the ministry of the Church it is always Christ Himself who is at work, nourishing, sustaining, ordering, and governing His Church on earth.\textsuperscript{349} This is made possible through the presence of the Holy Spirit who enables, conforms, empowers, appoints, commands, and governs the life of believers so that ‘throughout the whole prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry of the Church, it is Christ himself who presides as Prophet, Priest, and King, but He summons the Church to engage in His ministry by witness (μαρτυρία), by stewardship (οἰκονομία), and by service (διακονία).\textsuperscript{350} The derivative priesthood of the church becomes a significant form in which Torrance indicates what a practical vision of theōsis may look like.

Having laid such a foundation Torrance does not build upon it. Had Torrance undertaken to develop at least the rudiments of a practical theology many of his critics might have been appeased and more of his theology would perhaps have been accessible to a wider readership. This being said, it is obvious that Torrance’s thinking lends itself to a practical and applied theology, as is evident in the ever-growing secondary literature.\textsuperscript{351} Torrance obviously did not consider any of this important enough for him to address, however, he was fully supportive of those who felt it was their vocation to undertake such an endeavour.

Alongside an understanding of the High Priesthood of Christ, Torrance affirms a Reformed view on the orders of the ministry, or the royal priesthood of the church. Within the Church of Scotland these orders are
expressed through the institution of presbyter and elders. Torrance affirms a somewhat High Church position in this matter, emphasising that the presbytery brings God before the congregation in Word and sacrament and the deacons help people give their faithful response back to God. He explains the relationship between the High Priest, Jesus Christ, and the royal priesthood of the church thus:

That sacrificial act of Christ once and for all performed and enduring in His endless life in the presence of God, is realised in the life of His people, not by repetition of His substitutionary sacrifice, but by their dying and rising with Christ in faith and life, and by the worship of self-presentation to God...This sacrifice of the Church in worship, ministry, and life is entirely non-propitiatory, non-piacular. It is essentially eucharistic.

As a royal priesthood the church is created to offer 'spiritual sacrifices' (pneumatikai thusai) to God (1 Pet 2.5), which Torrance links with the Pauline concept of 'rational worship' (logikē latreia) found in Rom 12.1. What unites both concepts is the twofold work of Christ and the Spirit. The sacrifice of Christ has cleansed our conscience from fear and anxiety for legal justification, and the Spirit has liberated us from the dead works and carnal ordinances of ritual so that worship comes to stand for the life of the people, the living sacrifice that is spiritual worship. This leads Torrance to the conclusion that 'Latreia is worship of God in Spirit and in Truth (John 4.22f).'

Spiritual worship, conducted by the church as the royal priesthood, is significant because its life of worship on earth conforms to a heavenly pattern (Heb 12.22-24, 28, 29). While this was true also of Old Testament worship (Heb 8.5; 9.23), the radical nature of New Testament worship is found in the relationship established between the ascended Christ, our Leitourgos, and the yet-to-be-perfected-and-resurrected church. Avoiding the language of the Septuagint or Platonic philosophy,

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353 T.F. Torrance, Royal Priesthood (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), 80-81. He goes on to distance his view of Church order from that of Roman Catholicism.

354 T.F. Torrance, Royal Priesthood (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), 17

Hebrews 9.23 pointedly uses *hupodeigma* as opposed to *paradeigma* or *eidos* to show that worship on earth is 'not a transcription of the heavenly reality, but a pointer in observable form to a higher reality.' Our *hupodeigma* is an imperfect reality which will one day pass away, whose efficacy lies in liturgical obedience to what God has done in Christ on the cross.

By highlighting both the High Priesthood of Christ and the royal priesthood of the church, Torrance makes the familiar point that what the church, and believers who make up the church, do on earth, summarised as worship, is done in the power of the Spirit who unites our imperfect sacrifice with that of Christ, the perfect sacrifice, our *Leitourgos*. On this basis:

...the Church is given to participate in His ministry, in word, deed, and life; in word, by proclaiming the Gospel to the nations, by prayer and worship and praise and thanksgiving; in life and deed, by self-sacrifice, by ministering humbly to the needs of others, and by presenting our bodies in worship to God.

The now familiar theme of our response being incorporated into Christ's means that the believer's real participation in spiritual ascension is acknowledged, but this is interpreted as empowered by the Spirit and made acceptable only through the incarnate Son.

Good works thus play an important part in *theōsis*, not as the means to *theōsis*, but as a result of it. As Dawson, highly influenced by Torrance, remarks:

The most daring and engaged ministries of compassion and evangelism will mark churches living in vivid awareness of the continuing incarnation of Jesus. Our Lord is in heaven, but he is also

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356 T.F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), 20-21, Heb 8.5; and 9.23 speak of the Old Testament worship as a *ἀρτοδότημα*, a parable (Heb 9.9); *shadow* (Heb 8.5; 10.1); and a *type* (Heb 8.5; 9.24) of the heavenly reality. Torrance is correct that *παράδειγμα* is not used in the New Testament. However, many commentators take *ἀρτοδότημα* to be a synonym for *παράδειγμα*. Cf. P. Ellingworth, *Commentary on Hebrews*. NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 406. W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*. WBC (Dallas: Word, 1991), 201; 206-208, uses *hupodeigma* and *paradeigma* interchangeably, although he is aware that the two differ slightly in meaning: the first conveys the idea of 'suggestion', the second that of 'comparison' or 'exhibition'. Cf. E.K. Lee, 'Words Denoting "Pattern" in the New Testament,' *New Testament Studies* 8 (1961-1962), 167-168. Lane argues that 'the resemblance to Platonism is merely verbal', because, 'the categories of time and history are interchangeably bound up with the thought of v 5 in a way that is inconsistent with Platonism...,' (207). He concludes, 'The distinction between "earthly" and "heavenly" in 8:1-5 is eschatological rather than philosophical' (208).

here among the least of the least. Remaining incarnate, he directs us
to cherish all those with whom he is a brother after the flesh. Thus,
no one is to be left out of the sphere of the Church living in the power
of the Spirit of the ascended Jesus.\textsuperscript{358}

According to Torrance this is evident in the church’s prayer and worship.

Unfortunately Torrance offers no extended discussion of Christian
ministry and its relation to salvation, justification, or good works.
Conspicuous by its absence is also any specific discussion of what \textit{theösis}
‘looks like’ in everyday life. We might speculate that if asked to account
for this absence Torrance would respond that other concerns, namely
epistemic clarity, occupied his time to the exclusion of applying the
principles of his theology to practical questions. Perhaps this is so.
However, to not attempt to work out in practice one’s soteriology,
especially when it is as consciously and rigorously constructed as his, is
surely a serious omission. In lieu of a developed ‘practical theology’ what
we do find is a discussion of the life of the Christian formed by prayer and
worship. The treatment of these themes is sparse but it does at least give
some guidelines to anyone seeking to apply Torrance’s theology to
Christian spirituality, something a doctrine of \textit{theösis} would commit one
to.

Both prayer and worship are intimately related to the sacraments in
Torrance’s thought:

In so far as the Eucharist is the act of the Church in his name and is
also a human rite, it must be understood as act of prayer,
thanksgiving and worship, i.e. as essentially \textit{eucharistic} in nature, but
as act in which through the Spirit we are given to share in the
vicarious life, faith, prayer, worship, thanksgiving and self-offering of
Jesus Christ to the Father, for in the final resort it is Jesus Christ
himself who is our true worship.\textsuperscript{359}

\textsuperscript{358} G.S. Dawson, \textit{Jesus Ascended: the Meaning of Christ’s Continuing Incarnation} (Phillipsburg: P &

\textsuperscript{359} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East
The theme of Jesus Christ as our true worship and the Spirit as the one who enables communion between the church and Christ is a hallmark of Torrance’s use of theōsis.\textsuperscript{360}

Torrance appeals to John McLeod Campbell’s definition of worship as the presentation of ‘the mind of Christ’ to the Father, for what God accepts as our true worship is Christ himself.\textsuperscript{361} ‘Worship of the Father in spirit and in truth is the life of the Son in us that ascends to the Father in such worship.’\textsuperscript{362} Outside of Christ nothing is acceptable to the Father, so prayer and worship can only be offered both in Christ and through Christ. ‘All our prayer and praise and worship are sinful and unworthy but through the Holy Spirit breathed upon us they are cleansed in the sacrifice of Christ and absorbed into intercession and praise and worship within the veil.’\textsuperscript{363} The Spirit thus creates the bond between the believer and Christ and takes what is ours to Christ and what is Christ’s to us so that his prayer and his worship of the Father becomes ours. In the light of this perhaps the most specific statement regarding worship that we find in Torrance is the following: ‘Jesus Christ is our worship, the essence of it and the whole of it, and we may worship God in Spirit and in Truth as we are made partakers of his worship.’\textsuperscript{364} This parallels the definition of worship referred to earlier, provided by James Torrance: ‘Christian worship is, therefore, our participation through the Spirit in the Son’s communion with the Father, in his vicarious life of worship and intercession’.\textsuperscript{365} Both James and Thomas Torrance see worship as central to the life of the church. As James Torrance explains:

When we see that the worship and mission of the church are the gift of participating through the Holy Spirit in the incarnate Son’s communion with the Father and the Son’s mission from the Father to

\textsuperscript{360} It is also a hallmark of Eastern Orthodox theology as seen in the essay by B. Nassif, ‘Are Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism Compatible? Yes,’ in Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelism, ed. J. Stamoollis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 40-48.

\textsuperscript{361} T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 139.

\textsuperscript{362} T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 139.

\textsuperscript{363} T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 249.

\textsuperscript{364} T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 249.

\textsuperscript{365} J.B. Torrance, Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), 15.
the world, that the unique center of the Bible is Jesus Christ, 'the apostle and high priest whom we confess' (Heb 3.1), then the doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, the ministry of the Spirit, Church and sacraments, our understanding of the kingdom, our anthropology and eschatology, all unfold from that center.\footnote{J.B. Torrance, \textit{Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace} (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), 9.}

This perspective is no less true for Thomas Torrance.

The Spirit breathed upon the disciples by Christ is the Spirit of our response to Christ and, through him, to the Father. This is the trinitarian frame of worship, this is life, and this is \textit{theōsis}. The vision of the Christian life lived on earth for Torrance is empowered by the breath of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ:

On our lips the prayer, \textit{Come, Creator Spirit}, is a prayer of commitment to what God has already done in Jesus Christ, and a prayer of participation in the divine nature, in the faith that it is only the power of God which can redeem fallen man, and that nothing short of the very life and breath of God can renew the life of his people.\footnote{T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 242.}

For the church to worship God means that it is drawn within the circle of the life of God in Christ Jesus by the Spirit in order to 'live out that divine life on earth...a life of praise and witness to his glory'.\footnote{T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconstruction} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 242.} As Colyer explains:

The indwelling presence of God through Christ and the Spirit heals, restores and intensifies our human and personal being and response in relation to God and others...The Spirit actualizes God's relation with us and activates our relation with God in a way in which the freedom and agency of God interpenetrates, embraces and upholds the freedom and agency of our redeemed humanity through Christ's vicarious humanity to the glory of God.\footnote{E.M. Colyer, \textit{How To Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding his Trinitarian and Scientific Theology} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 233.}

What is not apparent in Torrance’s theology of worship is a discussion of what a life of worship really looks like. Had Torrance taken greater care to explain the relationship between the Spirit and Christ during Christ’s earthly ministry, specifically the way the Spirit was able to lead, inspire, and keep Christ faithful to God as he grew in wisdom and grace (Lk 2.40)
and learnt obedience through his sufferings (Heb 5.8), Torrance would have been able to apply this more directly to the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life of the believer in these in-between times as we await the glorious return of the risen Christ. Unfortunately, such a discussion is absent and the student of Torrance’s works is left to work out such a practical theology for themselves.\textsuperscript{370} However, that said, Torrance does provide the theological resources such an enterprise can draw upon, and this in itself is a major achievement.

Prayer and worship complete our examination of how Torrance incorporates \textit{theōsis} into his theology for with them we come full circle back to our participation in the completed work of Christ, through union with the incarnate Son, by the Holy Spirit. We pray and worship in the Spirit of Christ who takes our prayer and worship and unites it with Christ’s own self-consecration and so offers us to the Father as Offerer and Offering, Gift and Giver. In the final analysis what God accepts as our true worship is Christ himself.\textsuperscript{371} True worship is to have the mind of Christ in worship (Phil 2.5).\textsuperscript{372} ‘Through the indwelling Spirit, who himself completes the adorable and blessed Trinity, the worshipping church is, so to speak, the doxological correlate of the Triunity of God.’\textsuperscript{373}

\textbf{§19 Conclusion}

Torrance reminds us of the heart of the Gospel as he sees it - the significance of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ:

In conclusion, let me direct you to those striking words of St Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, 2.20, which give succinct expression to the evangelical truth which we have been trying to clarify. ‘I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith, the

\textsuperscript{370} Compare this with the work of his brother J.B. Torrance, \textit{Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace}. Downers Grove: IVP, 1996, who applies much the same theology to the way believers pray, worship, and establish church practices.


\textsuperscript{372} T.F. Torrance, \textit{Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West} (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), 113.

\textsuperscript{373} T.F. Torrance, \textit{The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988, 1995), 269. Torrance is drawing on the insights of Basil at this point of his argument for an interpretation of the oneness of the Church.
faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.' This is surely the insight that we must allow to inform all our human responses to God, whether they be in faith, conversion and personal decision, worship and prayer, the holy sacraments, or the proclamation of the Gospel: 'I yet not I but Christ'...this applies to the whole of my life in Christ and to all my human responses to God, for in Jesus Christ they are laid hold of, sanctified and informed by his vicarious life of obedience and response to the Father. They are in fact so indissolubly united to the life of Jesus Christ which he lived out among us and which he has offered to the Father, as arising out of our human being and nature, that they are our responses toward the love of the Father poured out upon us through the mediation of the Son and in the unity of his Holy Spirit.374

While Torrance has more to say about community and communion, the principles outlined above are sufficient to indicate what theōsis entails for believers and the church. Theōsis is worship from beginning to end, for it is an active participation in Jesus Christ made possible by the Spirit. In reconciliation with God believers are caught up into the life of the Son’s response to the Father and in that communion they participate in the Divine nature. Christ’s vicarious life thus sanctifies believers so that what Christ has done and continues to do is communicated to them, and his worshipful response to the Father becomes theirs. The communion of the Holy Trinity is imaged on earth in the communion of the Spirit – the church, of which its members are called and transformed into Christlikeness, in order that they may participate in the Divine communion.

Conclusion: The ‘Danger of Vertigo’?

'The only thing which can be better than what is by God (apart from God Himself) is what is to develop out of what is in its communion and encounter with God.'

- Karl Barth

'(God) said that we were 'gods' and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him if we choose—he will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said.'

- Clive S Lewis

'[M]an's true life springs from his participation in the life of God and his communion with Him.'

- Georges I Mantzaridis

§20 ‘The Danger of Vertigo’?

The central argument of this research is that although the formal concept of theosis may appear rather infrequently in Torrance’s work, its material content is widely pervasive. Torrance considers theosis to be biblical, orthodox, Reformed, and appropriate for contemporary theology, as long as it is defined within specific parameters.

Torrance explores what theosis affirms while defining the limits to this soteriological analogy. Neoplatonic ideas of divinization are consistently dismissed as foreign accretions to the Christian gospel. According to Torrance such forms of divinization posit the immediate participation of the creature with Divinity so that the creature literally becomes divine in its essence. In its place Torrance argues that the Christian gospel supports the fact that God himself became man in the incarnation and in that unique theandric person, deification took place. Therefore, through

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1 K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), III/1, 366.
participation in Christ by the Holy Spirit believers may also be ‘deified’. The eternal Son is ‘deified’ by nature; the believer in Christ is ‘deified’ by grace. As such, salvation consists in being incorporated into the humanity of the incarnate Christ and through his humanity one may experience, participate in and know the triune God.

Jesus Christ alone is the imago Dei in its fullness. As the Alpha and the Omega the incarnate Son is the true image of God. This has several implications for Torrance’s articulation of theological anthropology. First, the incarnate Son is the imago Dei in whose image Adam and Eve were created. Second, the incarnate Son is the image into which all believers will one day be conformed. Third, salvation is the full participation of creatures in the humanity of Jesus Christ.

The hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Jesus preserves the human and creaturely being he took from us, and it is in and through our sharing in that human and creaturely being, sanctified and blessed with him, that we share in the life of God while remaining what we are made to be, humans and not Gods. This is an emphatic rejection of any reading of theósis which would suggest humanity ceases to be human even at the telos of salvation.

As a consequence of Torrance’s theological anthropology believers may participate in the divine nature because humanity is, in part, compatible with divinity, as the incarnation proves. In the person of the incarnate Son, through his life, death, and resurrection, reconciliation occurred between God and humanity. The Son became human, even, if Torrance is to be believed, taking on the form of fallen human nature, and redeemed humanity through his obedient life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The life of this man, the last Adam, was, from first to last, vicarious. In him humanity and divinity were perfectly reconciled resulting in true personhood and full salvation.

Recent thinkers have presented ideas similar to Torrance’s, however, none have done so as consistently or as comprehensively. Despite this, problems remain regarding many of Torrance’s ideas. Is the doctrine of

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the Primacy of Christ as clear in Scripture as Torrance would have us to believe? Preferring the theology of Duns Scotus over Thomas Aquinas, Torrance offers the disputed thesis that there would have been an incarnation even had there been no fall. In addition, Torrance forcefully contends that the patristic phrase, 'the unassumed is the unhealed' unambiguously means that the Son assumed a fallen human nature in his incarnation, and thus salvation is about healing that human nature in his own person. While coherent within Torrance’s own theology, this reading of patristic theology is highly debatable. Although such notions as these are not required in order to accept Torrance’s theology, he emphasizes these themes in his own work. He was, however, not able to provide a satisfactory defence of these ideas and so they require further consideration.

Central to Torrance’s soteriology is the emphasis upon the vicarious humanity of Christ. Jesus Christ has accomplished communion with God perfectly by uniting humanity with divinity, without dissolving either nature. Jesus Christ is homoousios with God and humanity and he alone establishes a twofold mediation between the two. By means of the hypostatic union the incarnate Son has entered into the depths of the human condition, healed it, united it with divinity, and established a communion between the two in which neither nature - divine or human - ceases to be what it is. This, argues Torrance, is what doctrines of theōsis are meant to suggest, and nothing less.

A closer reading of Torrance’s theology does raise certain questions. Eschewing certain notions of a physical theory of redemption aspects of it remain. Torrance does not make union and communion with God merely a mechanical process, however, his stress upon the incarnation over the atonement lends support to such a reading. Reformed theologians especially, the tradition within which Torrance works, will want to see a more rigorous interaction with the doctrines of sin and guilt, the cross and imputation, both of sin and grace. These themes are present in Torrance’s theology but do not occupy a prominent position. This consistently leads his critics to question how much Torrance actually
endorses a Reformed soteriology. Unfortunately, a thorough articulation of how compatible theōsis is with Reformed theology is not provided by Torrance.

While cogent and even compelling, Torrance’s soteriology, working as it does within a Western, Reformed context, offers little direct explanation of how a model of theōsis is compatible with a doctrine of justification by faith, for instance. For many, deification and justification are doctrines which inhabit two mutually exclusive theological paradigms and bringing the two together is incoherent. Torrance’s work does provide resources to address such allegations, as has been shown, despite the fact that he does not directly interact with these issues in any detail. A conception of how the two themes may ultimately be compatible requires development beyond which Torrance provides.

What Torrance does present is a christology and soteriology that reflects what he considers to be the core of Reformed theology, namely, the priority of union with Christ from which all the benefits of salvation flow, including theōsis. Theōsis expresses a rich biblical truth that helps express the lengths to which God has gone in reconciling humanity to himself. Because Jesus Christ has reconciled God and humanity, the reconciliation he achieved is both objective and subjective. Profoundly utilising a theme of ‘exchange’, Torrance finds a concept of theōsis central to a theology of the incarnation. Co-opting Athanasius’ phrase, Torrance asserts, ‘Christ became human so that humans may become divine’. Christ takes to himself what is ours, namely, our fallenness, disobedience and sin, in order to give us what is his, namely, obedient sonship, immortality, knowledge of and participation in the Holy Trinity. Through this ‘wonderful exchange’ our humanity is healed, redeemed, and perfected in the Son. Furthermore, as we participate in Christ by the Spirit, we too may come to experience the reconciling love of God and partake of the divine nature of love and life.

5 Equivalents to ‘wonderful exchange’ which Torrance also employs include: ‘sweet exchange’, ‘atonning exchange’, and ‘reconciling exchange’.
For reconciliation to become a reality in the life of a believer the Holy Spirit joins believers to Christ and therefore to his perfected humanity. Building upon insights of Athanasius and Calvin regarding believers’ union with Christ, Torrance considers *theōsis* to be a central feature. When believers by grace through faith are joined to the Son by the Spirit, they are caught up into *his* obedient life, *his* worship, *his* ministry, and *his* perfect response to the Father. Believers become perfected persons in the Son. Through fellowship with the saints, corporate worship, the ministry of the Word, and partaking of the sacraments, the believer is continually bound to Christ by the Spirit and progressively transformed or ‘deified’ from glory to glory into Christlikeness. At the *parousia*, believers will finally be glorified, raised to new life with Christ, and equipped to serve and glorify God joyfully and obediently like the Son.

Torrance’s use of *theōsis* is not without its problems. The role of the Holy Spirit permeates his theology and is integral to its trinitarian dimensions but it is not given the attention it demands specifically when ideas of *theōsis* are articulated. The epistemological role of the Holy Spirit is meticulously developed, as are the trinitarian dimensions of pneumatology, yet Torrance’s discussion on the place of the Holy Spirit in the mission of Christ, while indicative, lacks a comprehensive development. In terms of a doctrine of reconciliation, especially one that so rigorously works with a concept of *theōsis*, the lack of developed pneumatological thought is a considerable oversight. This is especially true since Torrance is self-consciously drawing upon Eastern theological emphases which have made so much of this aspect, and in view of Barth’s pneumatological lacuna in this area. It is clear that Torrance lays a solid pneumatological foundation for various aspects of his theological enterprise; however, he does not go far enough in articulating the actual dynamics of how the Holy Spirit ‘deifies’ believers in practice.

Torrance’s description of a pneumato-ecclesiology is suggestive yet ultimately disappointing. Whereas Eastern Orthodox expressions of *theōsis* typically include a direct and well-developed application of the theme, Torrance’s theology leaves much of the application open-ended.
After defining what *theosis* is and showing its reality in the Incarnate Son, Torrance is content to make only general statements about how this may be so in the life of a believer. Torrance’s christocentricity apparently threatens to engulf a clear application of his theology to human creatures. While not completely absent, practical theology is clearly not considered important enough by Torrance to comment much upon it. Readers are left to establish the implications of Torrance’s theology. The resulting emphasis Torrance wishes to place upon *theosis* is implicitly undermined.

What is not in question is Torrance’s commitment to incorporating the theme of *theosis* throughout his corpus. Amongst many Western theologians the concept of *theosis* creates unease or hostility, for it appears to confuse humanity with God. Reformed and evangelical Christians in particular have been wary of introducing concepts of *theosis* into their theologies. Torrance is sensitive to this unease and while his doctrine of *theosis* never affirms the literal divinization of humans, he does identify the ‘danger of vertigo’ that can overwhelm some people when they contemplate being exalted in Christ to partake of the divine nature. The ‘vertigo’ of which Torrance speaks is the danger of mysticism or pantheism which identifies human being with the divine being. Torrance argues this is the antithesis of the Christian gospel. And yet, Torrance asserts, this perceived ‘danger’ is not sufficient for us to reject the idea of *theosis*. This phrase - ‘the danger of vertigo’ - is critical to this study for it shows Torrance’s preparedness to unequivocally espouse the theme of *theosis*.

Clearly Torrance does not offer the final word on *theosis* any more than he does on epistemology, theology and science, or natural theology. A

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rigorous examination of his theology has indicated the need to build upon this foundation in order to tease out and apply the implications it suggests. What may emerge is unclear; but this is the task Torrance has set the church. Torrance has initiated the building of a bridge between Eastern and Western theologies and he has done so via the central dogmas both share in common: the Trinity, incarnation, reconciliation, and theosis. By incorporating theosis into his theology, Torrance’s work has ecumenical and contemporary significance. This makes Torrance’s use of theosis both important and exciting, but not definitive. Torrance has set an agenda for those who may wish to follow.

Questions regarding some of Torrance’s ideas remain, but what he has provided is powerful and persuasive. Torrance’s use of theosis reminds us that the gift of the Son is a relationship with the Triune God. Without ceasing to be human, men and women are called and empowered to participate in the divine nature. As Torrance reminds us:

_Theosis_ is an attempt to express the staggering significance of Pentecost as the coming from on high, from outside of us and beyond us, of divine power, or rather as the coming of Almighty God, the Maker of heaven and earth, to dwell with sinful mortal man, and therefore as the emancipation of man from imprisonment in himself and the lifting of him up to partake of the living presence and saving acts of God the Creator and Redeemer.⁸

A study of theosis in Torrance’s scientific dogmatics offers new insights into his theology and for Reformed thought more generally. While the language may indeed sound strange to Western ears and some may perceive an apparent ‘danger of vertigo’, Torrance is right to urge us not to quarrel about the word theosis, but to honour its intention.

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⁸ T.F. Torrance, _Theology in Reconstruction_ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 244.
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3 This work was not available for use in the current study.


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