

# **Resurrection and Reality: In Dialogue with T.F. Torrance**

Samuel Andrew Fletcher Fernando

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## **Abstract**

This thesis argues that the resurrection of Jesus determines reality for humanity and all creation. His resurrection does so because he is the incarnate Son of God. As the creator become creature, his human life, death, resurrection and ascension affirms and redeems creation.

The person of Jesus is the subject of the resurrection and ascension, and thus his nature determines their meaning. Accordingly, the central concept of this thesis is the hypostatic union. In the incarnation, the eternal Son of God united human nature to himself by the Holy Spirit. As Chalcedon states, his divine and human natures are united in the one person without confusion, conversion, division, or separation. As such, all the moments of Jesus' incarnate life are to be understood as fully human and fully divine.

This thesis shows forth the implications of this for his resurrection and ascension, his mediation of reconciliation, and our eschatological hope. In particular, Jesus' ascension means that the new reality determined by his resurrection is both veiled until his return and being made actual here and now by the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the key to understanding both this and how the two natures of Jesus are related. Thinking through these relations in the details of Jesus' life elucidates the non-competitive relationship between divine and human agency in his incarnate life and in our participation in him.

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## Introduction

This thesis examines the resurrection of Jesus in the theology of T.F. Torrance. While he is not known specifically for his doctrine of the resurrection, it nonetheless occupies an important place in his theology. While he does not spill much ink on its historical evidence, he absolutely affirms its historicity. A common litmus test for the evangelical Christian is mental ascent to the historical resurrection of Jesus. Yet how often are its ontological implications expounded? In the Nicene Creed we affirm, 'on the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures,' and that 'we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.' However, is Jesus' full humanity in the resurrection explicitly linked in our minds with a hope in our fully human resurrection?

Contrary to nominal belief in its historicity or an *a priori* rejection of it, this thesis argues that the resurrection of Jesus determines reality for humanity and all creation. This may seem somewhat farfetched given that, by many, Jesus is viewed as an obscure Jew in the distant past whose resurrection from the dead is far from evident let alone determinative of reality – whatever 'reality' may mean in today's intellectual milieu. But it all depends on who Jesus is. If he was in fact resurrected from the dead, then he is not merely a first century Jew but the incarnate Son of God, in which case his history has not slipped away into the past but is present even now. As the creator become creature he defines and determines our reality.

The methodology of this thesis involves a close reading of the work of T.F. Torrance, specifically his writings most relevant to the resurrection of Jesus. Although he has many interesting and important publications and related areas of theology, this does not attempt to look at them. Accordingly, we engage most thoroughly with his posthumous publications, *Atonement* and *Incarnation*, as well as *Space, Time and Resurrection*; *The Mediation of Christ*; and *The Christian Doctrine of God*. Attempt is not made to trace the development of his thought over his many productive years, but rather we take these texts as his mature

thought and look for the internal consistencies between them. In line with this aim, neither do we attempt to trace the sources of the various aspects of his theology nor research the life of Torrance himself.<sup>1</sup> Instead, we incorporate his sources only insofar as they help to elucidate Torrance's thought itself. Likewise, regarding the growing supply of secondary literature, this thesis does not aim to analyse his influence nor evaluate how others read him. Rather, for the purpose of guiding us through the deep and complex waters of Torrance's thought we predominantly turn to Myk Habets, Elmer Colyer, Paul Molnar and David Fergusson.

The entire project is an attempt to think through the implications of the resurrection of the incarnate Son of God. As such, we begin with a chapter on christology, and the following chapters build upon this foundation. The primary christological concept is the hypostatic union: by the Holy Spirit the eternal Son of God united human nature to his divine nature. The importance of how we construe this cannot be overestimated. We thus spend the second half of the first chapter fleshing out its details. The concepts developed here are applied to Jesus' resurrection and ascension in the following chapters. The main ones are: *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*, the distinction without separation of his divine and human natures, and their union without change to either nature. These are not general truths but refer to the person of Jesus. Reality is determined not merely *by* him, but *in* him, which is why our understanding of the person of Jesus himself determines our understanding of what he did for us in his atoning incarnation.

Chapter Two, *The Resurrection and Redemption*, examines the nature of the resurrection. Here we introduce the important concept of *kataphysic* thinking. The resurrection can only be understood with reference to the subject, Jesus Christ, whose nature is fully divine and fully human. This means that humanity and creation is affirmed since he is resurrected as a fully human creature, and is

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<sup>1</sup> See "Introducing T.F. Torrance", in Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, Great Theologians Series (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 1–30; "Torrance's Life & Achievement", in Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 35–51; Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); see also "Participatio Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship 1" (2009), especially pages 13–48.

redeemed since he is the creator who renews life.

Chapter Three, *The Ascension and Reconciliation*, thinks through Jesus' ascension again in reference to his person. The ascension is given a significant place in Torrance's theology and is inseparable from Jesus' resurrection – the title could have read 'Resurrection, Ascension and Reality.' This chapter describes the ascension as human 'place' being taken into God's place. It includes a discussion on the so-called *extra Calvinisticum* which helps clarify some metaphysical issues raised in the first chapter regarding Jesus' kenosis – or lack thereof. Jesus' humiliation and exaltation means our exaltation into the life of God. The chapter concludes with our '*theosis*' or communion with God.

Having covered these two dimensions of the resurrection, Chapter Four, *The Mediator*, draws heavily on the first chapter to elucidate the importance of the mystery of Christ for understanding Jesus' death and resurrection. Too often the reconciliation of humanity to God is described only in terms of the cross, as if it were meaningful aside from Jesus' whole incarnate life and resurrection – not so with Torrance. In his theology, atonement begins with the incarnation and is not fulfilled until the resurrection and ascension. Jesus reconciles us to God by his life of obedience unto death, fulfilling in himself both the God-ward and human-ward directions of reconciliation, and is vindicated by the Father in the resurrection. As fully God and fully human, Jesus is also the mediator of revelation. He is the Word made flesh. We share in Jesus' human reception of God's revelation because as well as communicating himself in the Son, the Father imparts himself in the Spirit.

Finally, Chapter Five, *Eschatology*, expounds the relation between the reality of the new creation and on-going life here and now. The ascension creates an *eschatological pause*, which both holds back this new reality until Jesus' return in the flesh and partially actualises it now by the Holy Spirit. The Church is united to the ascended Jesus by the Spirit, and shares now in the whole life of him who is forever the incarnate, crucified and risen one.

These contours of T. F. Torrance's thought unfold the person of Jesus in relation to his resurrection and ascension. In so doing it becomes apparent that as the incarnate Son of God, his resurrection determines reality. Beginning with Jesus

and letting it determine our thinking for other aspects of theology, throughout we see the importance of not thinking in competitive terms between divine and human agency. Jesus remains the eternal Son of God as he becomes incarnate as a fully human person. Torrance describes the logic of grace: "all through the incarnate life and activity of the Lord Jesus we are shown that 'all of grace' does not mean 'nothing of man,' but precisely the opposite: *all of grace means all of man*, for the fullness of grace creatively includes the fullness and completeness of our human response in the equation."<sup>2</sup> We propose that this non-competitive relation between the divine and human natures and activity of Jesus is given more coherence by considering the work of the Holy Spirit. This is discussed at the end of the first chapter, touched on throughout, and its implications for further study of Torrance's theology are put forward in the conclusion.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Helmets & Howard, 1992), xii.

## Chapter 1

### The Resurrection and the Person of Jesus

The central point of this chapter, and indeed the whole thesis, is to expound what the resurrection of Jesus Christ teaches us about who he is. The first section describes this revelation. Firstly, the resurrection is *the* event in Jesus' life that reveals what was only fleetingly obvious throughout his life: he is the incarnate Son of God. Secondly, in the ascension Jesus' identity is further revealed as he is enthroned as the final prophet, priest, and king. Finally, this first section elucidates how the resurrection sheds light on even the darkest moments from his birth to death and how they look utterly different because of it. The second section posits that the resurrection is not an arbitrary event but is internally bound up with who Jesus is in himself and his relations with the Father and Holy Spirit. The third section looks at christology *per se*. The resurrected one is fully God and fully human in the one person of the eternal Son. We look at this Chalcedonian formulation as well as Torrance's usage of the terms '*anhypostasia*' and '*enhypostasia*' to understand Jesus' humanity, divinity and personhood. The final section describes Torrance's understanding of how the two natures relate in the one person and offers some constructive extensions.

#### A) The Resurrection's Epistemic Function

##### i) The Resurrection Reveals who Jesus is

The resurrection of Jesus reveals who he was all along: the incarnate Son of God. Suddenly all of his life looks different as everything he did, he did as God and not only as a human. Torrance uses the language of 'unveiling' to refer to Jesus being revealed as the incarnate Son of God, and 'veiling' to that fact being hidden from the world. While the resurrection is the most obvious exaltation or unveiling of Jesus, Torrance insists that we must not think of the unveiling of who Jesus really is, the Son of God, as exclusive to that moment. Rather, his whole incarnate life

contains elements of both veiling and unveiling. To put it geometrically, the resurrection is not the only point of unveiling, but the highest point on a line "from his birth to resurrection which is the unveiling of God."<sup>3</sup> Later this section, and in Chapter Five, Section a), ii) "The Ascension, Pentecost, and the Second Advent," we observe that even beyond the resurrection there is yet another veiling and unveiling of the Son of God in his glory and majesty.

The resurrection sheds light on key events in Jesus' life, beginning with his birth. Only with the resurrection do we realise that Jesus' birth was in fact the incarnation of the eternal Son of God. We must remember where the gospels were written from: the other side of the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is where the mystery of who Jesus is, true God as true human, is revealed, and "thus it is in the resurrection we see the real meaning of the virgin birth."<sup>4</sup> All that the virgin birth signifies about who Jesus is does not derive from the historical event of the virgin birth itself. Much like the empty tomb, the virgin birth is the necessary empirical corollary or sign to the reality inside it, but it is not the reality itself.<sup>5</sup> The virgin birth is what it is – the act of God becoming human – because Jesus is the eternal Son of God, as revealed in the resurrection.

Torrance speaks of the virgin birth and the resurrection as the two inseparable but asymmetric signs that point to the hypostatic union of God and humanity in the one person.<sup>6</sup> What does he mean by asymmetric? They are similar in that both the virgin birth and the resurrection have their ontological grounding in who Jesus is. As with the virgin birth, the hypostatic union is the ontological basis for the empty tomb. In other words, Jesus was raised from the dead because he is the Son of the Father. The converse is emphatically false: the resurrection itself did not cause an ontological change that made Jesus into the Son of God – he already was. Because of this, we only rightly understand the resurrection by beginning with the person of Jesus. As Molnar notes, "because it is the divine-human person of Jesus of Nazareth who alone engenders a proper

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 219.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 96.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

understanding of the resurrection, there can be no separation of Christ's two natures and no Apollinarian displacement of his human nature by his divine nature."<sup>7</sup> But that would be to get ahead of ourselves, for this is the topic of the next chapter, *The Resurrection and Redemption*. Unlike the virgin birth, the empty tomb *is* the epistemological basis of the hypostatic union: we know who Jesus is, namely the eternal Son of God as a fully and truly human person, because God the Father raised him from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the resurrection reveals who Jesus is, the Son of God, whereas the virgin birth does not. Only in light of the resurrection is the birth of Jesus seen to in fact be the incarnation of the Son of God.

The new creation, as evidenced by Jesus' renewed humanity, is only revealed at the resurrection. In it we *witness* the new creation burst forth from the grave of the old creation – but when did it begin? In one sense the resurrection is the beginning of the new creation in that Jesus has his renewed humanity. The atonement was not complete until the resurrection and ascension, but on the other hand it began at the incarnation. Since the new creation is in the person of Jesus and not merely an event, in a profound sense the resurrection reveals that the birth of Jesus carries within itself, that is, within the person of Jesus, the new creation. The resurrection gives Jesus' birth meaning by revealing that "the creator-Word is God, here creatively at work within the midst of the old-creation, breaking its continuity in estrangement and beginning a new creation headed by the incarnate Son. . . . It is then seen to be proleptic to the resurrection of the dead and building with it the birth of the new creation."<sup>9</sup> The relationship between creation and redemption is more fully explored in Chapter Two, Section a), i) "The New Creation is the Old Creation Renewed." Because in becoming a creature Jesus did not cease to be the creator, his birth could not but be a creative event. The humiliation of God in becoming a creature *eo ipso* means the

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<sup>7</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 227.

<sup>8</sup> The resurrection and the person of Jesus are mutually informing, which means the argument can seem circular. In Chapter Two, "The Resurrection and Redemption" we take a brief look at Torrance's methodology, in particular *kataphysic* thinking. Briefly now, Torrance is not doing speculative theology but formulating theological statements *a posteriori* based on the God who has encountered us in Jesus Christ. Thus the above argument is helical not circular: the *experience* of the resurrection reveals who Jesus is, but who Jesus is *makes sense of* the resurrection.

<sup>9</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 221.

exaltation of the creature.

Jesus' life and ministry are also given meaning and coherence when seen from the perspective of the resurrection. In the Gospels, those whom Jesus encountered were astonished at the authority of his teaching, over sickness and demonic forces, and over nature itself.<sup>10</sup> But even so, after all Jesus said and did, it was not until he was raised from the dead that his disciples, let alone the crowds, understood who he was.<sup>11</sup> John's gospel is helpful at this point due to his editorial comments that differentiate what he and the other disciples thought at the time and what they thought after Jesus' resurrection. In response to a question about the meaning of Jesus' actions at the temple,

Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. *After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*<sup>12</sup>

The resurrection is the final piece that suddenly brings clarity to the puzzle of Jesus' words and actions, revealing them to be utterly consistent with each other and with who he is. The resurrection highlights the "line that becomes fleetingly manifest in the transfiguration as also in the healing miracles and the other manifestations of Jesus' creative power."<sup>13</sup> On one hand, the hope of those who believed that Jesus was the Messiah was given an objective basis. On the other hand, ironically, the reasoning of the Pharisees, "who can forgive sins but God alone?"<sup>14</sup> was affirmed; their logic was correct but their premise false. Yes, Jesus answered them at the time: the ensuing miracle of healing was "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."<sup>15</sup> But since his miracles only subsist in the orbit of the resurrection,<sup>16</sup> it is not until the resurrection that those miracles are given ontological weight and 'the Son of

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<sup>10</sup> Luke 4:31-37; 8:21-25.

<sup>11</sup> Matt 16:16-17 is an exception, but significantly Jesus explained "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven." We examine the nature of faith and the role of the Holy Spirit in Chapter Four, Section b) "The Mediation of Revelation."

<sup>12</sup> John 2:19-22, emphasis mine.

<sup>13</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 219.

<sup>14</sup> Mark 2:7.

<sup>15</sup> Mark 5:10.

<sup>16</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 205.

Man' is recognised to be also 'the Son of God.' At the end of the day, if Jesus was not raised from the dead all his astounding words and deeds would have to be put down to something other than him being divine.

In sum, the resurrection gives coherence to the unveiling of Jesus' identity as the Son of God; the revelatory points in Jesus' life are not random displays of power and authority but are connected to each other since they are connected to who he is.

## **ii) The Ascension Enthrones Jesus as King**

As with the resurrection, Jesus' identity does not change in the ascension but is further revealed. As Fergusson comments, "while the ascent completes a pattern or movement that began with the descent of the Son of God, it does not signal the ending of the work of Christ. Instead, we should view the ascension as the commencement of his kingly ministry."<sup>17</sup> He was the rightful king all along but only now in the ascension is he fully installed as king, revealing him to be *the* prophet, *the* priest, and *the* king. The Father has not just temporarily anointed a human for service but has sent his Son into the world. Jesus, as the eternal Son in the Spirit, was given the Spirit without measure and is thus the final reality of these offices.<sup>18</sup>

Jesus came veiled in the likeness of sinful flesh and thus was not recognised as such. In the ascension he received back the glory and majesty he had emptied himself from in the incarnation. "It is with his exaltation to the throne of God and his sitting at the right hand of the Father that his kingly ministry properly began. It stretches from the ascension to the final advent, when he will come again as Lord and king of all in open majesty, power, and glory."<sup>19</sup> Jesus prayed to his Father, "I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed."<sup>20</sup> Jesus completed his work and thus was not

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<sup>17</sup> David A. S. Fergusson, "The Ascension of Christ: Its Significance in the Theology of T. F. Torrance," *Participatio Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* 3 (2012): 97.

<sup>18</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 272–3; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (London: T&T Clark, 1996), 146. See also Matthew 21:33–46 and John 3:34.

<sup>19</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 265.

<sup>20</sup> John 17:4–5.

going back to the Father empty handed: the Word returned as the Word made flesh. As David Torrance explains, “with his ascension he entered heaven to reign as man on our behalf, and yet also God.”<sup>21</sup>

This transforms our understanding of his two other offices. He is a *royal* prophet and a *royal* priest. As the ascended King he is in himself the mediator of reconciliation, *the* priest, and of revelation, *the* prophet. He is not simply a prophet who brings the word but he is himself the Word.<sup>22</sup> He is not a priest who simply offers God’s provided sacrifice, but is himself both God and God’s provided sacrifice.<sup>23</sup>

Jesus is forever a priestly king and a royal priest. His priesthood is enacted with power and eternal efficacy for he is the king. In the ascension Jesus’ fully human life is made eternally present before the Father. Therefore the ascension does “not mean that Christ’s priestly sacrifice and oblation of himself are over and done with, but rather that in their once for all completion are taken up eternally into the life of God, and remain prevalent, efficacious, valid, abidingly real.”<sup>24</sup> The ascended Jesus continues to be our fully human representative through whom we share in the life of the Father, in the Spirit.

We later unfold the implications of Jesus’ heavenly session: in Chapter Three, *The Ascension and Reconciliation*, that Jesus takes humanity into the life of God; in Chapter Four, *The Mediator*, that Christ continues to offer his life on our behalf as our response to the Father; and in Chapter Five, *Eschatology*, that our ministry is but a participation in his high-priestly ministry.

### **iii) The Resurrection Unveils the Identity that the Incarnate Son Veiled**

We now turn to look at how the resurrection makes sense of not only Jesus’ glorious moments but the opposite motif in the gospels: the line of veiling and the hiddenness of Jesus’ identity. Torrance’s linking together of paradoxical ideas

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<sup>21</sup> David W. Torrance, “The Vicarious Humanity of Christ, Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, and Ascended,” *Participatio; Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* Supp. Vol. 2 (2013): 109.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 119.

<sup>23</sup> See Torrance, *Atonement*, 42, for one of many places where he points out that even under the Old Covenant it was God who prescribed the atoning sacrifices.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

is quite brilliant, and not in a way that destroys the mystery. Instead he shows that other theological concepts are consistent with who Jesus is, that is, the mystery of Christ, the hypostatic union. The concepts of veiling and unveiling are linguistically contradictory, but because of who Jesus is and what he came to do they are in fact mutually necessary.

We explicate the necessity of Jesus' solidarity with sinful human nature in Section c) of this chapter and in Chapter Four, Section a) "The Mediator of Reconciliation." For now, suffice it to say that they hold together by thinking of the axiom, "the unassumed is the unredeemed."<sup>25</sup> In short, total solidarity with fallen existence means total sanctification from within it. Jesus' humiliation is our exaltation: "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."<sup>26</sup>

There are two major aspects of the veiling of Jesus' divinity. Firstly, the necessary concealing of the creator's majesty and glory in order to become a fully human creature, and secondly, his condescension of taking on *fallen* human nature and representing humanity in it. In his birth we only see the first aspect but the second one becomes more and more acute as Jesus travels toward the cross. These hidden aspects are seen differently in light of Jesus' resurrection. Specifically, the Son of God's veiling was a veiling *for us*, a veiling so that when he is unveiled humanity shares in his glorification.<sup>27</sup>

Torrance has a decisive reading of the Philippians hymn. We focus in on the words *morphē* (form) and *ekenōsen* (emptied):

Christ Jesus,  
who, though he was in the form (*morphē*) of God,  
did not count equality with God  
a thing to be grasped,  
but emptied himself (*heauton ekenōsen*),  
taking the form (*morphēn*) of a servant,  
being born in the likeness of men.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 250; see also Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 179–84. This particular phrase is Gregory Nazianzen's, but John of Damascus makes a similar claim in *De fide orthodoxa*, 3.6 "For what has not been taken cannot be healed."

<sup>26</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 219.

<sup>27</sup> See 'theosis' in Chapter Three, Section c) "Our communion with God."

<sup>28</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 74.

Torrance is uncompromising in his insistence, with Chalcedon, that the Son of God in becoming human does not give up his full divinity in any way whatsoever. And there is good theological reason for doing so. The exegetical evidence he cites to support his classic Reformed position is, “the Greek does not say that he who was in the form of God emptied anything *out of* himself, but that he emptied *himself* out of heavenly and glorious *morphē* into an earthly and inglorious *morphē* . . . he doffed his glorious form and veiled himself in the humble form of a servant.”<sup>29</sup> ‘Divinity’ is not an external attribute that can be put on and taken off. Rather it is a relational, ontological, Trinitarian term. Jesus’ divinity is his oneness of being with the Father and Spirit, and that never diminishes, not in his birth and not even in his death. What he does empty himself of is his rightful ‘glory and majesty.’ This is not an ontological change nor even a loss of divine predicates, but a self-humbling where he is not *recognised* as being who he is. When we get Jesus we really get God, for “there is nothing here about any so called metaphysical change in God the Son such as an emptying out of God the Son of any divine attributes or powers. He emptied himself out of his divine form into human form . . . a real existence in humanity assumed into oneness with the existence of the Son.”<sup>30</sup> In Jesus we do get God in his very being, but veiled for our sake. He was veiled in order to unveil, veiled in order to get near without destroying us, veiled so that humanity can receive him in its own form. While remaining who he always was, Jesus became fully human in solidarity with us so that he can really help us in our weakness:

Son of God though he was, he declined to use his divine power in order to help him in the hunger to which he has been reduced in vicarious fasting and penitence, for he had come to appropriate our weakness and meet and overcome all the assaults of evil in our abject condition. The same temptation came with all its force as he hung upon the cross. ‘If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross,’ but he resisted the temptation to use divine power to escape from his vicarious mission and remained still and passive as death overtook him, submitting to the ultimate lot of mankind in the disintegration and finality of death.<sup>31</sup>

We examine this thoroughly in the final section of this chapter, “How the natures

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 74–5.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>31</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 214.

relate: with and beyond Torrance." To clarify for now, 'divine power' is not an independent possession of Jesus. He did not have a new hybrid God-human nature enabling him to do physical acts that other humans cannot. But neither did he empty himself of divine power. Rather, 'divine power' is a Trinitarian and relational statement. In perfect communion with the Father in the Spirit he had divine power – the power of the Father Almighty, creator of all things. But the divine power is inseparable from the divine will, and since at every moment the Son, in the Spirit, received the will of the Father and gave the obedient response, he did not use this divine power outside of the divine will and timing. Evidently that timing was not while being tempted in the desert, nor in the garden of Gethsemane, nor even on the cross, but in the resurrection as the Father vindicated the Son's perfect obedience on our behalf.

Further, Torrance contends that it is not merely, or even primarily, the difference of being between creator and creation which means the eternal Son taking a veiled form in our humanity, but that he entered into *fallen* existence. "He is concealed by what is contrary, by the very flesh of sin and the body of death, the fallen existence which he has made his own in order to sanctify it."<sup>32</sup> Moving forward thirty odd years, we see a different and deeper kind of solidarity, as Jesus follows through, in word, with his assumption of fallen human nature in his birth. In Jesus' exchange with the Baptiser, John was quite rightly shocked:

I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me. . . . Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.'<sup>33</sup>

This was not false-humility by Jesus: he really took on our fallen human nature in order to sanctify it in himself by his holy life. He had to repent on behalf of the sin that he was representing. That Jesus assumed *fallen*, not neutral, human nature is of immense importance to Torrance, since 'the unassumed is the unredeemed.' Regarding Jesus' *vicarious* baptism, he fulfilled all righteousness by rejecting all self-righteousness, refusing to declare himself holy. In St Paul's

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>33</sup> Matt 3:11-15, selected parts.

words, "for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."<sup>34</sup> He thrust himself upon the Father's mercy and awaited his vindication. Just as at this point Jesus' solidarity with humanity came in word, so did the Father's vindication come in word: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."<sup>35</sup>

Just as the baptism prefigures Jesus' death, so too does the Father's word of approval prefigure and come to fulfilment in his act of resurrecting Jesus. Having become one with our fallen human nature in person and word, Jesus, in act, shares in utter solidarity with our sinful and corruptible state. "He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross."<sup>36</sup> The 'No' of God – the crucifixion of rebellious, decaying human nature in Jesus – is intrinsic to the 'Yes' of God – the resurrection of obedient, incorruptible human nature. Just as the high point of the upward line of unveiling is the resurrection, Jesus' crucifixion is the low point of his downward line of veiling. Similarly, the crucifixion is not a standalone point but the climax, or the ultimate crisis, of Jesus' long humiliation from birth in a manger, to the baptism of repentance, right up to the agony of Golgotha and cry of dereliction on the cross.

By itself, the cross is the ultimate concealing of Jesus' divinity. It is utterly shocking. The supposed Messiah, full of promise with his wondrous words and deeds, is suddenly killed, and killed on a cross, a sinners death;<sup>37</sup> but in light of the resurrection St Paul tells us that Christ crucified is "the power of God and the wisdom of God."<sup>38</sup> Not only is his person inseparable from his word and deed, but the deeds themselves are inseparable from each other. Molnar puts it this way, "it is only in light of the resurrection that the actual meaning of the crucifixion could be discerned . . . the two are indissolubly connected and even may be said to be blended . . . the Easter message of 'Christ the crucified risen again.'"<sup>39</sup> In other words, Jesus' death and resurrection are bound up together and only together show us who he is. As Torrance puts it, coining two

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<sup>34</sup> 2 Cor 5:21.

<sup>35</sup> Matt 3:17.

<sup>36</sup> Phil 2:8.

<sup>37</sup> Gal 3:13.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Cor 1:25.

<sup>39</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 228; containing footnote, Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 49.

extraordinary compound words, Jesus is "man-in-death to man-in-the-life-of-God."<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the resurrection is the exaltation of humanity because of the humiliation of the cross, and his humiliation, God-with-us, is revealed to be our exaltation, us-with-God, by the resurrection. "Since the resurrection is the final unveiling of the secret of Christ, the glorification of God incarnate, it is in the resurrection that the passion becomes lit up and is made articulate . . ."<sup>41</sup> Without the resurrection, the crucifixion would have simply been a man inappropriately named Jesus ("for he will save his people from their sins"<sup>42</sup>) dying an unjust death. Instead it is God bearing all of humanity's sin and death.

## B) The Divinity of Jesus

### i) What Jesus is Toward Us He is in Himself

We have seen above that who Jesus is, what he says, and what he does, are completely consistent. As well as this, they are consistent with God the Father. He and the Father (and the Holy Spirit) are one in being, word, and act. If you have seen Jesus you have seen the Father; he says only what the Father says, and does only what he sees him do.<sup>43</sup> These consistencies are only brought to focus in the resurrection; without it they would be dissonant. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life."<sup>44</sup> Therefore we must not separate who Jesus is from what he did, that is, christology from soteriology. In other words, atonement is not merely *through* Jesus or *because* of Jesus, but *in* Jesus. Eternal life is not a gift that Jesus gives us and then walks away, so to speak, rather the giver is the gift and eternal life is to know Jesus.<sup>45</sup>

Torrance states, "*it is the whole Jesus Christ who is the content of the resurrection.*"<sup>46</sup> Firstly, 'the whole Christ' refers to the hypostatic union: Jesus was resurrected as the God-human. The resurrection is miraculous in that it does

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<sup>40</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 212.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>42</sup> Matt 1:21.

<sup>43</sup> John 5:19; 12:49-50; 14:9-10.

<sup>44</sup> John 11:25.

<sup>45</sup> John 17:3.

<sup>46</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 222. Emphasis original.

not arise from natural/physical processes. But it is not miraculous in the sense that it is quite *natural* given the *nature* of Jesus: one who is fully God and fully human.<sup>47</sup> The resurrection of Jesus is not just some event that happened to him, but one that is completely consistent with who he is as the Lord who has life in himself.<sup>48</sup> He is the eternal Son and thus death could not hold him down since nothing could ultimately separate him from God the Father. Resurrection is not antithetical to the one who created life in the first place. Torrance puts all of this somewhat axiomatically, "*what Jesus Christ is in his resurrection, he is in himself.*"<sup>49</sup>

Secondly, 'the whole Christ' refers to all the moments of Jesus' life. As of his incarnate life, Jesus is forevermore the incarnate, crucified and risen Lord. To clarify, the incarnation is not simply something that he has done, rather as of his human birth he is incarnate forevermore. Torrance frequently quotes Calvin, describing Christ as "clothed with his message and robed in his promises."<sup>50</sup> This means that there is not just an epistemological relationship between who Jesus is and what he did (the resurrection sheds light on his life), but an ontological relationship between them. As Torrance puts it, the resurrection belongs "to *the ontological structure of the mediator himself.*"<sup>51</sup> Likewise in the ascension Jesus does not cease to be the lamb who was slain but rather is enthroned forever as the one who is for us.<sup>52</sup> Therefore Christ the Saviour cannot be known without referring to the historical Jesus whose incarnate life is now part of who he is. He "is the Christ who is clothed with the *kerygma* of his death and resurrection, for they are ontologically and structurally bound up with who he is in himself and in his relation to the Father."<sup>53</sup> It is to his relation to the Father we now turn.

Torrance, again axiomatically, states, "what God is toward us in Christ, and in him toward us, in his *opus ad extra*, he is eternally in himself in his *opus ad*

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<sup>47</sup> This is '*kataphysic* thinking.' See the introduction to Chapter Two, "The Resurrection and Redemption."

<sup>48</sup> John 5:26.

<sup>49</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 221.

<sup>50</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. H. Beveridge (London: James Clarke, 1953), 2.9.3; cited in Torrance, *Atonement*, 211.

<sup>51</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 212.

<sup>52</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 228.

<sup>53</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 211.

*intra*.”<sup>54</sup> This ensures that Jesus actually has the gift to give, that he really has life in himself, that Jesus is God. The promise of Christ in the resurrection is thus eternally valid since it is not an arbitrary event but one that is rooted in the very being of God. Torrance makes much of this because he wants to insist that in Jesus we really get God, for there is “no God behind the back of Jesus Christ.”<sup>55</sup> Torrance recounts a story from his days in the war as a chaplain,

I have been asked on the battle field by a young man who had barely half an hour to live: 'Is God really like Jesus?'  
Fearful anxiety arises in the human heart when people cannot connect Jesus up in their faith or understanding to the ultimate Being of God . . . whom they inevitably think of with terror for their guilty conscience makes them paint harsh angry streaks upon his face. It is quite different when the face of Jesus is identical with the face of God, when his forgiveness of sin is forgiveness indeed for its promise is made good through the atoning sacrifice of God in Jesus Christ, and when the perfect love of God casts out all fear. But all that depends on the identity between Christ's mediation of divine revelation and reconciliation and his own Personal Being as Mediator.<sup>56</sup>

At the heart of it, the resurrection reveals the oneness between Jesus and God. In other words, what Jesus says, God says, and what Jesus does, God does. Jesus' death and resurrection corresponds to who God said he was and what he said he would do.<sup>57</sup> He is the faithful one of Israel who would send a Messiah to redeem his people, and "in the resurrection the Father owns Christ as his Son and acknowledges his deed in life and death as his own deed."<sup>58</sup> Therefore Jesus is none other than the incarnation of the eternal Son of God the Father. In the words of the Nicene Creed, he is Light of Light, very God of very God. There is complete oneness between the being, word, and act of Jesus and God. Jesus is God. This cannot be overemphasised since,

unless there is this eternal and essential relation between the union of God and man on earth, and the eternal union of God the Father, the Son

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<sup>54</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 177. Lat, *opus ad extra*, 'work toward the outside'; *opus ad intra*, 'work toward the inside'.

<sup>55</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 243. The first theology lecture I attended, before even hearing of Thomas Torrance, was by a Scotsman who was influenced by him. I vividly recall Ivor Davidson declaring (in his distinctive Scottish accent), "there isn't some God hiding behind the back of Jesus. When we get Jesus, we really, really, really, *really* get God." This is of course a Torrancean quote of his professor H.R. Mackintosh.

<sup>56</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 60.

<sup>57</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 236.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

and the Holy Spirit in heaven, we are not assured with real, or of eternal relations with God. Our salvation would have otherwise no ultimate ontological ground in reality.<sup>59</sup>

To that ultimate ontological ground, the Trinity, we now turn.

## ii) Who Jesus is in Himself; the Doctrine of the Trinity

The resurrection reveals that Jesus is God incarnate, but equally Jesus reveals what is to be understood by 'God.' In the Old Testament God revealed himself as the personal and eternal "I am who I am, I shall be who I shall be."<sup>60</sup> Jesus identifies himself as that very same God – most pointedly in saying, "before Abraham was, I am"<sup>61</sup> – and in his life he fills that revelation with content. This section is a very brief overview of that content: the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>62</sup>

Under the pressure that the act of Jesus toward us is rooted in the being of God, we make the mental move from intuitive triadic worship in response to his saving acts, such as the baptismal formula,<sup>63</sup> to formulating explicitly the Triune relations of God toward us, and then his relations within himself. Torrance describes this as the stratified levels of knowledge, and much study indeed has been done on his theological methodology.<sup>64</sup> In his terminology, our apprehension of God begins with the *evangelical and doxological level* and, without leaving it behind, moves to the *economic theological* level. That is, from "day-to-day worship and meeting with God in response to the proclamation of the Gospel and the interpretation of Holy Scriptures within the fellowship of the Church"<sup>65</sup> to "penetrating through it to apprehend more fully the economic and ontological and Trinitarian structure of God's revealing and saving acts in Jesus Christ as they are present to us in the Gospel."<sup>66</sup> Then, we can and must move to the *higher theological level* "in which we discern the Trinitarian relations

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<sup>59</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 177.

<sup>60</sup> See Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 118–125.

<sup>61</sup> John 8:58. See also John 6:35,48; 8:12; 9:5; 10:9,11; 11:25; 14:6, 15:1.

<sup>62</sup> For an excellent work that elucidates the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for all of Torrance's theology, see Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*.

<sup>63</sup> Matt 28:19.

<sup>64</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 88–107; see Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 291–301, for more on the stratified levels of knowledge.

<sup>65</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 88.

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

immanent in God himself.”<sup>67</sup> The following statement, deriving from Jesus being *homoousios* with the Father, is the basis for our thinking being able to move from the economic theological level to the higher, ontological, theological level.

It is only in knowledge of the economic Trinity that by divine grace we may have access within the space and time of our earthly existence to knowledge of the ontological Trinity, for what God has revealed of himself in his activity toward us and on our behalf as Father, Son and Holy Spirit he assures us that he really and eternally is in himself.<sup>68</sup>

Let us look at these economic and ontological relations in some detail in order to know what Torrance means by saying that Jesus is “fully God.”

The Son did not unite some abstract ‘divine nature’ to human nature in himself at the incarnation, for ‘person’ (*hypostasis*) and ‘nature’ (*ousia*) are inseparable.<sup>69</sup>

The Son’s relation with the Father, plus the Holy Spirit’s relations, is what we mean by divine nature: one being in three persons, three persons in one being.

Jesus is God as the eternal Son. We must think of the Son both in terms of being and person, both absolutely (*in se*) and relatively (*ad alium*).<sup>70</sup>

When considered in himself, he is himself very God, and has his divine Life from himself. ‘For as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son to have life in himself.’ Considered relatively, however, *ad alium*, in relation to the eternal Persons of the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Son in his own particular Person is distinct from the Father and the Spirit, yet of the same equal being with them so that he constitutes hypostatically with them the eternal Communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, three Persons, one Being.<sup>71</sup>

The relations between the persons are “onto-relations;”<sup>72</sup> they constitute both the one being and each of the three persons. “Homoously and hypostatically they interpenetrate each other in such a way that each Person is distinctively

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>69</sup> See also Nicholas Loudovikos, “Possession or Wholeness? St. Maximus The Confessor and John Zizioulas on Person, Nature, and Will,” *Participatio; Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* 4 (2013): 262. “It is impossible to have nature without hypostasis, but also that it is impossible to have a hypostasis without essential qualities. Thus, it is also ‘impossible to think of hypostasis without nature.’” This, and the entire fourth issue of the journal, explores Torrance’s engagement with Eastern Orthodoxy.

<sup>70</sup> See also Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 56.

<sup>71</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 145. Containing footnote, “John 5.26. See Athanasius, *In illud, omnia*, 6; *Contra Arianos*, 4.1; and *Expositio fidei*, 1 & 4.”

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 102–3; see also Elmer M. Colyer, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 308–12; and Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 59–61.

who he is in relation to the other two.”<sup>73</sup> This coinherence or *perichoresis* is central to Torrance’s doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>74</sup> It is in the persons’ distinction and unity that the three persons are one God and the one God is three persons.<sup>75</sup>

Torrance is careful to not take away any substance from the ‘*in se*’ of each person as he defines who they are ‘*ad alium*.’ His impetus is to avoid any subordination in the Godhead. This shines forth in his treatment of the *filioque*, which cuts beneath many of the distinctions between the Eastern and Western formulations of the intra-Trinitarian relations.<sup>76</sup> Torrance, following Athanasius, considers the Spirit to proceed from the *being* of the Father – i.e. the Godhead – not the *person* of the Father.<sup>77</sup> The Son and Spirit derive their *personhood* not their *being* from the Father, and the Father, reciprocally, receives his Fatherhood from the *being* of the Son and Spirit. Thus in Torrance’s view making the Father the sole cause of the divinity of the Godhead (however subtly and eternally ‘cause’ is defined) tended to “weaken the Athanasian axiom that whatever we say of the Father we say of the Son and the Spirit except ‘Father.’”<sup>78</sup>

All three persons are who they are because of their eternal relations with the other two – which is the one being of God. “The Spirit is from the Father but from the Father in the Son. Since the Holy Spirit like the Son is of the Being of God, and belongs to the Son, since he is in the Being of the Father and in the Being of the Son, he could not but proceed from or out of the Being of God inseparably from and through the Son.”<sup>79</sup> As such, while Torrance certainly affirms that the Spirit is constituted by both the Father and the Son, he does not say the Spirit *proceeds* from (the persons of) the Father and the Son. Rather, the Spirit ‘proceeds from

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<sup>73</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 145.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 102; See also Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 61–65.

<sup>75</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, ed. T.F. Torrance and G.W. Bromiley, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 370.

<sup>76</sup> For more on Torrance’s theology of the Trinity and its ecumenical fruit, see Colyer, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*; Paul D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theologians* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 317–330 (a response to Gunton’s chapter in the above work); Myk Habets, ed., *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century* (London: T&T Clark, 2014); Ralph Del Colle, “Person’ and ‘Being’ in John Zizoulas’ Trinitarian Theology: Conversations with Thomas F. Torrance and Thomas Aquinas,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, no. 54 (2001): 70–86.

<sup>77</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 213.

<sup>78</sup> Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 241; see Torrance’s footnote and also Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 64 and 215.

<sup>79</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 188.

(the being of) the Father.’ Meant in this way, the *filioque* is unnecessary since the original phrase already involves the Son, for the being of the Father *is* the entire Godhead. He thus formulates “the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father in a way that cuts behind and sets aside the problems that divided the Church over the *filioque*.”<sup>80</sup> This formulation upholds in the ontological Trinity the biblical witness to the economic relation of the Son and Spirit.

These *ad intra* relations overflow and are revealed *ad extra* in God’s action toward us.<sup>81</sup> The economic overflow of *perichoresis* is the coactivity of the Holy Trinity.<sup>82</sup> Affirming Athanasius, “the *homoousion* implies a mutual indwelling or a mutual coinherence of the three divine Persons not only in their Being but in their Activity.”<sup>83</sup> Biblically this derives from Jesus’ statements, explicitly in John’s Gospel, regarding his interdependence with God the Father and the Spirit.<sup>84</sup> The persons are distinct but not separate, and so are their missions in the world. This makes clear that in becoming fully human it is absurd to think of the Son as becoming any less God. Apart from the Son, the Father and Spirit simply cannot exist or transcendently sustain the universe.

The persons are distinguished but not separated. The person of God the Son, not the being of God the Son, became incarnate, yet “the whole undivided Trinity must be recognised as participant in the incarnate Life and Work of Christ.”<sup>85</sup> Therefore the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, but, against Karl Rahner, the reverse does not hold. The evangelical *specifics* cannot be read back into the immanent Trinity (such as space-time, humanity and gender). However, the good news of God’s action in the world reveals that the immanent Trinity – God in himself – is essentially evangelical in the sense of being self-giving.<sup>86</sup>

Torrance refers to this *apophatic* reserve as the ‘critical edge’ of the *homoousial* reference.<sup>87</sup> In part this stems from Torrance’s critical realism in which we

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 190; Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 215–7.

<sup>81</sup> Lat, *ad intra*, ‘toward the inside’; *ad extra*, ‘toward the outside’.

<sup>82</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 194–202.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>84</sup> See in particular John 5, 14 and 16.

<sup>85</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 108.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 108–9; Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 68–9.

<sup>87</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 99.

“constantly distinguish what we know from our knowing of it.”<sup>88</sup> We thus “distinguish what is properly anthropomorphic from what is improperly anthropomorphic in our knowledge of him.”<sup>89</sup> Humanity is “created in the image of God,”<sup>90</sup> and thus humanity derives from divinity, while not itself being divine. Torrance calls this *epistemological inversion*.<sup>91</sup> God relates to us in our human forms, yet also as judge, for our thoughts are not his thoughts.<sup>92</sup> With respect to his divine nature, the Spirit as well as the Son is *homoousios* with the Father, therefore we cannot read Jesus’ humanity back into the Godhead.<sup>93</sup> We must employ imageless thinking of God.<sup>94</sup> Further, the Holy Spirit is self-effacing and does not reveal new content but rather points and unites us to God’s self-revelation in the Son.<sup>95</sup> “The Holy Spirit is not directly known in his own *hypostasis* for he remains veiled by the very revelation of the Father and the Son which he brings.”<sup>96</sup> Therefore the revealed God is mysterious and has revealed himself through the Son and in the Spirit to be as such. The *kataphatic* content of theology reveals that it is necessarily *apophatic* too.

### C) The Hypostatic Union

This section unpacks Torrance’s understanding of the mystery of Christ. Jesus is the eternal Son of God become fully human. He is unique, and as such full articulation of his person eludes our grasp. Instead, confronted by the reality of the risen Christ we must confess the mystery of his person. Christian theology begins with the person of Jesus and thus, in accordance with him, contains the character of mystery. This is evident in the following four chapters in which

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. An assessment of Torrance’s methodology is outside our scope, but see Mark P. Achtemeier, “The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T.F. Torrance,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, no. 47 (1996); and Part I. of Myk Habets, *Theology in Transposition: A Constructive Appraisal of T.F. Torrance* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), in particular pages 51–59.

<sup>89</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 100.

<sup>90</sup> Gen 1:27.

<sup>91</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 105.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>94</sup> See “Access to the Father,” in Thomas F. Torrance, *The School of Faith* (London: James Clarke, 1959), 47–75 and 194; and Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 48–54.

<sup>95</sup> Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 211–3.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 211; see also Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 151.

Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension are portrayed as consistent with the dual nature of Jesus. Accordingly, doctrine related to the person, life and work of Jesus cannot be fully comprehended and are to be approached in humility and adoration.

Firstly we discuss Torrance's dual concepts of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* as a way to understand the incarnation. Then we clarify the Chalcedonian definition that Jesus has two natures united in one person.<sup>97</sup> Jesus is the norm of both human nature and divine nature; he remains fully divine in the incarnation; in their union his two natures are not separate, but they are distinct; and his human nature is to be thought of in dynamic and soteriological terms. These clarifications are held together with a Reformed version of the *communicatio naturarum* (communication of natures). Throughout this section we note that Torrance refuses to separate christology from soteriology, the person of Jesus from his work; the later chapters show forth the importance of this.

### **i) Anhypostasia and Enhypostasia**

The concepts of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* are outlined here and give a christological framework for understanding Jesus' resurrection in the following chapters.<sup>98</sup> *Anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* together mean that Jesus is a human person in and only in the person of the Son – *enhypostasia* ensures 'in,' *anhypostasia* 'only in.' Robert T. Walker states it clearly in his introduction to *Atonement*: "*An-hypostasia* (*an-hypostasis*) is 'not-person' with the meaning of 'no independent personal reality or existence,' while *en-hypostasia* (*en-hypostasis*) is 'in-person' with the meaning of 'fully real and personal *in-the-person-of-the-eternal-Son*.'" <sup>99</sup> The *hypostasis* in whom human nature has full expression is the eternal *hypostatis* (person) of the Son. As such, Torrance also uses *enhypostasia* to refer to the consubstantial relations in God's inner Triune

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<sup>97</sup> See Torrance, *Atonement*, lxxii; *Incarnation*, 83, 197ff, 228–33.

<sup>98</sup> In particular, following from this dual concept, Chapter Five, Section b) "The Mediator of Reconciliation," describes Jesus' resurrection as both passive and active, and that he is both our representative and substitute.

<sup>99</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, lxxiii.

life.<sup>100</sup> That is not the sense here. This dual concept can be stated differently: "Jesus was at once man, and a man."<sup>101</sup> The immediate christological point is that Jesus did not assume a particular already existent human person, but united his already existent divine person to human nature.<sup>102</sup>

Due to his *anhypostatic* humanity, Jesus shares in what is common to all humanity. However, *enhypostasia* clarifies that he does not do so in an abstract impersonal sense but rather shared fully in the experience of a fully human life and the personal relations this entails.<sup>103</sup> Jesus is like us: he assumed a fallen human nature and thus really becomes what we are; he is *fully* human. But he is unlike us: though he took our place, he did not do what we did, namely sin, but lived a true human life in obedience to his Father; he is *truly* human.<sup>104</sup>

A reductionist approach will object that *anhypostasia* is mutually exclusive of *enhypostasia*, claiming that all of God means none of humanity. This unbaptised logic will not do.<sup>105</sup> Instead, confronted with the reality of true God as true human in Jesus Christ, the mind must submit its pre-conceived notions and systems of what is possible and be transformed to comprehend that which in faith it apprehends. *Anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* do just this. Torrance, having been misunderstood on this very point, clarifies 'the logic of grace' in his foreword of *The Mediation of Christ*: "All through the incarnate life and activity of the Lord Jesus we are shown that 'all of grace' does not mean 'nothing of man,' but precisely the opposite: *all of grace means all of man*, for the fullness of grace creatively includes the fullness and completeness of our human response in the equation."<sup>106</sup> This is the faith we share in, the faith of Jesus Christ, indeed we share in Jesus himself for Jesus is the grace of God (for his humanity is *anhypostatic*) and the human response to that grace (for his humanity is *enhypostatic*).

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<sup>100</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 188; Torrance, *The School of Faith*, 208; Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 55.

<sup>101</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 231; see also *ibid.*, 210; and also Richard Bauckham, "Christology Today," *Scriptura*, no. 27 (1988): 23.

<sup>102</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 231.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Torrance, *The School of Faith*, cxxiif.

<sup>104</sup> Heb 4:15, Jesus was like us in every way yet was without sin.

<sup>105</sup> See Chapter Five, Section b), i) "Against Determinism and Possibility."

<sup>106</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, xii.

Looking at Jesus' birth helps clarify these concepts. On one hand, *anhypostasia* emphasises that his birth was a *virgin birth*. The theological significance of the virgin birth is that Jesus is not a human become God, but God become human. This necessitates that the Spirit of God and not human sexual reproduction be the cause of Mary's conception. The incarnate life of Jesus has its source in the creative act of the Lord and Giver of Life, the Holy Spirit. The incarnation is the sovereign act of the Triune God. Why does the human Jesus exist? "For God so loved the world he sent his only Son . . ." <sup>107</sup> This is the absolute antithesis of Adoptionism and Ebionism. As Athanasius said, "therefore He was not man, and then became God, but He was God, and then became man, and that to deify us." <sup>108</sup> God did not adopt a man as his son, nor did the Son of God unite himself with a man or even an embryo, but the Son of God united human nature to his divine nature, that is to say, to himself, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yet on the other hand Jesus' birth was a *virgin birth*. His humanity is *enhypostatic* – he has real human personhood in the person of the eternal Son. To be sure, his conception was supernatural, but his embryonic development was natural. <sup>109</sup> This is the antithesis of Docetism: he did not merely appear human. <sup>110</sup> Jesus was fully human, and the following two chapters explain the implications of this for his resurrection and ascension.

In conclusion, because Jesus' humanity, from incarnation to ascension, and unto ages of ages, is both *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic*, his resurrection is a pure act of God's grace "but it is that mighty act of God translated into the perfection of a human nature which is made to issue freely and fully out of human nature." <sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>108</sup> Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos*, 1.39, arguing against Arius' and Eusebius of Nicomedia's adoptionist interpretation of the Philippians 2:5-10.

<sup>109</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 98. "Natural" is being used here in the ever day sense i.e. natural with respect to creaturely nature (with respect to the nature of the divine creator, Jesus' conception is not "supernatural" but quite natural).

<sup>110</sup> 'Docetic' comes from the Greek word *dokeō* meaning 'it seems.' This is the view that Jesus only seemed to be human.

<sup>111</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 218.

## ii) The Two Natures of Jesus are United without Change

### *The Chalcedonian Definition*

With Chalcedon, Torrance affirms that while Jesus is one person, he has two natures. This is vital for understanding the resurrection, for in it human nature remained fully human even as it was a divine act. The Chalcedonian statement about the incarnate Jesus stands true in the resurrection. Jesus is:

begotten of the Father before all times according to his Godhead . . . of the virgin Mary the bearer of God according to his humanity, and the same Christ, the Son, Lord, only begotten, of two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without division, without separation; the difference of natures not being removed by their union, but rather the propriety of each being preserved and conserved in one *prosopon* and in one *hypostasis*.<sup>112</sup>

This and the next two sub-sections clarify this definition.

### *Jesus Is the norm of both natures that are united in himself*

First of all, there are epistemological difficulties in discussing the human and divine natures of Jesus. The natures cannot be defined on *a priori* grounds, but only following Jesus, that is, *a posteriori*. He, in himself, is the revelation both of God and of what it means to be truly human:

If Christ's human nature is perfect, and further, if Christ is the word become man . . . it is the human nature of Christ alone that is the norm and criterion of all true human nature. . . . If Christ is the Son of God become man, then it is the divine nature of Christ which must be our only norm and criterion for the understanding of divine nature.<sup>113</sup>

Further, even though Jesus' human nature and divine nature exist in his one person without confusion or change this does not mean that his person can be split up into human and divine aspects, for they are united without separation or division. He does not have divine and human 'attributes' competing for 'parts' of his person. Instead, everything he does, he does as fully God and fully human; he is the eternal Son of God living a fully human life.

Jesus is 'God as human' not simply 'God and human.' This asymmetry is due to the fact that there is a different relation between the person of Jesus and his

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<sup>112</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 200, extract of Chalcedonian definition.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-2.

human nature and the person of Jesus and his divine nature. “God became man in Christ, but man did not, or did not also, become God. In the assumption of man into unity with the divine being, human nature was not divinized, but only raised into union and communion with God.”<sup>114</sup> This is upheld by the doctrine of *anhypostasia*. The person of the Son is eternally, by nature, divine. Therefore to say ‘the Son united human nature to his divine nature’ is precisely the same things as saying ‘the Son united human nature to himself.’ The Chalcedonian language could be misread since it does not explicitly state that his ‘divine nature,’ unlike his ‘human nature,’ is eternally proper to the ‘one person.’ Torrance clarifies, “the human nature is assumed into union with the divine Being of the Son,”<sup>115</sup> which moves past these unnecessary difficulties, and leaves only the necessary ones.

The previous section has already covered that Jesus is the self-revelation of God and thus the norm for our understanding of divine nature. In the hypostatic union, the Son remains who he always was but as of the incarnation lives out his eternal relation with the Father and Spirit from within our flesh, for our sake. “Since the Father-Son relation subsists eternally within the Communion of the Holy Trinity we must think of the incarnation of the Son as falling within the eternal Life and Being of God.”<sup>116</sup> Thus while being fully human, Jesus is unlike us in that he lived a truly human life in perfect obedience to the Father. He is the person of the Son and thus has a unique relation to the divine life. Jesus’ life reveals and determines that to live eternally in union with the Triune God is the purpose of humanity – though by grace and not by nature.<sup>117</sup>

#### *Jesus’ human nature remains fully human*

Torrance’s criticism of Chalcedon is not its metaphysical formulation of the hypostatic union but rather that when it says ‘human nature’ it does not define it dynamically and soteriologically.<sup>118</sup> He insists, firstly, that Jesus assumed human

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 222–3. Jesus is God, but his humanity *per se* is not.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>116</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 144.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 204. We discuss this further in Chapter Two, Section a), ii) “The Incarnation and Resurrection Determines the Relation of God and the World,” where we see that creation is proleptically conditioned by redemption.

<sup>118</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 200–1.

nature in order to heal it, and secondly that it had to remain fully human.

Jesus assumed fallen human nature and sanctified it throughout his whole life. When human nature was united to divine nature in the person of Jesus, the human nature did not cease to be fully human nature, and likewise with divine nature. However, just as there was an asymmetry in the virgin birth (it was enacted from the side of God not humanity), and an asymmetry in who Jesus is (true God *as* true human, not just true God *and* true human), there is an asymmetry at work in the way that the two natures do not cease to be what they are. Put simply, and soteriologically, there was nothing wrong with the divine nature but with the human nature that was assumed. The human nature that the Son of God assumed was genuinely our human nature and for that reason, since humanity is fallen, *untrue* human nature. Thus while Jesus' human nature does not cease to be fully human nature, from the moment of incarnation to the resurrection, the untrue human nature that Jesus assumed was being sanctified to be true human nature.<sup>119</sup>

In rejecting monothelitism, Torrance gives space for a full and proper account of Jesus' humanity. "In Christ there was a human will as well as a divine will. . . . The possession of a human will means that Christ was subject to temptation as we are, but the human will belonged to the one person of God the Son."<sup>120</sup> Little elaboration is given as to how these two wills are united. He is against the Lutheran version of the *communicatio naturarum* in which properties of each nature are ascribed to the opposite *nature* rather than to the *person* of Jesus. He asks of it, "what kind of humanity is this, to which all the divine attributes can be ascribed? Have we not here compromised the true and complete humanity of Christ?"<sup>121</sup>

His concern is the soteriological significance of the Chalcedonian affirmation that

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<sup>119</sup> There is a difficult relation between the act of incarnation and sanctification. The question is raised as to the coherency of Torrance's view on the matter in Kevin Chiarot, "The Unassumed Is the Unhealed: The Humanity of Christ in the Theology of T.F. Torrance." (PhD, University of Aberdeen, 2012); see also Thomas G. Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 153–6, for a traditional Roman Catholic view on the matter that also affirms the assumption of a fallen human nature. The second of these is cited in Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 182.

<sup>120</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 212.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

‘the peculiarity of each nature is preserved.’ If Jesus did not remain fully human from incarnation through to ascension and beyond then humanity is abrogated and dissolved, rather than saved and eternalised, by its union with the divine Son.<sup>122</sup> Jesus’ resurrected body, incorruptible as it is, is nonetheless fully human. It did not become divine; the hypostatic *union* was made eternal. Jesus’ humanity is now forever united to the divine life. We catch a glimpse of this transformed state in the 40 days between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. As metaphysically fascinating as these days are, the key factor in understanding them is christological, namely “the *personal self-identification of the familiar Jesus*.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, this was the very same human Jesus the disciples knew and loved. Whilst human nature did not become divine in the resurrection, just as divine nature did not become human in the incarnation, nonetheless a change of some sort did happen in both events, a humiliation and an exaltation:

Before the resurrection, Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, had lived on earth ‘not in the form of God’ . . . not therefore in the condition of his transcendent glory as eternal Son of God which he has with the Father before the world was. . . . After the resurrection he lived among us on earth after the manner of the exalted Son of God, yet in his nature as man, now victorious and triumphant man.<sup>124</sup>

We discuss Jesus’ resurrection state in more detail in Chapter Two, Section b) “The Resurrection is an Eternally Real Event.” Here we simply note that the peculiarity of each nature is preserved in the resurrection.

### **iii) The Two Natures of Jesus are Distinct but not Separate**

To consider the difficult issue of how to think of Jesus’ two natures in distinction but without falling into a Nestorian separation of them, we quote at length Alasdair Heron, who studied under T.F. Torrance. He admits that in Reformed theology:

A certain tendency towards Nestorianism is detectable . . . a dualism in the doctrine of God, distinguishing very sharply between Creation and Redemption, indeed between Election and Reprobation, and similarly between the divine and the human histories of the second person of the

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>123</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 241.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 242.

Trinity. . . . More recent Reformed thinkers, notably Karl Barth and Thomas Torrance, have seen dangers in a too one-sided emphasis simply on the classical Reformed tradition in Christology. Their answer is not, however, to take up Lutheran ideas of ubiquity, but *to insist on holding together the immanent and the economic Trinity, creation and redemption, by focusing centrally on the axial divine-human interaction in the person of the Incarnate Son.*

Second, in this kind of rethinking the not unproblematic notion of divine and human 'natures' coexisting in the person of Jesus, Christ tends to be reinterpreted in terms of this interaction: Jesus Christ, for example, is himself 'electing God' and 'elected man' (Karl Barth); or one speaks of him *as the locus of a twofold personal movement of God to man and man to God.*<sup>125</sup>

Heron's statement shows that we cannot comprehend Torrance's counteraction of the Nestorian tendency by simply analysing his description of *how* the two natures of Jesus are united. Rather, it is his whole theology, in particular the Trinity and atonement, which shines forth the integrity of Christ's person. This ability to not separate what God has held together is an impressive legacy of Torrance's theology. Even though his conviction was to proclaim the mystery of Christ he nonetheless shares insights into the metaphysics of the hypostatic union, and this is largely the focus for the remainder of this chapter.

A christology which only emphasises Jesus as the divine Logos avoids the Nestorian tendency by underemphasising the particularity of the man Jesus but it does not deal sufficiently with the fact the human nature is not a general substance but is only meaningful as real, individual, human life.<sup>126</sup> In this Torrance agrees with the Lutherans, "we must never think of the Word apart from the man Jesus, with whom the Word is forever united, and from whom the Word is never apart. Now that the incarnation has taken place, we must say that the Son is none other than Jesus, and is identical with him."<sup>127</sup> The two natures must be upheld in their distinction; the full reality of human nature must be emphasised for it is assumed, not consumed, by divine nature. This is soteriologically necessary, "the mediatorial office, while requiring two natures,

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<sup>125</sup> Alasdair Heron, "Communicatio Idiomatum and Deificatio of Human Nature: A Reformed Perspective," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43, no. 1–4 (1998): 375. Emphasis added. The final clause is in reference to Torrance.

<sup>126</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 210.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

also requires a conjoint but distinct operation of each of the two natures.”<sup>128</sup> We return specifically to this in Chapter Four, Section a) “The Mediator of Reconciliation.”

The natures are distinct in what it means for them to occupy ‘place.’ Torrance’s concept of ‘place’ and the so-called *extra Calvinisticum* are discussed in depth in Chapter Three, *The Ascension and Reconciliation*. For now, as St John of Damascus poignantly puts it, “without separating from the Father’s bosom, the Word dwelt in the bosom of the holy virgin . . . thus in all and over all He was Himself, when he existed in the bosom of the holy bearer of God.”<sup>129</sup> To not interpret this as a Nestorian separation of natures we must remember that God does not have a spatial relation to space but a creative or relational one.<sup>130</sup> Without a dualistic view of God and creation, Jesus being singularly present in his humanity whilst being present to all in his divinity is not contradictory. The ‘omnipresence’ of the incarnate Son’s divine nature therefore does not mean a spatial separation from his humanity, but merely a distinction of the two natures and their qualities, one being essentially Spirit, the other essentially spatio-temporal. As such, Torrance rejects “any local or spatial connection between the divine and human natures of Christ.”<sup>131</sup> This is not to say that the person of the Son was not actually there as Jesus. Rather, the Father and Spirit did not become human and thus neither did the divine nature *per se*. At the same time, in the person of the Son, God was present in a special sense at the physical location of Jesus, in a similar sense to which God was present ‘in’ the Ark of the Covenant while still remaining ‘omnipresent.’ In Jesus these two utterly distinct natures come together in one person, the enfleshed Word. There is only one Son, not an eternal Son and an incarnate Son, and so both predicates, so to speak, must be applied to him simultaneously, as the next sub-section explains.

#### **iv) Torrance’s *Communicatio Naturarum***

*Anhypostasia* makes clear that Torrance unequivocally rejects Nestorianism:

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>129</sup> St John of Damascus, *Ekdos*, 3, 7. Cited in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/2*, ed. T.F. Torrance and G.W. Bromiley, trans. G. T. Thomas and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 169.

<sup>130</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 3.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 31.

there is only one person. To make this intelligible, that is, to hazard an explanation of 'how' and not simply leave it at 'that,'<sup>132</sup> he poses a Reformed version of the *communicatio naturarum*.<sup>133</sup> This is comprised of three concepts: the *communicatio idiomatum* (communication of properties), the *communicatio operationum* (communication of acts), and the *communicatio gratiarum* (communication of graces).<sup>134</sup> The first two are discussed now and the third one in the next section.

Firstly, Torrance guards against the Nestorian tendency by affirming a particular form of the *communicatio idiomatum*.<sup>135</sup> Both human and divine predicates can be ascribed to the *person of Jesus* but not to the opposite natures. The point is soteriological: Jesus can be the mediator between God and humanity because both natures are united in himself. Torrance admits, "Chalcedonian Christology, in spite of its intention, should always tend toward a form of dyophysitism."<sup>136</sup> By dyophysitism Torrance means two natures that are not properly united in the one person, i.e. a form of Nestorianism. He believes this is due to a lack of soteriology, which he amends by integrating the Reformed and Patristic perspectives, with their soteriological and christological emphases, respectively.<sup>137</sup> In accordance with Heron's statement, Torrance claims, "whenever incarnation and atonement are not properly and fully related, there is an inevitable tendency toward a conception of the two natures of Christ in which the two natures are not seen in their full unity in the one mediator."<sup>138</sup> The *communicatio idiomatum* is the christological basis for Jesus containing in himself both the God-ward and human-ward directions. Thus while Torrance defines divinity in terms of Trinitarian relations not abstract attributes, on this issue he can say, "the one person shares equally in the names, properties, acts

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<sup>132</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 183. The Chalcedonian definition simply states 'that' Jesus has two natures in one person. Torrance is largely content with that and almost hesitantly posits some thoughts as to the 'how.' Positively, if an explanation were put into creedal form then it would have made the faith captive to the limits of the prevailing world-view. Instead, it leaves it up to each generation to restate it in terms that are both orthodox and relevant, both faithful and helpful, as theology must.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 225. Lat, *communicatio naturarum*, 'communication of natures'.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 225–6; he applies it analogically to his doctrine of Scripture, see Torrance, *Atonement*, 336–9.

<sup>136</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 202.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 182–3.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 199.

and experiences of both natures.”<sup>139</sup>

Secondly, the *communicatio operationum* is of particular importance for it means that the divine nature and human nature of Jesus are not working independently. We must think of the God-ward and human-ward direction of Jesus’ atoning life but *in one person*. “In him there takes place such a union and communion between his divine and human natures, that the divine acts are acts in his human nature, and the human acts are acts in his divine person.”<sup>140</sup> This view of the economic Trinity is a pivotal concept. On one hand, since the divine acts are in his human nature it means that the divine Word of forgiveness was communicated through the human word.<sup>141</sup> As such, it is the basis of the lower level of knowledge, that is, the evangelical confession that when Jesus forgives us God forgives us. On the other, since the human acts are in the divine nature, we can speak of the human Jesus as God for all his human acts are as the divine Son. What the Son does, God does. Therefore the *communicatio operationum* enables us to move to the higher theological level, that is, the ontological oneness in being and act between the Son and the Father. Further, while maintaining that it is only the Son, not the Father or Spirit, who became incarnate we must nonetheless say that the incarnate God died a human death. In Torrance’s words, “*He Himself* actually came, the immutable God, humbling himself to become a creature and to suffer as a creature our judgment and death.”<sup>142</sup>

#### D) How the Natures Relate: With and Beyond Torrance

It is not judicious to assess Torrance on what he did not try to do, to argue from silence, if you will. His theological impetus was not to give a conceptual frame for *how* the humanity and divinity of Jesus and the integrity of his person are upheld. Instead, firstly, he maintains the soteriological and ontological necessity of the

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 210. See also pages 221–2. Torrance calls this a *unio mediata* (Lat, ‘mediated union’) between the two natures. They are mediated by the one person in whom each nature has a *unio immediata* (Lat, ‘immediate union’).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>141</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 336–9. This is of course closely related with the *communicatio idiomatum* discussed above which Torrance applies to the relation between the written word and incarnate Word.

<sup>142</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 227.

Son remaining fully God in his whole incarnate life to resurrection and beyond. Secondly, he expounds the significance of his humanity for atonement and thus illustrates the theological necessity of Christ assuming and sanctifying fallen human nature in himself. That said, even though not always fully articulated by him *vis-à-vis* the details of Jesus' incarnate life, Torrance's Trinitarian theology holds the key to avoiding three things: a change in human nature, a change in divine nature, and the separation of these natures. This section will draw out how Torrance conceives the two natures relating in the one person, and go beyond him in applying his conception of the eternal relation of the Son and Spirit more thoroughly to Jesus' incarnate life.<sup>143</sup>

This brings us to the *communicatio gratiarum* in which we gain some insight into *how* the natures relate. Torrance posits:

From the first moments of [Jesus'] life, his properties as man and God, and the communication of the properties of his divine and human natures, effectively entered into operation step by step with his developing human life – and here we think especially of the graces of knowledge, will and power in which Jesus increased and grew, growing in knowledge and learning obedience. . . . At the baptism of Jesus . . . reaching its culmination.<sup>144</sup>

Torrance thus insists that Jesus' humanity be genuinely human. To translate this into specific terms: Jesus' mind cannot know more than a human mind can know given normal human brain development. The Father sent the Son to live as "Son of God become *man*, as Son of Man, that is to live out from beginning to end within the limitations of our creaturely humanity, and within the limitations of

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<sup>143</sup> Much work has already been done on "Spirit-christology." Of particular interest are those consistent with Chalcedon and complementary to Logos christology. For a description of necessary attributes of a Spirit-christology of this kind and for proponents of this, see Myk Habets, "Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, no. 11.2 (2003): 119–234; and Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, Princeton Theological Monograph 129 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010). For an excellent book from a Roman Catholic perspective, see Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). The intra-Trinitarian model this is based on is David Coffey's "bestowal model", see David M. Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," *TS*, no. 51 (1990): 193–229. It has some similarities with Torrance's in the sense that the persons mutually constitute each others' personhood. The Son eternally receives and "returns" the Spirit from and to the Father. An interesting study would be a comparison of this and Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity and their implications for a Chalcedonian Spirit-christology.

<sup>144</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 225.

our humanity in the house of bondage.”<sup>145</sup> Again, Torrance’s emphasis, as seen in the final clause, is Jesus’ *fallen* humanity. However firstly, and this is the aim of the present section, we must bring to coherence the first clause, that is, his affirmation of Jesus’ life ‘within the limitations of our creaturely humanity.’

As seen earlier, Torrance also insists, “we must say that the Son is none other than Jesus, and is identical with him.”<sup>146</sup> In other words, we cannot think of an eternal Son and a different incarnate Son existing simultaneously, such as an eternal Son being ‘all knowing’ whilst Jesus is limited in knowledge, for that destroys his integrity. How then is this possible?

The first response is to be silent and adore, not express, the mystery of Christ. Within that, two thoughts are helpful. Firstly, ‘divine nature’ is relational and Trinitarian not a set of abstract attributes. Secondly, we must think through these eternal Trinitarian relations from within the incarnate Son’s humanity. In proposing a relation between Christ’s humanity and divinity that takes fuller account of the Holy Spirit, this moves with and beyond Torrance in a way that is faithful to the Trinitarian and soteriological framework of his christology.

Habets insightfully observes,

Torrance self-consciously seeks to work with the third and highest level of theology – the ontological – rather than the lowest level, the evangelical. It is evangelical theology, thus understood, that is most concerned with the details of the Gospel story concerning the particulars of the human life of Christ, his psychology, and history. Torrance is concerned with the humanity of God as a theological principle, the *homoousios*, and what this means for theology.<sup>147</sup>

In summary of what we have covered thus far, Torrance certainly applies the *homoousion* to the evangelical level in the sense of elucidating the saving significance of Jesus’ humanity. Indeed his only real criticism of Chalcedon is:

It did not say enough – not that it could say one iota more about how the divine and human natures are related in the mystery of his person, but that it did not relate that mystery adequately to the historical obedience of Jesus

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>147</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 167.

Christ the incarnate Son, and to his atoning work, and so did not give sufficient attention to the *saving significance of the humanity of Christ*.<sup>148</sup>

Given Torrance's rich Trinitarian theology such as his concepts of the onto-relations of the persons, *perichoresis*, and the co-activity of the Holy Trinity, more in fact can be said about the mystery of the hypostatic union with respect to the day-to-day details of Jesus' life.

Firstly, the Spirit eternally constitutes Jesus' Sonship. We saw earlier in the doctrine of the Trinity that "there is a coinherent relation between the Holy Spirit and God the Son, just as there is a coinherent relation between the Son and the Father."<sup>149</sup> We return to the mutual relation of Christ and the Spirit a number of times:<sup>150</sup> Chapter Three, Section b) "Our Communion with God;" Chapter Four, Section b), ii) "The Holy Spirit is God the Father's Self-Impartation;" and Chapter Five, Section a), ii) "Ascension, Pentecost, and Second Advent."

Primarily, for Torrance, the mission of the Spirit is to incorporate us into Christ's humanity. The person of the Spirit, as the eternal mutual love of Father and Son, is imparted to us, uniting our humanity to Christ's humanity and thus through the hypostatic union makes us participant in the divine life. "He was already the Son of God in perfect communion with the Father and the Spirit, and had been from all eternity, but now as the incarnate Son he received the anointing of the Spirit upon our humanity which he wore."<sup>151</sup>

The Spirit can only do this for us since Jesus' humanity was entirely transparent to the Spirit. We must be thoroughly christocentric. Just as our faith in Jesus is but a participation in Christ's faith on our behalf, so too our union with God and obedience to him in the Spirit is but a participation in Christ's life by the Spirit on our behalf. "It is only through the Spirit that we are enabled to recognise Jesus as Lord, and it is only through him, *who was anointed with the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit without measure for our sakes*, that the Holy Spirit is mediated to

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<sup>148</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 183.

<sup>149</sup> Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 233. The context demonstrates that Torrance applies the axiom "what God is toward us, he is in himself, and what he is in himself, he is toward us" to the Spirit too.

<sup>150</sup> For an excellent summary of Torrance's thought on the issue, see Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance* Chapter 6, 3. "The Mutual Mediation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit", 221-233.

<sup>151</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 125.

us.”<sup>152</sup> Therefore the mission of the Spirit in our lives follows the mission of the Spirit in Jesus’ life. Colyer summarises Torrance, “as the Son incarnate for our sake Jesus Christ embraced the presence of the Holy Spirit within his humanity and lived out his entire life and ministry in the power of the Spirit.”<sup>153</sup> The work of the Spirit in our life is secondary to, and proceeds from, the work of the Spirit in Jesus’ life.

Conversely, since the three persons are united not only in being but in act, all that Christ did in his humanity was done in the Spirit. This second direction only receives secondary attention in Torrance’s thought, but it is present nonetheless for it flows from his understanding of mutual relations within the ontological Trinity and thus in the economic Trinity too. The mission of the Spirit is christocentric because the mission of the Son was in the Spirit: only because Jesus lived out his relation with the Father as fully human, by the Spirit, can the Spirit then be sent to us and enable us to share in the Son’s relation with the Father.

In other words, only in the Spirit does Jesus’ humanity share in his divinity. Thus the Spirit does not just unite our humanity to Christ (*koinōnia*)<sup>154</sup> but Christ’s humanity to his divinity (hypostatic union). The economic activity flows from the ontological relations. The sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, and thus our *koinōnia* in the Spirit, has its correlate in the procession of the Spirit – the Spirit proceeds from the Father, through the Son. We must also say that the hypostatic union has its correlate in the generation of the Son in the Spirit. The Son, eternally, is only the Son in the Spirit, and therefore in the economy, in his incarnate life, is only the Son in the Spirit.

This has two major implications. Firstly, how we understand the human mind of incarnate Son, and secondly, how we construe Jesus’ sinlessness.

Moving with and beyond Torrance, we venture a cautious Trinitarian proposal of how the human mind and divine mind are united in the person of the Son without compromise of human nature or his divinity. When the Son became

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<sup>152</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 146, emphasis added.

<sup>153</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 222.

<sup>154</sup> Gk, ‘communion.’ This is discussed in more depth in Chapter Three, Section b), ii) “We are Reconciled through Being United to the Ascended Jesus by the Spirit.”

human, all that makes him who he is, that is, his relation with the Father *and* the Spirit, is retained, for what he is toward us he is eternally in himself. Therefore only in the Spirit does the fully human Son know the Father's will and respond in loving obedience. This seemingly kenotic theology is not in fact kenotic. Rather, it is thoroughly Trinitarian. The Son does not empty anything out of himself, such as all knowledge. Rather, the divine attributes are seen to be relational and not possessive, and therefore are not lost in the incarnation. The divine mind and will never was an independent possession of the Son but one that eternally is from the Father in the Spirit.

This avoids the problem with kenotic christology of defining the immanent God independently of the revealed God. Claiming that Jesus emptied something out of himself supposes that aside from Jesus one knows what divinity is. Instead, "what God is in Jesus Christ in relation to man, he is antecedently and eternally in himself."<sup>155</sup> With due caution to not project his humanity back into the Godhead, how Jesus relates to the Father and the Spirit in the incarnation in fact *reveals* how he eternally relates to them.

In agreement with the impetus behind kenotic christologies, to uphold Jesus' full humanity we must maintain that in the incarnation the eternal Son only knew as much as his human mind could know. The Son, in utter humility – which reveals, not empties, his divine nature – limits his mind to that of a growing human and lives out his divine personhood from within his humanity. Step-by-step, according to Jesus' growth in wisdom and stature, the Father imparts his communication to the Son in the Spirit.<sup>156</sup> Since the person of the Son eternally is the self-communication of the Father in the Spirit, far from being a reduction of the Son's divinity the incarnate Son's limited knowledge in fact upholds the Trinitarian relations that constitute the Son's divinity. Jesus continues to be God *in se* in the distinct way that he is *in alium*. As is eternally the case, in the incarnation the Son receives from, and gives to, the Father in the Spirit. Therefore, quite the opposite of being an emptying of his divinity, the eternal Son

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<sup>155</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 175.

<sup>156</sup> We must even affirm that the incarnate Son did not have full comprehension of the universe even as he, the one and only Son, transcendentally sustained it with the Father and Spirit, since in the incarnation he continues to be the one he eternally is.

having limited knowledge in the incarnation means that he does not cease to be fully God.

Likewise, there was no change to the divinity of the Holy Spirit with his mission in the Son and in us. “The communion with God that the Holy Spirit is toward us – as through Christ he gives us access in himself to God – he is in his own Being as God.”<sup>157</sup> Since the incarnation is new even for God, so too is the way in which the eternal relations of the Father, Son and Spirit outwork.

The will of Jesus is also to be thought of in terms of Trinitarian relations.

Torrance affirms dithelitism: Jesus has two wills – the human and divine. Unless we have a ‘dynamic dithelitism’ in which the mind and will of the Father is only moment by moment imparted to the mind and will of the incarnate Son, we risk either Nestorianism or what is essentially monothelitism.<sup>158</sup> We return to the metaphysical problems of this formulation in Chapter Three, Section a), ii) “In the Ascension Renewed Human Place is Taken into God’s Place.” For now we simply make the christological statement Jesus’ human will was not overridden by the divine will. Rather, because Jesus, the Son, cannot disobey the Father, at every moment his will comes into agreement with the divine will. As is eternally the case, by the Spirit the incarnate Son receives the communication of God and by the Spirit responds in loving obedience. Therefore even though dithelitism affirms that Jesus has two minds and wills, at any given moment there is only one ‘state’: the human mind and will of Jesus in full communication with and submission to the Father in the Spirit, that is, the divine mind and will. Jesus is fully and truly God living as a fully and truly human person. In this dynamic sense the divine will and the human will of the Son are united in his one person.

This understanding of the will of Jesus has implications for the concern that his sinlessness abrogates his full humanity. Could Jesus have sinned, and if not, does that make him not fully human? For the sake of its soteriological significance, Torrance is abundantly clear that Jesus must have assumed a fallen human

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<sup>157</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 100.

<sup>158</sup> For a charitable but critical reading of Torrance’s articulation of Jesus’ fallen humanity, see Chiarot, “The Unassumed Is the Unhealed”. His abstract claims that his thesis “demonstrates that, on numerous fronts, Torrance has not made the concept fully intelligible. Primarily, through an examination of the human will of Christ, we show that the humanity which he assumed is in an incoherent state, both throughout his historical life and at the cross.”

nature and really taken upon himself our abject condition in order to wrestle it back to God by living a sinless life within it. He insists that the eternal Son:

Lived out his life of sonship among sinners, learning obedience in steadfastness to God's word and will. . . . His obedience as true man took the form of obedience in which he laid aside his glory in order that within our frailty and weakness, where we are assaulted by attacks and temptations of the evil one, he might perfectly fulfil the Father's will of love and holiness.<sup>159</sup>

However, when it comes to the following question, Torrance's answer works against the intelligibility of his insistence that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature.

Habets asks, "which of the traditional positions is to be adopted concerning Christ: *posse peccare* ('possible to sin'), *posse non peccare* ('possible not to sin'), *non posse peccare* ('not possible to sin'), *non posse non peccare* ('not possible not to sin')?"<sup>160</sup> Torrance's answer is *non posse peccare* (not possible to sin) because *non potuit peccare* (not able to sin).<sup>161</sup> Further, Christ "was not able to sin because we see that he did not sin."<sup>162</sup> This is consistent with his *a posteriori*, critical realistic approach: he does not speculate but submits his thinking to what has actually happened. Because of this, Torrance formulates his answer in light of the subject in question, Jesus the incarnate Son. Thus he reasons that Jesus was unable to sin, "not only because he did not sin but because he was of such a nature, in being One with the Word, that he would not have sinned."<sup>163</sup>

For Torrance, the *homoousion* of the Father and Son means rejecting *posse peccare*. On one hand this is quite true: the hypostatic union held firm under temptation and even death because Jesus is *homoousios* with the Father – he could not have sinned because of who he is as the eternal Son of the Father. But on the other hand, *how* did he do so from within our humanity? The Son being *homoousios* with us, and with the Holy Spirit, must be taken into consideration. Firstly, while on the economic and ontological level Torrance affirms the oneness

<sup>159</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 123.

<sup>160</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 181.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: Auburn Lectures 1938-39* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 126; cited in Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 181.

<sup>163</sup> Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, 128; cited in Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 181.

of being and act between the Son and Spirit he does not thoroughly apply this to the details of Jesus' human life.<sup>164</sup> He attributes the human obedience of Jesus directly to the person of the Son in a way that does not give full space for the work of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, while Torrance aims to come neither from 'above' nor below,' regarding his affirmation of Jesus' oneness with humanity within its estranged condition, he nonetheless appears to come more from above by not allowing statements 'from below' to have their full weight.<sup>165</sup>

Instead, the human and divine natures must equally be our starting point. Therefore Jesus *could* have sinned because he was fully human but *did not* because he was fully God, that is, because by the Spirit the Son obeyed the Father at every point. Since Jesus assumed our fallen human nature we must affirm of him '*posse peccare*' and '*posse non peccare*,' and reject '*non posse peccare*.' Finally, since he is the divine Son we must also reject '*non posse non peccare*.' This preserves the peculiarity of the two natures and the integrity of the one person, the incarnate Son of God. Moment by moment, by the Spirit, the Son lived out from within our twisted humanity his eternal relation with the Father. He could have, but did not, sin because of who he is in himself: the one whose eternal relation with the Father of mutual knowing and loving *is* the Holy Spirit.

In sum, applying Torrance's Trinitarian theology more thoroughly to the day-to-day life of the incarnate Son would strengthen and give coherency to his theological insistence on the saving significance of the humanity of Jesus. It does this by a Trinitarian consideration of *how* the one divine person lived a fully human life for our sake.

This chapter began by claiming that the resurrection of Jesus reveals that he is in fact the incarnate Son of God. In light of this, the direction of our thinking had to reverse; while the resurrection *revealed* the nature of Jesus, the nature of Jesus actually *determined* the nature of the resurrection event. Eternally, Jesus is the Son of God, and without ceasing to be this in any way, by grace he became a fully human person. This was held together by the dual concept of *anhypostasia* and

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<sup>164</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 167 and 182.

<sup>165</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 114, "we do not seek to understand the Person and Work of Jesus Christ by approaching him from below or from above, but from below and above at the same time"; see also the section "Torrance's rejection of Ebionitic and Docetic Christology", in Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 105–111.

*enhypostasia*. The Chalcedonian definition also gave boundaries to work within as we attempted to articulate more precisely how the two natures are united in the one person of Jesus Christ. Thinking through his eternal relations with both the Father and the Spirit from within his humanity helped give coherency to the formulation. The purpose of this was not to resolve the mystery but rather to uphold the fullness of the person of Jesus. Primarily, then, this chapter has given us the christological framework to be able to understand Jesus' resurrection and ascension. The following chapter uses this framework to express that as the creator become creature, Jesus' resurrection redeems all creation.

## Chapter 2

### The Resurrection and Redemption

This chapter begins with an introduction to *kataphysic* thinking: to understand what happened in the resurrection and ascension one must think in accordance with the nature of the subject, Jesus Christ. The two natures of Jesus examined in Chapter One reveal two things about the nature of his resurrection. Firstly, Jesus' humanity means that the resurrection is a real, historical event within creation. Secondly, his divinity means that it is the decisive act of God and thus a re-creative event. As such, the resurrection means the redemption *of* creation not *from* creation. It means redemption from both sin and death and affects all creation.<sup>1</sup>

Even when understanding normal historical events the nature of the subject must be taken into account. Torrance terms this *kataphysic* thinking, that is, "according to the nature or reality of things."<sup>2</sup> Therefore to correctly interpret the resurrection of Jesus Christ we must consider the subject involved to avoid not only a material reductionist approach but mere human historical observation too. Just as the science of general relativity has revealed that events are to be understood from their own reference frame<sup>3</sup> so too historical events are to be understood from the reference point of the subject(s) involved in the event. In the case of the resurrection, the subject is the divine-human Jesus Christ, and therefore mere historical human analysis cannot, by its very nature, understand the resurrection. Instead, a theological-historical perspective is needed since the subject, Jesus Christ, is both fully God and fully human.<sup>4</sup> "The resurrection is to

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<sup>1</sup> Torrance deals extensively with the Old Testament understanding of redemption in Chapter Two, "Redemption in Light of the Old Testament" of Torrance, *Atonement*, 25–60; then with the New Testament understanding in Chapter Six, "Atonement as Redemption" of *ibid.*, 97–119.

<sup>2</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 240. Gk, *kata*, 'according to'; *physin*, 'nature'; see also Torrance, *Incarnation*, 4–6.

<sup>3</sup> For example, relativity theory has taught us that whether or not two events are perceived to occur simultaneously depends on the speed of the reference frame the events are observed from, implying that there does not exist a point of absolute rest from which all events can be observed objectively (since there is no such thing as a non-inertial reference frame).

<sup>4</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 250.

be understood in consistency with Jesus Christ himself . . . we have a divine-human subject, and therefore a unique happening defined by the nature of this unique agent . . . the Son of God incarnate in human existence in space and time."<sup>5</sup> Another way to say this, building on our understanding of the nature of Jesus in Chapter One is that "the resurrection must be understood *enhypostatically* as well as *anhypostatically*."<sup>6</sup>

The first section shows that theology cannot be divorced from history for that would leave us with mythology, which is not appropriate to the fully human subject Jesus. But likewise, Torrance convincingly rejects the notion that to look at Jesus from a purely historical (human agency and natural processes) perspective is to be 'objective.'<sup>7</sup> That approach is in fact "neither open-minded nor scientific, since it would foreclose the issue completely as to who Jesus Christ is, before we have even considered him in accordance with his nature and self-disclosure."<sup>8</sup>

### A) The Resurrection is a Temporally Real Event

In accordance with Jesus' *enhypostatic* human nature, the resurrection was a *real* event. This must not be treated abstractly but in reference to the *reality* in question. The reality, or *physin*, at hand is the resurrection of the divine-human

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>7</sup> Torrance first distinguishes between natural processes and historical events: "an historical event comes into being through a free happening, by means of spontaneous human agencies." (*Atonement*, 249). And, whilst "there are elements of causal determination in historical happening that we have to take into account . . . historical events are not by any means merely natural physical processes, for as happenings initiated and bound up with purposeful agents they embody intention which often conflicts with and triumphs over the course of events that nature would take on its own." (Ibid.) In other words, if a human agent is involved we must take into account their intention and not merely the physical events if we are to give a correct historical interpretation.

Torrance explains that a material reductionist approach (which falsely assumes that the universe is a closed, causal, deterministic system) fails to distinguish between factual and logico-causal necessity. To be sure, once an event has happened it cannot be undone; from every moment in time after an event has happened it is factually necessary. But before it happened it did not necessarily have to happen; for every moment in time before an event, that event does not necessarily have to happen, and is thus never logically necessary, even after it has happened (Ibid., 248–250).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 252.

Jesus.<sup>9</sup> Jesus is *homoousios* with us. The hypostatic union of genuine created order with uncreated being (the eternal Son of God) in the person of Jesus, is the theological underpinning of a resurrection that really restores the created order. Jesus is fully human and "since human beings are the concrete reality that they are, human resurrection in the nature of the case can only be *bodily resurrection* – any 'resurrection' that is not bodily is simply a contradiction in terms."<sup>10</sup> It was not some 'purely spiritual' resurrection – whatever that might mean. It was not an event that existed only in the minds of the early Church and without any objective reference point. It was not simply that Jesus' memory was kept alive in the hearts and minds of his followers. Instead, "here we have historical happening within our historical existence and within the same sphere of actuality and reality to which we human beings belong."<sup>11</sup> What Torrance is arguing against here is any mythologizing of theology.<sup>12</sup>

The importance of there being an actual place and time, namely the empty tomb of Jesus, is that "we cannot separate our being from space and time, for space and time are conditions and functions of created existence and the bearers of its order."<sup>13</sup> In other words, for Jesus' resurrection to be an event within creation it must have happened at a particular time in a particular place. Therefore the historicity of the empty tomb is indispensable since "it is *the empty tomb that constitutes the essential empirical correlative in statements about the resurrection of Christ*."<sup>14</sup> While the empty tomb of Jesus is not the resurrection itself it is the sign pointing to his resurrection. It is "the point where the triumph of Christ over the space-time of our fallen world is nevertheless correlated with the space-time of our ongoing existence in this world."<sup>15</sup> As such, the resurrection of Jesus establishes real knowledge of God, and communion with God, in human

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<sup>9</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, 203–4. As in this sentence, since *physis* can mean reality "when some fathers spoke of Christ in terms of one nature, *mia physis*, they meant that in Christ we have the manifestation of one reality (*ousia*) . . . [thus] were not necessarily monophysite (denying divine and human 'natures' in Christ)."

<sup>10</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 241.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>12</sup> See Rudolf Bultmann, *Glauben Und Verstehen*, 7th ed., vol. 1 (Mohr (Siebeck), 1972) whose view of the relation between history and theology is at complete odds with Torrance; see Torrance, *Incarnation*, 310. For a recent work on the historicity of the resurrection, see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 247.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 299–300.

existence. By it "God has established a real bond between his reality and ours *in this world*."<sup>16</sup> The real historical resurrection means that we can "have communion with him without having to take leave of the realm of our own this-worldly existence."<sup>17</sup>

A docetic christology leads to a docetic soteriology: "everything depends on the resurrection of the body, otherwise all we have is a ghost for a saviour."<sup>18</sup> Since salvation is in the person of Christ, not external to him, a mythological resurrection ultimately leads to the disappearance of any real hope. "All docetic conceptions of the risen Christ are quite irrelevant to men and women of flesh and blood and have no message to offer them in their actual existence."<sup>19</sup> If the resurrection were not a real event in space-time then there would be no new creation. We would have no basis for hope for this world. It would mean that 'resurrection' was a rejection of the created order, an escape *from* this place rather than the restoration *of* this place.

However, many affirm the real resurrection of Jesus while still maintaining a docetic soteriology. This is simply inconsistent. The common phrase describing the hope in Jesus as 'going to heaven when you die' – rather than looking forward to 'a new heaven and a new earth'<sup>20</sup> – portrays the dualistic structures of thought that separate matter from mind and spirit, and which Torrance so vehemently opposed. St Paul argues for Jesus' real resurrection and our real resurrection by showing both sides of the mutual relation of christology and soteriology: "for if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."<sup>21</sup> Again, what has happened to Jesus has, and will, happen to us: "for if we have been united with him in a death *like his*, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection *like his*."<sup>22</sup>

The biblical witness to Christ's resurrected state is of a real, physical and this-worldly body. The third of St John's post-resurrection appearance accounts, eight

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 233. Emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>20</sup> Revelation 21:1.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor 15:16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Rom 6:5. Emphasis added.

days after the resurrection, states, "Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'peace to you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at my hand; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving but believing.'" <sup>23</sup> At a stretch, one could interpret the previous sightings of Jesus as mere appearances that do not take up real room in this physical world. However, the fact that not just sight but touch are used to verify Jesus' identity shows that John is not portraying a docetic christology in which Jesus only appeared to be there. In the next section we shall address Jesus' coming and standing in their midst while the doors were shut; we do so continuing to think *kataphysically*, but with respect to his divine nature. To be sure, mystery remains, but mystery that is consistent with the mystery of Christ.

Any rejection of Jesus' physicality in the resurrection reveals that the reader is imposing on the text an *a priori* rejection of Jesus' actual resurrection. Against this dualistic tendency to exclude the possibility of God's real action in the world Torrance unequivocally affirms in Jesus and his resurrection "the being and action of God himself in space and time." <sup>24</sup> The apostles themselves had an interesting reaction to the first account that the women told of Jesus' empty tomb: "and their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them." <sup>25</sup> This is contrary to the often-argued point that modern science has meant that modern people cannot accept the resurrection as factual. Rather, not even in the first century did they believe the resurrection could arise from the immanent possibilities within creation. Stating what should be obvious, all first century people knew that people do not just rise from the dead! However, when encountered by the risen Christ, Thomas declared "my Lord and my God." <sup>26</sup> Having realised Jesus' divine nature, the resurrection is then quite natural given the nature of Jesus. This is *kataphysic* thinking: since Jesus is fully human his resurrection is physical, since he is fully God it was possible.

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<sup>23</sup> John 20:26-27.

<sup>24</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 240.

<sup>25</sup> Luke 24:11.

<sup>26</sup> John 20:28.

## B) The Resurrection is an Eternally Real Event

### i) The New Creation is the Old Creation Renewed

The *anhypostatic* aspect of Jesus' resurrected incarnate life is that he only has his human existence because of the decisive act of God. Jesus' resurrection, and all creation in him, was not possible from creaturely nature alone. While affirming the dignity of creation – the resurrection being a real event in our space-time – its “perfection will not come about mechanistically or ‘naturally,’ but rather through divine grace.”<sup>27</sup> But now we subvert the words ‘real’ and ‘naturally.’ The resurrection is not merely real according to our human nature – a bodily resurrection – but real according to God's nature: it is what one normally calls a supernatural event i.e. it does not arise from the immanent possibilities within creation. But given the dual *nature* of Jesus, the resurrection is entirely *natural*. Given the *reality* of the hypostatic union, the resurrection is wholly *real* event: it takes place not only in creaturely life but in the life of the creator.

In the next two chapters we look specifically at the reconciliation of humanity to God. Here we begin with the cosmic scope of redemption: God in Christ is reconciling the *world* to himself. “Theologically speaking, man and the universe belong together and together constitute what we mean by ‘world,’ the world in its relation to God.”<sup>28</sup> Thus redemption includes all creation:

The whole of creation falls within the range of his mighty acts and Lordship as he works out his purpose by bringing redemption together with creation. . . . God does not abandon his creation when he has saved man, for all creation together with humanity, will be renewed when Christ comes again . . . the resurrection of Christ in *body* becomes the pledge that the whole physical universe will be renewed, for in a fundamental sense it has already been resurrected in Christ.<sup>29</sup>

The key point, which Torrance phrases ‘the unity of creation and redemption,’ is that new humanity *is* the old humanity, just renewed. This makes all the difference in the world. It means that our hope is for this very world, not its destruction and the coming of a different one. There is an essential continuity

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<sup>27</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 240.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 25; cited in Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 147.

<sup>29</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 311–2.

between the two, albeit one which requires God's mighty act to transform it. New does not mean 'different' but 'renewed.' The point of theological significance is that it is not space and time, creaturely existence, *per se* that will be done away with, but rather that which negates existence in fellowship with God and others.

This double emphasis of both the *enhypostatic* and *anhypostatic* nature of redemption in the resurrection – i.e. the pure act of God from within creation – “holds together in unshakeable unity the redeemed community and a redeemed earth.”<sup>30</sup> We see this in Romans 8 where Paul speaks of creation groaning and waiting for the sons of God to be revealed, waiting for the time “when creation and kingdom come together.”<sup>31</sup> Our hope is not ‘purely spiritual’ but redeemed physical existence. We are established in this space and time to be part of its renewal. The continuity and discontinuity between the old creation and the new creation, between creation and redemption, is the same as that between Jesus’ incarnate humanity and his crucified and resurrected humanity. It is the same humanity, but renewed and transformed.

In Jesus’ life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, “*redemption and creation come completely together.*”<sup>32</sup> Jesus’ resurrected body was qualitatively different from his pre-resurrected body, and thus there is the same qualitative distinction between the new creation and the old creation. But, and this is most important, because the resurrected Jesus is the very same Jesus who was crucified we must *not* ontologically distinguish the new creation from the old creation.

At the same time, the new creation is not merely the old creation seen with a different perspective – there is an objective difference to it. It is incorruptible, and united to the eternal; the events that take place within its renewed space and time are godly and not sinful. “The new creation is a new creation and cannot be identified with the present evil world.”<sup>33</sup>

As with Jesus’ humanity, to understand the redemption of creation a dynamic and soteriological view of creation and redemption is required. Torrance describes the present state of the world as ‘old time.’ The tension is not between

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 403.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 423.

creation and creator, between time and eternity, but “rather in terms of the new and the old, of a new time in reconciliation and union with the eternal, and an old time which is the time of this fallen world, which through sin exists in mysterious contradiction to God.”<sup>34</sup> In accordance with Jesus' human nature, the resurrection does not mean “the abrogation of time, it means its redemption. Just as in justification the law was not destroyed but established, so in the resurrection time is not annihilated but recreated, for it is taken up in Christ, sanctified in his human life and transformed in his resurrection as man.”<sup>35</sup> In Christ there is a new time of freedom where the events that take place in it are not ones of bondage or disobedience but rather life giving events.

All of this happens *in* Christ. He is the one human in whom the eternal purposes of God coincide perfectly with his human time on earth. Therefore in him there is a new time, which is united to eternity, instead of the old time, which decays into nothingness. “In the risen Christ, in whom hypostatic union between God and man is carried through to its *telos* or end, there is involved a hypostatic union between eternity and time, eternity and redeemed and sanctified time, and therefore eternity and new time.”<sup>36</sup> As with the hypostatic union in which humanity is not made divine, but rather fallen human nature is united to divine nature and sanctified whilst remaining fully human, so too time does not dissolve into eternity but rather fallen time is sanctified and united to eternity. In Torrance’s words, “the resurrection of the man Jesus and his exaltation to the right hand of the Father mean the taking up of *human time* into God. In Christ the time of human being and life is wedded to eternity.”<sup>37</sup>

Finally, since our language is necessarily coordinated only with this present world as we know it, we must be rather reserved in our description of what the new creation and Jesus’ resurrected body are like. Nonetheless, his post-resurrection appearances reveal that his physicality is not quite what it was before his death and resurrection. “When the doors were shut where the

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<sup>34</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 309. Here Torrance is expounding the later Barth, and the context reveals that Torrance himself agrees with this statement.

<sup>35</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 255.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 255–6.

<sup>37</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*; see also Emil Brunner, “The Christian Understanding of Time,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, no. 4.1 (1951): 10.

disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"<sup>38</sup> Jesus' glorious body could perhaps be described as more-physical, super-physical, or incorruptibly-physical. However we attempt to articulate it, Torrance will not allow it to deny Jesus' full humanity:

to be a spiritual body is not to be less body but more truly and completely body, for by the Spirit physical existence is redeemed from all that corrupts and undermines it, and from all or any privation of being . . . a body healed and quickened by the Spirit in which all corruption had been overcome.<sup>39</sup>

We must realise that because of the nature of the resurrection, i.e. it is *new*, we cannot express the details of the transcendent Christ and the new creation in the language of this fallen world.<sup>40</sup> As Torrance puts it, "the apocalyptic images are an inner necessity to faith."<sup>41</sup> The precise details of the difference between the old creation and new creation are shrouded in the mystery of the ascended Christ. That said, sin and death will be destroyed: "the world in its present conditions with all its forms and patterns suited to human selfishness and sin, will pass away, and the new age, the new creation, will stand revealed."<sup>42</sup>

## **ii) The Resurrection Determines the Relation of God and the World**

In the final chapter we point out that eschatological reality is found in the *Eschatos*, the Last One, Jesus Christ. He is the Alpha and Omega: the beginning and the end. Here, we understand creation, first things, by knowing the *Protos*, the First One, Jesus Christ. This section shall unpack the following important comment by Torrance:

In the incarnation the order of redemption has been made to intersect and overlap the order of creation in such a way that the whole history of mankind and the universe comes under the Kingdom of Christ as the First and the Last, the *Protos* and the *Eschatos*, the origin and goal of creation – and so we have the Christological and soteriological interrelation between eschatology and cosmology.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> John 20:19.

<sup>39</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 299. See also 1 Cor 15.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>43</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 214.

The one who re-orders creation in redemption is the one who ordered it in the first place. From creation to incarnation and beyond he “is continuously active in creative preservation and redemptive intervention in the affairs on mankind and the world.”<sup>44</sup> Torrance utterly rejects a dualistic, deistic understanding of God and the world. Habets concludes, “redemption is not an interference with or interruption of the created order, but is a healing or restoring of a damaged (disordered) creation.”<sup>45</sup> ‘Miracle,’ or God’s action in the world, does not mean an interruption of natural order. Therefore the incarnation and resurrection is not a

suspension or interference in the natural order of things, for the natural order came from the Word of God in the first place, and is now to be regarded as brought under the reordering activity of God through the redemptive intervention of the Creator Word and given a deeper dimension in which it reaches its fulfilment in God’s eternal purpose of love.<sup>46</sup>

The incarnation and resurrection together are our starting point and definition of how God acts in the world; they are not interruptions, rather they are consistent with the way the world really is in its relation to God as creator, sustainer and personal agent.

As acts of God who is the creative source of all order in space and time, they are essentially ordering events within the natural order, restoring and creating order where it is damaged or lacking, and it is in terms of that *giving of order* that they constitute the relevant boundary conditions within the natural order where it is open to the transcendent and creative reality of God.<sup>47</sup>

The resurrection of the incarnate Son of God determines reality. His incarnation reveals the purpose of creation; his resurrection fulfils that purpose. “Christology actually conditions the creation in the first place, proleptically influencing its very reality.”<sup>48</sup> As Torrance puts it, “creation is proleptically conditioned by redemption.”<sup>49</sup> The hypostatic union of time and eternity in Jesus retroactively, so to speak, conditions creation by its redemption in him. Habets explains, “through the incarnation of the Son of God, in God’s taking on human nature, God

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 156.

<sup>46</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 214.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Resurrection*, 22.

<sup>48</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 152.

<sup>49</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 204.

transfers our creaturely contingent existence into God's own experience, so that Jesus Christ secures the origin and end of creation in his own eternal being."<sup>50</sup> "Torrance adopts the language of *prothesis* to refer to divine election whereby the Father purposed or 'set-forth' the union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ."<sup>51</sup> In other words, humanity and all creation is purposeful but that purpose is only revealed and brought to fullness in Jesus. His resurrection re-orders humanity and all creation to the eternal life for which he created it. Therefore, from the very beginning, participation in the hypostatic union was the purpose of creation.<sup>52</sup> In Calvin's words, all creation – heaven and earth – constitutes the "*theatrum gloriae Dei*."<sup>53</sup> Torrance does theology *a posteriori*, but in light of the revelation of God's eternal love in Christ he is willing to hesitantly and reverently say, "in his eternal purpose the immeasurable Love of God overflowing freely beyond himself which brought the creation into existence would have become incarnate within the creation even if we and our world were not in need of redeeming grace."<sup>54</sup> In conclusion, in Jesus Christ the original purpose of creation is revealed, affirmed and fulfilled.

### C) The Resurrection Redeems Humanity from Sin and Death

The resurrection of Jesus is from both death and judgment, both disorder and corruption. He creates in and through his own person both a new world and a new order of things. In Jesus, human nature remains human nature but is united to God and made sinless and incorruptible. In the atoning life of Christ God entered into and redeemed not just the created world but the world as we know

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<sup>50</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 158.

<sup>51</sup> Myk Habets, "There Is No God behind the Back of Jesus Christ: Christologically Conditioned Election," in *Evangelical Calvinism: Essays Resourcing the Continuing Reformation of the Church*, ed. Myk Habets and Bobby Grow (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 175.

<sup>52</sup> Myk Habets, "On Getting First Things First: Assessing Claims for the Primacy of Christ," *NBF*, no. 90 (2009): 343–64.

<sup>53</sup> Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.6.2; 1.14.20; 2.6.1; 3.9.2; cited in Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 213; see also Susan Schreiner, *The Theatre of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1991), 97–111. Lat, *theatrum gloriae Dei*, 'the theatre of God's glory'.

<sup>54</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 210; this is the thesis of John Duns Scotus, see James B. Torrance and Roland C. Walls, *John Duns Scotus Doctor of the Church* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1992).

it "conditioned and determined by sin and guilt."<sup>55</sup> Jesus was not resurrected from within an ideal non-real created order, but this one, with a fallen human nature. Torrance refuses to separate the limitations of this space-time from our fallen existence.

St Paul declares our redemption from both sin and death:

When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'

'Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?'

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>56</sup>

In Torrance's words, redemption "is the deliverance of humanity out of all darkness, death and destruction, into light, life and being."<sup>57</sup> It is thus the redemption of both the fabric of creation itself, as well as its relation to God: "the resurrection issues in a new creation beyond the corruptible processes of this world, on the other side of decay and death, and on the other side of judgment."<sup>58</sup> St Paul, such as in Romans and First Corinthians, links the resurrection to both sin and death, to both a new order of things and a new world. "We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."<sup>59</sup> Jesus rose both to incorruptibility since he 'will never die again,' and to communion with the Father since 'the life he lives, he lives to God.' Since the fallen order of sin and guilt conditions the world, intrinsic to the new creation is the new order of sinless freedom, that is, true freedom.

Furthermore, creation's redemption is linked with our adoption as *filium in filio*: "for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God."<sup>60</sup> As Colyer explains, "Torrance sees humanity as having a unique place within the universe, called and appointed to serve Christ 'as covenant-partner' in the on-going actualization of Christ's redemption and renewal within the

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<sup>55</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 245.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Cor 15:54-57.

<sup>57</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 234.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>59</sup> Rom 6:9-10.

<sup>60</sup> Rom 8:19. Lat, *filium in filio*, 'sons (and daughters) in the Son.'

universe.”<sup>61</sup> The following sub-sections on human redemption from sin and death cannot be separated from the redemption of all creation just described.

### **i) Humanity is Redeemed from Death**

Jesus’ resurrection means deliverance out of death and destruction, that is, out of literal annihilation / cessation of being and into life and being. The significance of this is often missed in preaching partly due to the syncretism of Greek philosophy and Christian thought. The false belief is, firstly, that the human spirit *by nature* exists eternally, and secondly, that this immortal soul is trapped in an intrinsically bad mortal body.<sup>62</sup> But of course “the New Testament does not teach a doctrine of individual resurrection *first*, in the sense that each person is to rise again because they are made of a body and an immortal soul, a resurrection (*anastasis*) because of some interior principle in their creation.”<sup>63</sup> Negatively, then, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus together reveal that the natural course of fallen human nature is entire human death, with no ‘part’ of the human surviving.

But positively, because of these marvellous events, human nature is given holistic eternal life. Therefore, with St Paul, death has lost its sting and our mortal body will put on immortality. This is only possible because Jesus went to the very place we needed redeeming from – death – since the unassumed is the unredeemed. Jesus gave up his sinless life “in order to invade the last stronghold of evil, in the finality and ultimateness of its incarceration of us in death, and as such that he broke out of it, shattering the bands of death.”<sup>64</sup> It overcomes our tendency to nothingness:

Mankind’s very being has become forfeit and it lapses away from them, crumbling down into the dust, so that their existence is a hovering between being and non-being, between being and rejected being. In that

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<sup>61</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 180.

<sup>62</sup> A common belief amongst Christians is that the human spirit or soul is the ‘part’ of a human that lives forever and presumably would do so without the resurrection of Jesus. This is often coupled with no belief that one will be given a new physical body at the final *parousia*. Putting those two together, the resurrection has no effect on making human existence eternal – the spirit or soul always was and the body still is not! Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection is reduced to a transaction whereby people’s eternal spirits are accepted into heaven.

<sup>63</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 208.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

condition they become the prey of the forces of evil and darkness, but redemption is the deliverance of humanity out of all darkness, death and destruction, into light, life and being.<sup>65</sup>

Just as Jesus' history is eternalised in the resurrection so too is all creation in him. As shown, while affirming history, Torrance's theology raises profound questions about our understanding of existence. Existence, as we know it, always ends in death and decay, and historical happenings are forgotten in the sands of time. However Jesus is not just fully human but *truly* human. "The resurrection is the establishing of the creature in a reality that does not crumble away into the dust or denigrate into nothingness or slip into the oblivion of the past."<sup>66</sup> Far from abdicating human reality, his resurrection makes human being more real – eternally real, devoid of all loss of being.

## ii) Humanity is Redeemed from Sin

Jesus came to assume and heal our human nature. As shown in Chapter One, *The Resurrection and the Person of Jesus*, the line of veiling from his birth to his death completed his assumption of our fallen human nature. The resurrection, on the other hand, is the final point on the line of complete healing of our human nature. The resurrection does not change and override human nature, rather "resurrection as redemption means the restoration of men and women *in all the fullness of their humanity*."<sup>67</sup> Jesus did this by living a holy life within our estranged state and thus removing the sting out of death since 'the sting of death is sin.' In Chapter Four, Section a) "The Mediator of Reconciliation," we return to *how* he overcame sin; here we see *that* he redeems us from it.

The resurrection is deliverance out of the darkness of sin into the light of God. God declared in the beginning that humanity was 'very good,' but without the resurrection that declaration would not have come to fulfilment. This re-affirmation of human nature is surprising and wonderful in light of the reality of human sin and death we see before us every day. Our fallen human nature is assumed by Jesus and sanctified in himself. Because God judges sin in the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 234.

crucifixion, sin is not denied; because God raises Jesus out of that judgement – and us in him – sin does not have the final word. Jesus' resurrection is thus "the making good of God's word in creation that the creature is good, in face of all the sin and evil that have contradicted it."<sup>68</sup>

As said, the time that needed to be redeemed was not mere created time but fallen time, time that is under the bondage of the *law*. Historical events do not take place on neutral ground, so to speak, but as part of an existence held in captivity to the "*nomistic* form of human existence."<sup>69</sup> Torrance speaks of the present time as refracted time, or *nomistic* time, but by this he does not mean that time is a substance with those predicates. He means that the current operation of the universe, i.e. 'nomistic time,' with the existence of sin and evil within it, is broken. Torrance also uses the word 'age' or 'aeon' which perhaps better describes what he means by 'nomistic time.' "The New Testament speaks of the *schema* of this present *aeon* or age as *nomos*, law, for the kind of time we have in our fallen existence is refracted time, time that has broken loose from God, as it were."<sup>70</sup> . Jesus came into a time when God's kingdom did not reign; he had to enter into *that* order to work out freedom for it. In the incarnation he does so and renews it:

It was in his resurrection that he broke through the *nomistic* form of our existence, rising again no longer in the form of a servant under the law, but in the form of the life-giving new man, entirely and fully human, yet man no longer confined to the kind of limits that are imposed on us in our fallen world by the time-form of law or by the *nomistic* form of time.<sup>71</sup>

In conclusion, Jesus' resurrection is victory over sin and death for humanity and all creation. The resurrection of the incarnate Son of God, as one with us and one with the Father, determines us to a new, incorruptible, sinless reality. It means that *in* the Son we have eternal life:

The resurrection recapitulates and transcends the original creation of man, making good the deficiency in the unstable, fleeting nature of his

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 253. "Nomistic" derives from the Greek *nomos* meaning "law". Torrance is taking up the Pauline motif of the Law as not only good and holy, but also that which, through sin, puts us into bondage. See Galatians 1:4 in particular, and J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (Anchor Bible; NY: Doubleday, 1997).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

contingent being, and finalizing his reality and integrity as body of his soul and soul of his body through giving him participation in the eternal life of God embodied in the Incarnate Son.<sup>72</sup>

Humanity and creation is contingent; aside from the resurrection there is absolutely no reason to suppose that humanity, or this universe at all, should exist eternally. Against material reductionism, against religions of escape from material existence like Buddhism and Hinduism,<sup>73</sup> against versions of Christianity which deny the bodily resurrection and thus see redemption as *from* creation rather than *of* creation, against Greek philosophy in which the body is a temporary casing for a trapped human soul: the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead affirms human nature as the creation of God, which he loves more than he loves himself and will never let go.<sup>74</sup> In the resurrection we have absolute assurance of this, absolute because it rests in Jesus Christ, in the very being of God himself.

This chapter has shown forth that because of who Jesus is, the eternal Son of God become human, his resurrection from the dead determines a new reality for humanity and all creation. By thinking *kataphysically*, the claims in Chapter One regarding Jesus remaining who he always was, the eternal Son of the Father, as he assumed *fallen* human nature, is seen to be the interpretive key to both the nature of the resurrection and its soteriological significance. Since Jesus took to himself not some generic creatureliness but humanity in its fallen and broken state his resurrection has to do with this very world. Since he is the creator who has life in himself, his life as a creature was not merely a sharing in its tendency to nothingness in sin and death but was redemptive. By the Spirit he lived a fully human life in unbroken fellowship with the Father, died a fully human death and was resurrected to newness of life, therefore human sin and separation from God has been overcome and death has lost its sting. In Jesus, all creation has been redeemed from its loss of being and has been given a new reality of eternal life.

Chapter Three, *Ascension and Reconciliation*, affirms that Jesus remained fully

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, "The Soul and Person in Theological Perspective," in *Religion, Reason and the Self: Essays in Honour of Hywel D. Lewis*, ed. Stewart R. Sutherland and T. A. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), 106; cited in Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 176.

<sup>73</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 240.

<sup>74</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 215.

human in the ascension. Jesus' resurrected humanity is not a temporary state that ended with the ascension, rather it is the final and lasting reality for all humanity. His ascension takes that new humanity into the life of God. Therefore his present state – a fully human life free from sin and death and completely transparent to the presence of God – is the new reality that we will participate in with his second advent. For now, we have communion with God by the Spirit as we await this final hope.

## Chapter 3

### The Ascension and Reconciliation

In this chapter we continue to see that the resurrection is determinative of reality by studying a distinct but inseparable event in relation to the resurrection: Jesus' ascension. As David Fergusson has pointed out, Torrance devotes more time to the ascension than do most other modern theologians.<sup>1</sup> One reason is that Torrance is thoroughly christocentric and thus does not describe our reconciliation to God apart from the present life of Jesus. Our '*theosis*' or communion with God is only through being united to Christ.

Reconciliation is the central aspect of Torrance's theology of atonement and the primary purpose of the incarnation itself. *Cur Deus homo?*<sup>2</sup> so that humanity could be united to God.<sup>3</sup> It is "the resurrection of our human nature in Christ into communion with the life of God that is the end goal of atonement."<sup>4</sup> Jesus' ascension takes his renewed humanity into the life of God such that he determines a new reality for creation and even for heaven itself. To make us participant now in that reality, the Father sent forth the Holy Spirit through Jesus.

The first section of this chapter describes the ascension as Jesus' human life being taken into the life of God. To do this, Torrance's concept of 'place' and the *extra Calvinisticum* is discussed. The second section describes our participation in the life of God through being united to the ascended Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Fergusson, "The Ascension of Christ," 93. He points out some interesting reasons as to its modern neglect.

<sup>2</sup> As Anselm asked in his famous book of that title.

<sup>3</sup> Torrance deals with the whole concept of reconciliation in Chapter 5, "Atonement as Reconciliation", page 137-170, of *Atonement*. Here we limit ourselves to reconciliation with respect to the resurrection.

<sup>4</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 228.

## A) The Ascension takes Jesus' Humanity into the Life of God

In the previous chapter Jesus' bodily resurrection was definitively affirmed.

Therefore, as Robert Jenson has asked, "what happened to the body?"<sup>5</sup>

Let us look at the biblical account by way of introduction. After his resurrection, Jesus sends his disciples out into the world and promises to send his Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Luke continues:

When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'<sup>7</sup>

One could picture this in a crass literal way of Jesus travelling very high up into the air until the disciples could not see him anymore. There are clear theological problems with this. Spatial imagery is necessary for that is the only language we have available, but as with the doctrine of God we must let God's reality redefine the meaning of our speech about him.<sup>8</sup> Even exegetically this is problematic.

Luke does not say that Jesus went up into the clouds (dense water vapour) but rather: a cloud (God's divine presence) 'took him out of their sight,' he 'has been taken from you into heaven' and 'you saw him go into heaven.' Later we see that Jesus' ascension transforms 'heaven' by taking human nature into it.

At the same time, Jesus did not become immaterial. The angel described Jesus' imminent return as 'this same Jesus.' Jesus did not become immaterial in the

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<sup>5</sup> Fergusson, "The Ascension of Christ," 94.

<sup>6</sup> The link between the ascension and Pentecost is made clear in Chapter Five, Section a), ii) "The Ascension, Pentecost, and the Second Advent."

<sup>7</sup> Acts 1:10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Torrance gives a brief analysis of the New Testament terminology: "Four main verbs are employed in the New Testament to speak of the ascension of Christ: *anabainein*, to go up or ascend; *kathizein*, to sit down; *analambanein*, to take up; *hupsoun*, to exalt." *Atonement*, 265. Regarding *anabainein*, Torrance explains that it is used in a religious context of a king's enthronement, entering into a holy place and offering a sacrifice, and as such here "*ascension* is essentially concerned with the royal priesthood of the crucified, risen and ascended Christ, a priesthood exercised from the right hand of divine power." *Ibid.*, 265. Torrance points out that the final two terms are used of Jesus' crucifixion, that is, his 'lifting up' on the cross. As such, they qualify the other meanings as including the cross: "his exaltation to glory but *through the cross*." *Ibid.*, 290.

ascension, and he will not return immaterially but somatically.<sup>9</sup> The ascension is the obverse of his incarnation, and thus the Son of God remains fully human while returning to his throne of glory. As the previous chapter made clear, if Jesus did not remain fully human the unity of creation and redemption is destroyed.

Ascend and descend terminology – while necessarily spatial, for we are creatures whose language originates in space and time – works against the intended meaning if interpreted spatially. In the ascension Jesus' body did not travel to a 'higher' spatial point within the universe, nor did he become non-physical. This clearly leads to Jenson's question, 'what happened to the body?' Torrance's Reformed, christocentric and scientifically nuanced answer is rather different to these two spatial interpretations and to the Lutheran response to the question.

Articulating precisely what happened in the ascension is impossible, but attempting to do so helps to clarify who Jesus is and what he did for us. As Torrance himself says, "the way we interpret the ascended and advent *humanity* of Christ and its cosmic and eschatological import for human and physical existence in space and time, will determine more precisely how we regard the resurrection of Jesus in body."<sup>10</sup> It has to do with the last moment of Jesus' presence in the flesh and thus is significant for our understanding of his everlasting state, and what our hope is as those sharing in his life. Therefore we continue to think *kataphysically*; the ascension is consistent with its subject, the divine Son who united human nature to himself for our sake. Reference to human 'place' and God's 'place' is to distinguish but not separate Jesus' human nature and divine nature. This means examining the so-called *extra Calvinisticum* – which sheds light back toward the incarnation. A dynamic and soteriological understanding of human nature continues to be used, here with the categories of fallen and redeemed 'place,' just as the previous chapter did so with respect to old and new 'time.' In consistency with the subject at hand, the mystery of Christ and its unresolvable metaphysical issues will be apparent in his ascension.

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<sup>9</sup> Gk, *sōma*, 'body.'

<sup>10</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 25.

### i) Torrance's Concept of Place

Torrance's argument against kenosis has already been seen from a christological perspective: Jesus did not empty anything out of himself, but rather veiled from us the divine person that he never ceased to be. We now return to this from the metaphysical angle of the relation of God to space and time.<sup>11</sup>

What happened in the resurrection and ascension is better understood by taking a brief look at the metaphysics of the incarnation, for the ascension is the continuation of that very same incarnate life. In conformity with Chalcedon's two natures affirmation, the Reformed Torrance states that the eternal Son entered creation "not merely creator but as himself made creature, within the creaturely limits of space and time, and yet did not cease to be what he was eternally in himself, the creator Word in whom and through whom all things consist and by whom all things continue to have their being."<sup>12</sup>

Torrance insists on a whole and complete incarnation of the Son of God. Human nature is united to divine nature in the entire person of the Son, and no part of the Son is 'left behind.' He also insists that the Son remained at the throne of the God, ruling over the entire universe. With a correct understanding of the relation of God to the universe these two statements do not contradict.

Torrance defines place "in terms of that which occupies it."<sup>13</sup> 'Place' has a different meaning depending on the nature and activity of the subject it is used in reference to, namely creator or creature. Thus in the incarnation there is an interesting situation with respect to place since divine and human natures are united in one person. Every act of Jesus must be thought of in terms of both types of 'place' since at every moment the two natures and activities of Jesus are distinct but not separate. Secondly, place and time are intrinsically purposeful in the sense of the type of activity that can happen 'within' them. Space-time is for inanimate as well as creaturely and human relations.

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<sup>11</sup> This focus of this thesis does not allow space to thoroughly discuss Torrance's understanding of space and time, nor his rejection of "dualism" between God and this world. For two important works on these issues, see Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*; and Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>12</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 282.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

With respect to human 'place' i.e. space-time, a modern scientific understanding is helpful. One cannot travel anywhere to get out of 'space.' Space is a function of all bodies and events, therefore wherever one travels to, there 'space' is.<sup>14</sup> The 'boundary' of space is simply a plane made up of the furthest points that constitutive elements of the universe have travelled. As such, the body of Jesus was not like a vessel that contained the Son of God, but rather Jesus' physical body was the place where the Son of God acted as a personal human agent within creation.

In comparison, God's place "can only be defined by the communion of the persons in the divine life – that is why we speak of the '*perichoresis*' (from *chora* meaning space or room) or mutual indwelling of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the triunity of God."<sup>15</sup> God is active in this world, but by the interaction of God's place and time and our place and time, and not by his divine nature becoming human nature, for even in the incarnation this does not happen.

Given the above two definitions of place, it is evident that God does not exist spatially outside of the furthest points of space. That would be a meaningless statement since God's presence would then constitute another point that would make up space and thus be part of it. Instead, in his transcendent relation to creation God is just as 'near' or 'far' from every point. As Torrance puts it, "God utterly transcends the boundaries of space and time, and therefore because he is beyond them he is also everywhere, for the limits of space and time which God transcends are all around us. Hence from this aspect the absence or presence of God cannot be spoken of in categories of space and time."<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, God does not have a spatial relation to space but a creative one.<sup>17</sup> Simply put, heaven is not a place with a space-time coordinate. When we speak of God's omnipresence we should not even take this to mean that God is physically everywhere, but rather that all things are present to God.

This means that God the Son did not have to leave anywhere to 'come' to earth. Instead, in the incarnation, he became present within it as a personal human

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 285; and Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 130.

<sup>15</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 290; see also Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 131; and Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 253.

<sup>16</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 287.

<sup>17</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 3.

agent, as opposed to being only its transcendent creator and sustainer. The *extra Calvinisticum* – the affirmation that “without separating from the Father’s bosom, the Word dwelt in the bosom of the holy virgin”<sup>18</sup> – is coherent because in the incarnation there is no spatial ‘where’ for any part of the Son to be ‘left behind.’ The Lutherans – due to their understanding of space as a container rather than as a function of events – took Calvin “to mean that in the Incarnation something of the Son or Word of God was left *outside, extra* – which they dubbed ‘the Calvinist extra.’”<sup>19</sup>

The Son, incarnate as the man Jesus Christ in space and time, remained fully present with the Father and Spirit, and present to all things. As difficult as this is to conceive, it is coherent since God’s place, heaven, is not a spatial location but a function of God’s being and activity – the place in which God is God and does as God does. When, by the Spirit, God the Father sent the Son, he most certainly did not send the Son spatially *away* from himself. As well as the categorical error with respect to ‘space,’ this is ontologically impossible since they are eternally in *perichoretic* communion: the divine persons share in the one being and activity of the others. Therefore in the incarnation the Triune God continued to do all that the Triune God ever has done before creation and since creation, but now *as well as this* the Triune God is personally present, in the Son, as the human Jesus. Nothing was lost in God the Son’s relation to the rest of the universe, *rather the humanity of the incarnate Son per se did not gain these functions.*

## ii) In the Ascension Renewed Human Place is Taken into God’s Place

Consistent with the Chalcedonian ‘without change’ discussed in Chapter One, “in his ascension we have to think of Christ as ascending above all space and time without ceasing to be man or without any diminishment of his physical historical existence.”<sup>20</sup> This is the obverse of the incarnation in which he became fully human without ceasing to be fully God. As Fergusson has also recognised, “this twinning of eternal transcendence and particular location becomes especially

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<sup>18</sup> St John of Damascus, *Ekdos*, 3, 7. Cited in Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/2*, 169. See also Heidelberg Catechism Question 48.

<sup>19</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 287.

difficult with respect to thinking of the ascended Christ. It is the converse of the problem of the incarnation.”<sup>21</sup>

This returns us to the metaphysical problem related to the christological formulation we postulated in Chapter One regarding the relation of Jesus’ human and divine natures. If in the ascension Jesus remains fully human how can he ascend to fill all things? How can this be formulated without expanding his humanity beyond what could reasonably be considered fully human?

Torrance rejects the Lutheran principle *finitum capax infiniti*,<sup>22</sup> explaining:

Originally it had been applied to the humanity of Christ but his receptive capacity (*capacitas*) was held to be extended as His human nature was interpenetrated by divine majesty and power . . . the human nature which the Son of God assumed is our humanity, that in which we share, who can stop short of applying divine attributes to the humanity of Christ and not apply them to humanity in general?<sup>23</sup>

In other words, Torrance reasons that whatever is applied to Jesus’ humanity, ultimately must be applied to our humanity. Regarding the ascension he thus rejects the Lutheran doctrine of the ubiquity of the body. He can do this because he rejects the receptacle notion of space. Within Torrance’s framework there is no contradiction between Jesus being singularly present in space and time while being ‘omnipresent’ or rather transcendently sustaining all things.

Therefore – though this speculation is perhaps unhelpful – in the new heaven and new earth are we to consider Jesus still being in one spatial location at any given time even as he fills all things? Given the discontinuity of the new creation with this one perhaps it is unwise to even attempt to consider such things; since the resurrection and ascension transforms both heaven and earth, it simply cannot be articulated. But for the sake of consistency, how do we insist on the singular spatial presence of Jesus’ humanity without creating a Nestorian separation of his natures? While not resolving the issue, Oberman helpfully reverses the question.

He points out that ‘*finitum non capax infiniti*’ is absent in Calvin, and that connected to the *extra Calvinisticum* is actually its “complete inversion: ‘*infinitum*

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<sup>21</sup> Fergusson, “The Ascension of Christ,” 99.

<sup>22</sup> Lat, *finitum*, ‘finite’; *capax*, ‘capable’; *infiniti*, ‘of the infinite’.

<sup>23</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 41.

*capax finiti.* The eternal Son, appointed as Mediator before the beginning of the world, has in the Incarnation not diluted or compromised the reality of our humanity.”<sup>24</sup> Methodologically, because Jesus’ humanity is *anhypostatic* we must first think of the incarnation from the side of God who willed to take the form of humanity, and not from the side of the human. This reversal shows, contrary to the Lutheran objection, that the *extra Calvinisticum* serves to uphold a full and complete incarnation.

The ascension does not abdicate humanity but establishes it in its place. Against medieval theologian Gabriel Biel, Calvin argues that Jesus’ resurrection gives us real hope not despite of the hypostatic union but because of it. Jesus’ nature is not some *tertium quid*; in the Son uniting humanity to himself, it remains fully human.<sup>25</sup> “The same real [that is, our own human] flesh he had not only retained in the Resurrection but also carried to heaven. This now is the hope for our own resurrection and our ascension to heaven, that Christ is risen and ascended.”<sup>26</sup> Jesus ascends to God’s place but still with his human place. He ascends with full and true human nature so that “our humanity in Christ is taken up into the full communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in life and love.”<sup>27</sup>

*God’s place is transformed to accommodate human place*

‘Taken up into the life of God’ is not meant spatially, as in travelling to a spatial place called heaven, but relationally, as in existing fully in the Triune life. Even so, how can Torrance affirm the *extra Calvinisticum* and also say that Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father? If the Son never left the Father, if he never ceased to be transcendent over all, if he remained fully God, then why did he need to *return* there? Firstly, the incarnation (from conception to ascension) was something new for God. At the end of it all, in the Son, human nature is eternally united to the very being of God. This change must be theologically accounted for, and the act of incarnation alone does not fully account for this. Accordingly, we are thinking dynamically and soteriologically about Jesus’

<sup>24</sup> Heiko Augustinus Oberman, “Extra Dimension in the Theology of Calvin,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21, no. 1 Ja (1970): 62.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 58–9.

<sup>26</sup> John Calvin, *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, ed. Peter Barth, Wilhelm Niesel, and Dora Scheuner, vol. 5 (Chr. Kaiser, 1936); cited in Oberman, “Extra Dimension in the Theology of Calvin,” 59.

<sup>27</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 292.

atoning incarnation.

Jesus achieved something in his life; he brought about a fundamentally new situation for humanity and God. Heaven itself and the relation between heaven and earth is transformed in the ascension. Torrance makes the fascinating claim that “the ascension of the incarnate, crucified and risen Jesus Christ inevitably transforms ‘heaven’: something quite new has been effected in the heavenlies which must alter its material content in our understanding of what heaven is.”<sup>28</sup> It is the place where Christ is in God. Heaven was never separate from earth – it always interpenetrated earth as a different sphere of reality – but in Jesus the two are personally united. Torrance seems to conceive of heaven, as of the ascension, as the ‘place’ of God and humanity. In Jesus’ resurrection and ascension a whole new kind of place comes into existence that is equally accommodating of both God’s activity and creaturely activity. The ascension of the resurrected incarnate Son determines not only a new reality for us but for God himself! In whatever way we inadequately attempt to conceive it, heaven is transformed to be “the dimension of divine and human fellowship which is based on the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus.”<sup>29</sup> That place is Jesus Christ, who fills all things, and in whom all things live and move and have their being. What will heaven be like? Jesus Christ.

Where is he? He is neither at a different point in our space-time, nor has he become immaterial. Torrance moves beyond his *Doktorvater* – vis-à-vis Christ’s Royal Priesthood<sup>30</sup> – but his theology of the ascension is indebted to Barth: “Jesus does not embark on a journey into outer space but enters a side of the created world that is for the moment inaccessible to us. From there, he lives and acts in the mode of God, so that the side of created reality that we call heaven is not forever closed to us.”<sup>31</sup> All we can say is that he exists as fully human in the new creation. Then we must be silent. Language breaks off. As with the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Ratzinger in Karl Rahner, ed., *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 1 (London: Burns and Oates, 1968), 110; cited in Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 130.

<sup>30</sup> See Torrance’s book of this title, Thomas F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993). We discussed this in Chapter One, “The Resurrection and the Person of Jesus,” and we unfold some of its eschatological and ecclesiological implications in Chapter Five, “Eschatology.”

<sup>31</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/1*, ed. T.F. Torrance and G.W. Bromiley, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 453–4; cited in Fergusson, “The Ascension of Christ,” 95.

resurrection which is a new event and thus not intelligible in the old reference frame that does not have it as its controlling centre, so too the ascended state of Jesus is intrinsically unintelligible to us now since we remain in this world whose newness is yet to be manifest in actuality, even though in Christ it is already new.

*Our human place must be renewed in actuality*

The above is why Jesus had to ascend *to* heaven: to fulfil the goal of the incarnation. It also reveals why he had to ascend *from* earth. Ultimately in Jesus there is no contradiction between God's place and our place, but given that this world is still fallen, Jesus had to ascend. As Torrance puts it, the ascension is the "exaltation of new man"<sup>32</sup> not the old man.

As in the incarnation, the key, with Torrance, is to think dynamically and soteriologically. In the previous chapter we had occasion to see that Jesus redeemed space-time itself. Just as in the incarnation Jesus did not enter into neutral space-time, so too he did not ascend from neutral space-time. In an important comment that draws together the previous chapter and the final one, Molnar states of Jesus, "he ascended from our fallen space which, along with our fallen time, he had healed in his resurrection from the dead."<sup>33</sup> This is why he had to ascend: for our sake.

Jesus did not have a neutral relation to human nature; he sanctified fallen human nature in his atoning life. The incarnation is the uniting of the Son of God to fallen human nature, whereas the ascension is the completion of that atoning union and thus its final state. Fully sanctified human nature is united in the Son to the being of God. This was not the situation until after Jesus' resurrection. In the resurrection Jesus redeemed creation in himself and made it incorruptible. But the disciples whom he ascended from still live in the old creation for which the new creation has not been actualised.<sup>34</sup>

The ascension is not the exaltation of humanity in its fallen state. Rather, the same fallen humanity, but now renewed, is taken into God's presence. Jesus' new humanity is inaccessible to us because this world needs to be renewed in

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<sup>32</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 292.

<sup>33</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 251.

<sup>34</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 286.

actuality before it can fully partake of the new life. The new man, Jesus, could not remain in the old creation lest he overwhelm it with his newness, and so disappeared from our sight. Jesus had to ascend so that he could leave this space-time and come back with the renewed space-time in which God is personally and intensively present to all things. As Torrance says, he had to leave “us in the mode of man’s presence to man and returning to us in the mode of God’s presence to man, and thus not leaving mankind bereft of himself.”<sup>35</sup>

By ‘the mode of God’s presence’ Torrance is not referring to non-physicality or non-humanity but rather the new creation in which God is personally present in all his glory. He concludes, “the ascension of Christ is thus an ascension to fill all things with himself, so that in a real sense he comes again in the ascension.”<sup>36</sup> It determines the present and future relation of Jesus to the Church. Fergusson has noted, “the ascension connects Christology with ecclesiology, the Christian life and eschatology.”<sup>37</sup> This is elaborated on in the following section and in Chapter Five, *Eschatology*; for now, suffice it to say that in the ascension Jesus holds back the new creation.

In conclusion to Section a), the key has been to think *kataphysically*, that is, in accordance with the nature of the subjects involved. The eternal divine nature and the contingent human nature of the incarnate Son are distinct, but not separate. In accordance with fallen humanity, Jesus’ human nature was understood dynamically and soteriologically. By affirming that even in the ascension Jesus remains fully human and by denying that Jesus’ humanity itself becomes ubiquitous, Torrance avoids subordinating Jesus’ human nature to his divine nature.<sup>38</sup> Colyer pointed out that distinguishing fallen and redeemed space-time helps us soteriologically understand the difficult question posed by Jenson concerning the whereabouts of the ascended Jesus. However, Fergusson is less convinced that this helps with the metaphysical problems.<sup>39</sup> He quotes Hans Frei, “metaphysical schemes, like myths, change but the Word of God abides. In his eternal rule Jesus Christ maintains that solidarity with us that he

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 291. See also John 14:18.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>37</sup> Fergusson, “The Ascension of Christ,” 95.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 100.

established in the days of his flesh. That is the point of this matter."<sup>40</sup> For Torrance, too, that is the point of the matter. While he offers helping insights both from modern science vis-à-vis the relational nature of space and time, and thinks consistently from his soteriological christology, he nonetheless maintains the mystery of Christ in the ascension. In Jesus, God somehow makes room for humanity in his life, and us in him.

## B) Our Communion with God

Humanity being reconciled to God is the goal of Jesus' incarnation. That goal is only fulfilled in the ascension for, as has been seen, in the ascension Jesus' humanity is taken into the life of God. Firstly, this section shows forth the importance of the resurrection in making eternally valid the union of natures in Jesus. This must be established first since reconciliation is not merely because of Jesus, but *in* Jesus. Secondly, our communion with God is a sharing in this union. The Son ascended to the right hand of the Father so that the Holy Spirit could be sent to unite us to him.

### i) The Resurrection Eternalises the Hypostatic Union

The resurrection of Jesus is the eternalising of the hypostatic union of God's place and our place. It is the hypostatic union of human nature and divine nature, in Jesus, holding fast even through death. In his death, "the forces of evil thrust against that union, seeking to break it wide open, to divide the human life of the Son on earth from the life of the Father above, to divide the divine and human natures in Christ himself."<sup>41</sup> The importance of the bodily resurrection is clear here. The union of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ had to hold firm at the crucial point. In the resurrection, Jesus remained *homoousios* with us, and *homoousios* with the Father. If he were not resurrected, it would mean one of two absurd possibilities. On one hand, it could mean that Jesus' divine nature had

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<sup>40</sup> Hans W. Frei, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 205–6; cited in Fergusson, "The Ascension of Christ," 106.

<sup>41</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 252.

been split off from his human nature: his humanity rotting in the ground and the eternal Son returning to the Father without his humanity. This would of course make a mockery of the incarnation. On the other hand, it could mean that the *homoousion* of the Father and Son had broken, the eternal Son being forever dead. This would be a mockery of the very nature of God: one being, three persons. As with Chapter One, the absurdity of these two possibilities makes clear that if Jesus was not raised from the dead he was never the incarnate Son of God at all.

If Jesus did not go through death and out the other side with his humanity intact, then there is no resurrection of the dead, no eternal life for humanity, and our humanity remains unhealed.<sup>42</sup> In Torrance's words:

The resurrection means that this union did not give way but held under the strain imposed not only by the forces that sought to divide Jesus from God, but the strain imposed through the infliction of the righteous judgment of the Father upon our rebellious humanity which Christ made his own – and it held under the strain imposed by both in the crucifixion: the hypostatic union survived the descent into hell and Christ arose still in unbroken fellowship with the Father.<sup>43</sup>

Because Jesus *is* the resurrection not just the one who was resurrected, we see reconciliation not just as a new state of affairs between God and the world but "reconciliation as the living and everlasting union of God and man in Christ."<sup>44</sup> Thus the incarnation is God's life and love coming amongst us as a human person, but the resurrection is vital since it means that God-with-us has survived death and judgment.<sup>45</sup> It means that the union of humanity and God is "final and complete, which nothing in heaven or earth can or will undo."<sup>46</sup>

In other words, the resurrection eternally secures the hypostatic union of Jesus' human nature to divine nature, and thus through sharing in Jesus we too are given eternal life. The resurrection makes eternally valid what is already true of Jesus in his incarnate life. It makes unity between humanity and God not just a once-off union for a period of 30 odd years in the life of the incarnate Son, but

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<sup>42</sup> 1 Cor 15.

<sup>43</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 216.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

eternally true for him, and thus all humanity in him. "Atonement without resurrection would not be reconciliation, and without reconciliation atonement would not have reached its proper end in union with the Father, in peace."<sup>47</sup> Without the resurrection the goal of atonement would not have been accomplished.

## **ii) We are Reconciled through being United to the Ascended Jesus by the Spirit**

This reconciliation is the goal of the incarnation; the point of God-with-us is us-with-God. Jesus' humiliation and exaltation carries within it, within him, our exaltation. His whole incarnate life, his humiliation or veiling (his birth into our humanity up to his death on the cross) and his exaltation or unveiling (his miraculous ministry up to his resurrection and ascension) unites us to God. As Torrance beautifully explains: "The coming of the Son of God into our lost and alienated being constitutes *Immanuel*, God with us, but if God is with us in Christ then in him we are with God. *We with God* is thus the obverse of *God with us*. The exaltation of man is the obverse of the humiliation of the Son of God."<sup>48</sup> In Luther's words, this is the Great Exchange, in Athanasius', "he became man in order to make us divine."<sup>49</sup> This of course is not meant in ontological terms: "man simply cannot become 'god.' But . . . the whole of human existence is, as it were, permeated by the Divine Presence."<sup>50</sup>

It is because Jesus remained fully God while becoming fully human in the incarnation, and then remained fully human in the ascension that he reconciles us to God. As Habets explains, "Christ alone is the true human. He alone is able to participate fully in the divine life for he remains divine (and human) in the hypostatic union. Through participating in the humanity of Jesus Christ the believer is drawn into the light and life of God – 'divinized' – without losing his or

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>49</sup> Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 54.

<sup>50</sup> Georges Florovsky, "'St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers' in Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View," in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 1 (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972); cited in Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 96.

her created humanity in the process.”<sup>51</sup>

Reconciliation is not merely *through* Jesus, as if it were some kind of external transaction where Jesus fades into the background and becomes redundant, but *in* him. Jesus “is the resurrected man who has life in himself, and has become in himself the source and fountain of eternal life for others.”<sup>52</sup> Creation is redeemed in the resurrection, and Jesus’ ascension assures that we will come to share in it too. “In the ascension the son of man, new man in Christ, is given to partake of the divine nature. . . . We are with Jesus beside God, or we are gathered up in him and included in his own presence before the Father.”<sup>53</sup> In the Spirit, the throne of God is present to us here and now. Jesus sends us his Spirit “from the throne of God, so that through the Spirit we may already have communion in the consummated reality which will be fully actualised in us in the resurrection and redemption of the body.”<sup>54</sup> Thus the Spirit of God actualises this new creation in believers and creates a place, the Church, where people can meet the Father through Jesus in the Spirit.

God is not only present in his transcendent providence, but now also personally in the Holy Spirit uniting people to God’s heavenly reality so that our life is hidden with Christ in God at the right hand of the Father.<sup>55</sup> In Chapter Five, *Eschatology*, we understand this as Christ’s *abiding parousia* in the Holy Spirit. It is the incarnate Son filling all things – even though this is yet to be fully manifest. Being ‘transcendent over all things’ is distinct from ‘filling all things.’ It is the difference between God’s transcendent relation to creation and his personal relation in Christ and the Spirit. The ascension and second advent fulfil the goal of the incarnation, which is God being personally present as Lord in all things. As St Paul declares at the end of the Philippians hymn discussed in Chapter One, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,”<sup>56</sup> that is, every square inch of the universe will acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus and total shalom will be brought to all things. This has clear pastoral implications. Each person, moment by

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<sup>51</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 133–4; see also Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 217.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 294–5.

<sup>55</sup> See Col 3 and Heb 4 in particular.

<sup>56</sup> Philippians 2:10.

moment, in the humble portion of space-time they have been allocated can use those events to submit to and declare the Lordship of Jesus. This proclaims to the rest of humanity, indeed to all creation, that Jesus is Lord of all.

The following unpacks and clarifies what is and is not meant by 'divinization,' or '*theosis*.' Firstly, our communion with God through union with Jesus is of an ontologically different kind to that of Jesus' union with God. Secondly, like Jesus our human nature remains fully human when it is brought into communion with God. Finally, by being brought into union with Jesus' humanity, we become truly human.

Torrance maintains a distinction between the unity that the incarnate Son has with the Father, and what we have. Jesus has two unions. Torrance defines these unions, as well as our union with God, as follows:

(a) the *consubstantial communion* between Father and Son in the Holy Spirit who is love, the love that God is; (b) the *hypostatic union* between the divine and human natures in Christ which takes place through the operation of the Spirit who is the love of God; and (c) the *communion* or *koinōnia* of the Spirit who is mediated to us from the Father through the Son and who is the love of God poured out into our hearts.<sup>57</sup>

There is only one divine nature in the Trinity, subsisting in three persons.

Therefore the human nature of Jesus is not simply united to the Son, but to the divine nature of the Father, Son and Spirit, in the person of the Son. The *person* of the incarnate Son is in essential union or 'consubstantial communion' with the persons of the Father and the Holy Spirit, but the *human nature* of the incarnate Son is in hypostatic union with the divine nature, the Godhead, in the Son.

We are brought into communion with God in the person of the Son. To maintain the ontological distinction between Jesus' union with God and our union with God, Torrance describes our union with God as the 'communion' of the Spirit. Unlike us, Jesus' human nature is *anhypostatic*: he has no human nature independent of his existence as the incarnate Son of God. All other human persons each have their own independent personhood, but are brought into fellowship with the Father through union with the Son in the communion of the Spirit. The Son is divine for he is the eternal Son of the Father in the Spirit.

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<sup>57</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 231.

Therefore we cannot become divine, for we are not the eternal Son, but created beings. However, in the Spirit we are united with the Son and are therefore sons and daughters in the Son – *filium in filio*. “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 and thus partake of God.”<sup>58</sup> As Habets clarifies, “*theosis* in the pro-Nicene theologians represents communion through Jesus Christ in the Spirit.”<sup>59</sup>

We can receive the Spirit into our humanity because, and only because, Jesus received the Spirit into his humanity. “Our receiving of the Spirit is objectively grounded in and derives from Christ who as the incarnate Son was anointed by the Spirit without measure, not for his own sake (for he was eternally one in being with the Spirit in God) but for our sakes, and who then mediates the Spirit to us through himself.”<sup>60</sup> The Father sends the Spirit through Jesus at Pentecost. This economic relation between Jesus and the Spirit sheds light back on our discussion of the *filioque* in Chapter One. Ontologically, the economic relation derives from the eternal relation, but, epistemologically, we only know that relation because of this economic one.<sup>61</sup>

Through communion with God in the Spirit, *theosis*, we remain fully human and become truly human. Jesus ascended as a human to the glory that was the Son’s before the world began. This means that we do not enter God’s glory by becoming immaterial and ‘pure spirit.’ Torrance insists that Jesus did not change our human nature, rather he brought it into communion with God. This stems from his Chalcedonian christology in which the two natures were united without confusion or change. We remain fully human, just as Jesus did in the incarnation and resurrection. Torrance explains, “the resurrection of our human nature in [Jesus] implies a reconciliation and a oneness with God which is not identity.”<sup>62</sup>

However, he continues, “yet 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

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<sup>58</sup> Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 139.

<sup>59</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 138.

<sup>60</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 148.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>62</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 213.

love of God embodied in him.”<sup>63</sup> The communion of the Spirit brings us into unity with the whole Christ, that is to say, his human nature and divine nature. In the final chapter we draw out this statement in eschatological terms. Torrance continues once more, “in him the Godhead dwells bodily and it is out of his incarnate fullness that we receive but by grace.”<sup>64</sup> We partake of Jesus’ incarnate fullness. We share in the sanctification of his human nature, including bodily resurrection. It is Jesus’ perfected humanity that we share in but since it is united to his divine nature we are also “made to partake of the very love which God himself is, and are thus ‘partakers of the divine nature.’”<sup>65</sup>

Humanity does not become divine, but in a very real sense it participates in the divine life. Through the historical and ascended Jesus, in whose eternal humanity we share, “we really meet with God in his transcendent glory and majesty – we really are gathered up in to the communion of the Son with the Father and the Father with the Son, and really taken up through the Spirit to share in the divine life and love that have overflowed to us in Jesus Christ.”<sup>66</sup> We really participate in the Son’s eternal relation with the Father. We personally receive the Spirit, that is, the love that the Father eternally has for the Son, and return that love to the Father; we shall fully know, even as we are fully known. Therefore while we do not become ontologically divine – that is reserved for the one divine being in three persons – relationally and by grace we *do* share the divine relations of the Son. This is the wonderful *theosis* that the Church Fathers spoke about and which brings such joy when realised; moreover, it is only grasped as we recognise that union with God is *in* the Son, and not merely because of him.

This chapter has been a further reflection on the person of Jesus, but now with respect to his ascension. The aspects of the Chalcedonian definition at the fore have been that Jesus’ divine nature is united to human nature without separation of, or change to, either nature. Affirming the so-called *extra Calvinisticum* – by recognising that the meaning of ‘place’ is dependent on the nature of the subject occupying it – enabled us to uphold both ‘without separation’ and ‘without

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 293.

change.’ The christological implication has been that in the incarnation Jesus remained the divine person he always was, and in the ascension he remained the fully human person he has become. The soteriological significance is that when we are united to the Son by the Spirit we remain what we are – fully human – as we share in the life of the Father. As such, the new reality determined by Christ’s resurrected and ascended life affirms his creation as ‘very good.’ Rather than doing away with his fallen creation, in his Son God both sanctifies it and accommodates heaven to receive it. The final and everlasting reality is a new heaven and new earth, both in their fullness and totally present to each other.

The next chapter, *The Mediator*, seeks to elucidate how this reconciliation between God and creation has been established. Now that we have ascertained the conceptual basis of how Jesus’ divine and human natures can remain distinct without separation, its soteriological import can be explained. This chapter looked at the connection between Jesus’ resurrection and his ascension; the following does so between his resurrection and his life and crucifixion. In short, the resurrected and ascended Christ includes and reconciles all humanity and creation to God because in his whole incarnate life he is our representative and our substitute.

## Chapter 4

### The Mediator

Having looked at reconciliation as the goal of the incarnation in the previous chapter, we now probe into the ‘how’ of atonement. On one hand, this chapter does not address the thesis as directly as the previous three; they considered the person of Jesus, his resurrection, and his ascension. On the other, it is vital to the integrity of the thesis for it soteriologically carries forward the christological claims of the first chapter, thus showing forth their coherency. Jesus is, in himself, the mediator between humanity and God who reconciles us to God in his whole atoning life. This chapter also establishes the claim of Chapter Two that Jesus’ resurrection determines a new order free from sin and death, and of Chapter Three that our humanity is truly reconciled to God in the person of the Son. This is the content of the first section, “The Mediation of Reconciliation,” and it does this by returning to the resurrection but in its connection with Jesus’ crucifixion.<sup>1</sup> The second section, “The Mediation of Revelation,” also builds on the previous chapters. It explains that in the incarnation, the Word of God has been made flesh, and that in his ascension and sending of the Spirit, that Word is imparted to us. In Jesus, God’s knowledge of himself is both made known to humanity and received by humanity.

#### A) The Mediation of Reconciliation

Our reconciliation occurs in Jesus and thus has a two-way movement: God-ward and human-ward. This two-way movement in the one person is what Heron earlier indicated overcomes the Nestorian tendency. Torrance does not just nominally acknowledge that Jesus’ two distinct natures are not separate. As discussed in Chapter One, Section c) “The Hypostatic Union,” his christology *per*

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<sup>1</sup> Torrance addresses justification extensively in Chapter 4, “Atonement in the Teaching of St Paul: Atonement as Justification,” *Atonement*, 97–119. Here we simply focus on justification with respect to the resurrection.

*se* upholds this by ascribing the two natures a *unio mediata*, for by the *communicatio idiomatum* the properties of each nature are ascribed to the one person. This formulation plays out in his soteriology and thus gives credence to his counter of the tendency to, in effect, separate Jesus into two persons. Firstly we examine the human-ward direction: the person being crucified and resurrected is God himself acting for us. Secondly we introduce the two aspects of the God-ward direction, Jesus as passive and active, which correspond to his *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* human nature, respectively. We then explore these two aspects. Finally, we clarify that far from pushing us to the side, Jesus' vicarious humanity fully includes us such that by his Spirit we actually share in his holy life.

### **i) God and Jesus**

Firstly, precision is required when speaking of what 'God' is doing in the resurrection. Jesus is God *in se*, and is the Son of God *in alium*. Jesus is only God as the Son. There is only one act of God, the co-activity of the Holy Trinity. But in that one act, particularly in Jesus' death and resurrection, the Father, Son and Spirit are doing rather different things.

As our discussion on 'place' made clear, God the Father is not in some distant place called heaven while Jesus is on the cross. Rather there is God the Son, Jesus, on the cross, God the Father present and suffering too as he gives up his Son to death, and God the Holy Spirit also suffering for it is by the Spirit that Jesus offers up his life.<sup>2</sup> Torrance expounds the implications of God's *perichoretic* relations for the atoning co-activity of the Holy Trinity in his wonderful final chapter of *The Mediation of Christ*. He writes, "the coinherent relation between the Spirit and Son implies that the Holy Spirit was afflicted with the affliction of Christ, and suffered with him like the Father in his atoning sacrifice."<sup>3</sup> As Torrance poignantly pronounces:

Put God in heaven and Jesus on the cross allowed to die, and you destroy your faith, for you cannot believe in a God who allowed that. . . . But (and this is the gospel) put God on the cross and you alter the whole situation,

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<sup>2</sup> Heb 9:14.

<sup>3</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 118; see also Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 222–3.

for then the cross is not the picture of God's unconcern or careless disregard. Rather it is the picture of God's utmost concern, nay, a picture of his actual intervention in the affairs of men.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus being resurrected is God the incarnate Son being resurrected and therefore we must say, 'Jesus *is* God reconciling us to himself' and not only, 'God reconciles Jesus to himself and thus us to himself in Jesus.' By itself, without Trinitarian qualification, the latter ontologically separates Jesus and God.

On the other hand, we cannot say 'God died' *simpliciter*. In Jesus' death, the divine nature itself does not die. Rather, God the incarnate Son died a human death whilst remaining in communion with the Father. Further, in stating, 'God raised Jesus from the dead,' it is meant, 'God the Father raised God the incarnate Son by God the Spirit.' Of course we at times, with the New Testament, do say the former.<sup>5</sup> Since the Father is the Almighty creator and the Son takes the form of a creature, Jesus rightly calls him 'God' – even though the Father is 'God the Father' *in alium* and equally 'God' *in se* with the Son and Spirit.

Jesus' death and resurrection is not just God the Father acting upon Jesus for us, it is also God the incarnate Son acting for us. Jesus does not just fulfil the covenant from the side of humanity, but from the side of God. Jesus, as the Son of God and rightful judge who speaks on the Father's behalf, condemns sin in the flesh, i.e. in the fallen human nature he assumed. The incarnate Son, while dying on the cross is giving his verdict to humanity. Whilst the divine *person*, the incarnate Son, is judged, his divine *being per se* is not judged but judges. In the next part of this section we see that in the very same breath Jesus receives that verdict as the human who fully accepts responsibility for that sin on our behalf.

Secondly, Jesus is both passive and active in his God-ward movement. The two main words used in the New Testament for raising Jesus from the dead are *anistēmi* and *egeirō*. *Anistēmi* was used in common Greek to refer to someone being lifted up, even of coming back to life. *Egeirō*, is used more often in the New Testament and is also used to refer to lifting or raising up, but only in the New Testament is it used to describe rising from the dead. Torrance takes this

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<sup>4</sup> Torrance, cited in McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 75; cited in Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 12–13.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26. Interestingly though, the first two are used to show that Jesus is Lord and is seated at the right hand of the Father i.e. to affirm his divinity.

peculiar usage of *egeirō* to be emphasising the miraculous activity God. As such, *egeirō* stresses the passive aspect of Jesus in the resurrection: God the Father miraculously raises Jesus and us in him. Torrance observes:

*Egeirō* and *anistēmi* are also used in the New Testament in the middle voice, particularly *anistēmi*, that is, of Christ rising from the dead. Here the emphasis is on his own victorious activity, his standing up out of the dead, his rising above corruption and mortality, all seen within the orbit of his own sinless life and the regenerating effect of his holiness upon other human life.<sup>6</sup>

The New Testament writers are using these words with Old Testament nuances in their mind. God ‘raises up’ Jesus as his anointed one, as the final and perfect prophet, priest, and king.<sup>7</sup> This emphasises Jesus as the one who actively lives out his role. Another nuance is God raising up a seed out of a barren womb – which emphasises the passive nature of Jesus’ resurrection in accord with his miraculous birth.

There is a relationship, though not a one-to-one correspondence, between *anhypostasia* and passive resurrection and between *enhypostasia* and active resurrection. In the passive aspect of Jesus’ resurrection his humanity is still *enhypostasia* – in the Son – but it is his *full* humanity that is at the fore; he is one with us and takes our place. Thus the passive resurrection corresponds more to the *anhypostatic* humanity of Jesus: his utter reliance on God for life. The active aspect of resurrection derives more from his *enhypostatic* human nature: Jesus did not just have *full* human personhood but *true* human personhood *in the Son*. Jesus being fully human is seen in his assumption of our fallen human nature and thus him being our substitute, whereas his true humanity is seen in his sanctification of that human nature and thus him being our representative.

As a final clarification, even though the emphasis here is the God-ward direction, Jesus only accomplishes this because he is the fully divine Son of God. His active obedience and resurrection to the Father is in the Spirit. The passive aspect of the resurrection is done for him by the Father in the Spirit.

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<sup>6</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 206.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

## ii) Jesus is Passive in the Resurrection; He is Our Substitute

In accordance with Jesus' *anhypostatic* human personhood, the resurrection was something that was done *to* him. This is the 'passive' aspect of resurrection. It emphasises that Jesus was 'humanity' in general and his corresponding function as our 'substitute.' The primary biblical term we look at to understand this is 'justification.' Now these are not novel terms, but for this very reason they quickly lose their meaning. In particular they have a tendency to take on a life of their own outside the person of Jesus. Torrance will not allow this and reins them back into him.

Torrance explains, "the Greek word *dikaion* means to justify in both senses, to condemn and to vindicate."<sup>8</sup> The cross is the Father's condemnation of humanity's sin, whereas the resurrection is his vindication of Jesus and pardon of sin. The resurrection is God's acceptance of humanity's submission, in Jesus, to his verdict. In the crucifixion Jesus was righteous and continued on the path he began in the wilderness of refusing to use his power as the Son of God to vindicate himself. In response, "the resurrection is the Father's *amen* to Christ's high priestly self-offering in obedience and sacrifice for sin."<sup>9</sup> As indicated in Chapter One, Section a), iii) "The Resurrection Unveils the Identity that the Incarnate Son Veiled," this is the fulfilment of the promise when Jesus underwent the baptism of repentance on our behalf and the Father responded by declaring, "you are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."<sup>10</sup>

To be a real resurrection Jesus must have experienced a real human death. "It was real and complete death – our death into which he entered, and where he was so powerless that he had to be raised up by God himself."<sup>11</sup> Thus Jesus is passive in the resurrection. He utterly thrusts himself upon the Father's mercy and power to raise him from the dead. "Passive resurrection is the counterpart to that abject passion, and corresponds to the *anhypostatic* aspect of the incarnation and the dramatic aspect of redemption in which we are redeemed by

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 3.22.

<sup>11</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 213.

the sheer act of almighty God."<sup>12</sup> Just as the human Jesus would not exist if not for the Son of God's uniting the human nature to his divine nature by the Spirit, so too he would not have been raised from the dead if it were not for God the Father raising him by the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life.

As fully human, Jesus is our substitute. As has been seen in the veiling of Jesus' divinity beneath our sinful flesh, the passivity of Jesus in the resurrection was not just because he was physically dead but dead in his sin, that is, our sin that he made his own. He had to fully identify with us so that he would be resurrected out of our *fallen* state and could be our substitute for our sin and guilt. It is "the resurrection of the union forged between man and God in Jesus out of the damned and lost condition of humanity,"<sup>13</sup> which means that humanity in its fallen state of separation from God is justified. In Jesus' crucifixion he receives on himself God's judgment on our sin and guilt. The crucifixion is necessary for atonement not just chronologically (clearly there can be no resurrection without death first) but soteriologically. "Apart from God's *No*, in judgment and crucifixion, the resurrection would be only an empty show of wonderful power – it would not have any saving content to it, it would contain no forgiveness."<sup>14</sup>

This is the sense in which Jesus is our substitute and is precisely what is meant by the doctrine of 'satisfaction,' which in some schools of thought is regarded as God's need for retribution being exacted upon Jesus. Because of this, what Jesus did for us is so often reduced to an external legal transaction, where the wrath of God was 'satisfied.' Instead, "in the New Testament, satisfaction is the 'good pleasure' of God in the obedient self-offering of the incarnate Son, manifested and expressed in the raising of the Son from the dead."<sup>15</sup> It was Jesus' life of active obedience that the Father was satisfied with.

### **iii) Jesus is Active in the Resurrection; He is Our Representative**

It was by his fully and truly human life that Jesus was raised from the dead; he triumphed over death by his life of holy obedience. This is the active aspect of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 215.

resurrection: in our sinful human nature Jesus did not sin. Just as in his passive resurrection Jesus is our substitute, here in his active resurrection he is our representative. Vis-à-vis Jesus' sinlessness, Chapter One postulated that rather than stating, with Torrance, that Jesus 'could not sin,' his *homoousios* with the Father and with humanity is better upheld by stating that Jesus 'could have sinned' but because of who he is in relation to the Father and the Spirit 'did not sin.' The importance of that is now seen: Jesus' sinlessness is active and from within our *fallen* humanity.

The aspect of *enhypostasia* at the fore is Jesus' *true* humanity – indeed it is precisely because his humanity is 'in the person of the Son,' that it becomes truly human. He does not repeat the sin of Adam of turning his own way. Humanity twisted the image of God "into their opposite so that instead of expressing genuine filial relation to the heavenly Father they expressed what we are in our self-centred alienation from him and from one another."<sup>16</sup> Instead, the Son lives in perfect communion with the Father – he lives as humanity was intended, as the true image of God.

To Jesus, his crucifixion was neither an accident nor even a reluctant resignation to his Father's will but an active obedience to it. He stepped into the place where humanity resists God's will, *vicariously* "offering the *true human response* to God on our behalf and in our place, which we cannot make for ourselves."<sup>17</sup>

Accordingly, it is not just Jesus' death but his entire incarnate life that Torrance describes as his vicarious humanity. He became incarnate *for us*, living his filial relationship within our humanity so that we could become by grace what he is by nature.

When Torrance says that the Son rose from the dead, in the active tense, he is not speaking of agency (for that is the Father by the Spirit), he is not at all saying that Jesus physically raised himself from the dead. Rather, "the resurrection is the complete amen of the Son to the Father as of the Father to the Son."<sup>18</sup> Because of the incarnate Son's active obedience during his life and death, that is, his

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<sup>16</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 79; see also Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 109.

<sup>17</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 228.

holiness, death could not hold him down.<sup>19</sup> Jesus enabled the resurrection by his sinless life, for "there was no sin in him which allowed it [death] to subject him to corruption . . . by entering into our death as the holy one of God he robbed it of its sting."<sup>20</sup> In his life of active obedience, Jesus triumphed over sin by his holiness and thus disempowered death. Torrance does not view this in abstract moral terms of, say, 'doing no wrong,' but in relational terms. Jesus lived in obedient, prayerful, worshipful and loving dependence on his Father.<sup>21</sup> He was active in the resurrection by being the incarnate Son of God who had unbroken fellowship with the Father.

As has been seen in Chapter Two, eternal life is not to be conceived just in terms of physical incorruptibility but as life with God. Jesus' active obedience enables us to share in his abundant life: "by living in utter holiness as Son on earth he appropriated for and into our human nature the eternal life of God."<sup>22</sup> Jesus establishes and sustains the creator/creature distinction while uniting them in himself. "The resurrection reveals that what divides man from God is not the discrepancy between the finite and infinite, for God is not limited by human incapacities and weaknesses, although that discrepancy does become a real disjunction for us when it is infected by sin and guilt."<sup>23</sup> Yes, there is an essential *discrepancy* or difference between creator and creation, between the being of God and our human being, but that is not, in and of itself, a *disjunction* that separates us. The resurrection demonstrates that physical human nature can be united to the being of God, and that the physical is not essentially corruptible. It was sin that gave death its sting, and when one human person, the incarnate Son of God, lived a holy life and was crucified, there was no separation between him and God. Therefore, it is only *fallen* human nature that is separated from God, whereas *sanctified* human nature can and will, in Jesus, be resurrected from the dead and eternally partake of the divine nature.

To conclude these two sub-sections, even as we have tried to delineate 'active'

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<sup>19</sup> Acts 2:23-28.

<sup>20</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 216.

<sup>21</sup> See Section "The life and faithfulness of the Son towards the Father," in Torrance, *Incarnation*, 114-29.

<sup>22</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 217.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

and 'passive' in order to give full expression to what happened on that wonderful day, these two lines have come back together. This is not surprising since Jesus is one person and is completely consistent in all he is, and says, and does. His sinlessness, i.e. active obedience, is a matter of living in complete dependence on God and rejecting all self-righteousness. But that is passive obedience, for in so doing he takes our sin upon himself and submits to the verdict of the Father in the resurrection, thus undoing our disobedience.<sup>24</sup>

In Torrance's thought, soteriology is bound up with christology – forgiveness is not merely because of Jesus, but *in* Jesus. In particular, Jesus is the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity. Jesus is the mediator between God and humanity, and so he contains within his own person both the sinner and the one sinned against, both the justified and the justifier, both the forgiven and the forgiver. In the crucifixion God bears the cost of our sin, for "the resurrection reveals that God himself was at work directly in Jesus Christ, making himself responsible for our condition, and fulfilling it by bearing the cost of forgiveness in himself."<sup>25</sup> As such, far more than having God simply tolerate us, in the Spirit we are caught up in the mutual receiving and offering of love between the Father and the Son.

#### **iv) Humanity Shares in Jesus' True Humanity**

As seen above, while we do have our own personhood and humanity, it is de-personalised and de-humanised. Autonomous humanity is not true humanity. In Jesus we discover that true humanity is that which is in radical dependence and reliance on God; freedom in God not from God. "It is humanity 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."<sup>26</sup> He has redeemed us by meeting us in the place where we are turned in on ourselves, turning us out to see God and others. He goes out to meet us in the far country, in our de-humanised state, and carries

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<sup>24</sup> See Chiarot, "The Unassumed Is the Unhealed," 220, for a contrasting view which sees Jesus' simultaneous substitution and representation as christologically problematic. "The same will is exposed and unmasked in all its wickedness, and perfectly obedient and submissive."

<sup>25</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 222.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

us back with him into his Father's house by including us in his truly human life.<sup>27</sup> Jesus is the humanizing human, the personalizing person.<sup>28</sup> His work on our behalf makes us fully who we are, and not as a legal transaction where we are simply declared holy; by the Holy Spirit in us, enabling us to share in Jesus' truly human life, we are actually made holy.

It can seem at first glance that in Torrance's theology human agency is overridden by divine agency. This is a misreading of Torrance, and fails to grasp his *kataphysic* thinking in which everything must be understood in accordance with the dual nature of Jesus. In the first chapter we rejected a competitive relationship between Jesus' full humanity and full divinity, we do the same now with respect to our relation to God. "All through the incarnate life and activity of the Lord Jesus we are shown that 'all of grace' does not mean 'nothing of man,' but precisely the opposite: *all of grace means all of man*, for the fullness of grace creatively includes the fullness and completeness of our human response in the equation."<sup>29</sup> Just as Jesus' humanity was not abrogated but eternally upheld in the hypostatic union, so too is our humanity upheld in the communion of the Spirit in whom we are united to Christ. Jesus takes on our dehumanised humanity, humanises it in his life, and then imparts that truly human life to us by the Spirit. As Colyer puts it, "in the incarnation and the *ordo salutis*, the human person is never emptied of agency or overpowered by the divine agency. Rather the human person is upheld and intensified, personalized and humanized, in relation to God."<sup>30</sup>

Becoming 'humanised' and 'personalised' can seem somewhat abstract. In the first chapter we had to move beyond Torrance's affirmation of Jesus' fully human fallen nature as a theological principle and apply it to the details of Jesus' life in order to make it not just true but intelligible and helpful. Jesus lived an obedient life on our behalf, and even now our worship and prayer to God is but a participation in his. How, then, in practice, does the Spirit unite us to the

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<sup>27</sup> Luke 15:11-32, the Prodigal Son.

<sup>28</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 67-72.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>30</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 121. See the containing section "The Logic of Grace" for an insightful account of the relation between God and human agency in Torrance's theology.

incarnate life of Christ?<sup>31</sup>

*Theosis* involves our very human lives being made receptive and responsive to the love of the Father through being united to Christ by the Spirit. To Torrance, the Gospel *is* Jesus Christ – for, as said, he is “clothed with his message and robed in his promises.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore receiving the Gospel is not mental assent to a theory of atonement but receiving Jesus: the historical, incarnate Jesus. It is Jesus wrenching our fallen humanity back to obedience to the Father at every point. Therefore Jesus’ life, in the details, is salvific. These details are present to us since the risen and ascended Jesus is the incarnate, historical Jesus. As seen, the resurrection eternalises Jesus’ history, not letting it slip into the past. The incarnate Word of God is living and active; Jesus is present by his Spirit to impart his holy life to us.

A Christian practice that makes room for Jesus to do this in our lives is ‘imaginative prayer,’ such as described by Ignatius of Loyola. First of all, while Torrance did not make this move in his theological work *per se*, his theology is friendly to such an extension. Habets has postulated that he can be regarded as a mystical theologian *sui generis*.<sup>33</sup> While Torrance rejects both Latin and Eastern forms of mysticism,<sup>34</sup> the relationship between experience and knowledge in his theology has certain affinities with them. The inseparability of faith and godliness in his theology leads him to affirm spiritual practices.<sup>35</sup> Patristic ascetic theology stresses the need for “*askesis* or spiritual discipline in mind and life promoting a way of understanding of God that is worthy of him.”<sup>36</sup> For Torrance, the goal of this is true cognitive knowledge of God. His critical-realist approach considers experience and the ‘reconciliation of mind’ to be necessary if one is to

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<sup>31</sup> For a thesis which specifically addresses this question, see Thomas E. Moore, “Unexpected Joy: The Vicarious Humanity of Jesus Christ and the Life of Discipleship” (S.T.M., Pittsburg Theological Seminary, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.9.3; cited in Torrance, *Atonement*, 211.

<sup>33</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 125–44; see also Kurt Richardson, “Revelation, Scripture, and Mystical Apprehension of Divine Knowledge,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 136.

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter One, “Faith and Godliness” in Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 13–46; and Chapter Two, “The Christian Perspective” and Three, “The Trinitarian Mind” in Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 13–31, 73–111.

<sup>36</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 26; see also Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*, 136–7, which directed me to this previously glanced over passage.

be 'scientific.'<sup>37</sup> "Knowledge of an object is knowledge by a subject,"<sup>38</sup> therefore:

The knowledge of God does not really strike home to us unless it issues in a deep knowledge of our own selves. That does not mean that self understanding is our criterion for the knowledge of God, but that we are truly discovered to ourselves only when we are brought into conformity of heart and mind to Jesus Christ, for it is in him that God has turned toward man and turned man toward Himself.<sup>39</sup>

At the least, those who are in fact mystical theologians may appreciate the place Torrance gives experience in his theology.

In Ignatian imaginative prayer, then, one meditates on the Gospels – on the incarnate life of Jesus – and as such gives space for the Holy Spirit to practically form Jesus in them. The very same Jesus, risen and active, draws us into his story, revealing himself and ourselves. He speaks to us as he did to his disciples, revealing the thoughts and desires of our hearts. He teaches us to pray by drawing us into his "Our Father."<sup>40</sup> As we contemplate his life, such as his transition to manhood as a boy at the temple, he personalises us and enables us to participate in the full human personhood that he achieved by the Spirit. As we join him in the Passion Week we realise our need for him as we struggle to keep watch for one hour. As we share in the Final Supper, we realise that while we still were sinners Christ died for us: our communion with him precedes and includes our betrayal and denial of him and thus is not destroyed by our unfaithfulness. Our faith becomes faith in his faithfulness. We declare theologically and experientially, "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 faithfulness of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>41</sup>

## B) The Mediation of Revelation

Jesus Christ is, in himself, not just the mediator of reconciliation but of

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<sup>37</sup> See "The Reconciliation of Mind" in Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–47.

<sup>38</sup> Torrance, *Theological Science*, 85.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>40</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 120–1. This understanding of prayer is upheld in Orthodox liturgical life. Its "prayer for the beginning of the day" ends with, "direct my will, teach me to pray. *And, Yourself, Pray in me. Amen.*" Italics added.

<sup>41</sup> Gal 2:20, Torrance's translation.

revelation. By reflecting on the doctrine of the hypostatic union outlined in Chapter One, the previous section related Jesus' resurrection to his life and crucifixion in order to show that he is the mediator of reconciliation. This section continues to reflect on the person of Jesus but now in reference to his incarnation and ascension to show that he is the mediator or revelation. This thesis began with the basic implication of the resurrection: Jesus is God. Having covered much ground about who Jesus is and what he did for us we can now flesh out the human reception of God's self-revelation. Firstly, by being very God become very human, Jesus is the self-communication of the Father to us; he embodies revelation. In the incarnation, the Word became flesh and thus we can know God. We then see that through Christ, the Father imparts himself in the Holy Spirit, enabling us to receive Jesus, God's self-revelation. The ascended Jesus continues to give the true human response to God on our behalf, and through him the Father sends the Holy Spirit that we may participate in this response.

#### **i) The Word made Flesh is God the Father's Self-Communication**

Genuine human knowledge of God must both rest on the very being of God and be in a form we can grasp. This is why the *Word* became *flesh*. Firstly, Jesus is the very being of God and so in him and his resurrection we have an objective pledge of our apprehension of God. Our knowledge of God is only valid insofar as it corresponds to God's word to us – else it is just speculation. It is found by being attentive to his saving work in the incarnation rather than by trying to strip all space-time considerations away from God – for the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity. Torrance cleverly brings to the fore this cognitive element of discipleship by saying, “we have to *follow* Jesus exclusively. We derive our knowledge of God *a posteriori* from him who is constituted the way, the truth and the life.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore we must give up *a priori* notions of what God must be like, and instead follow God's self-revelation in Jesus.

Since this eternal Word became flesh, humanity can share in God's knowledge of God. The eternal Son has always known the Father, as he is indeed the self-

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<sup>42</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 293.

knowledge of God. But in the incarnation, *as a human* the Son knows God – in our place and on our behalf. “The immediate centre of our knowledge of the Holy Trinity is lodged in the divine-human Person of Christ, for it was he the Son and Word of God . . . who became incarnate as the self-communication of God to us within the bounds of our human existence and knowledge.”<sup>43</sup>

Part of what Torrance is fighting against here is the entrenched Greek philosophical notion that there is a discrepancy between the sensible realm and the intelligible realm. Pertaining to theology, this would mean a discrepancy between this material space-time world and the reality of God and thus that we cannot really know God, for our statements about God can “not rest upon any objective ground in God.”<sup>44</sup> To be sure, our statements themselves are not the reality, nor do they fully describe the reality, but they are valid nonetheless. As we saw in Chapter One, Section b), ii) “Who Jesus is in Himself; the Doctrine of the Trinity,” theology is necessarily *apophatic* and *kataphatic* since Jesus is very God as very human.

Torrance does maintain the *apophatic* dimension of knowledge of God, but for very different reasons than do the Greek philosophers. It is not because of an ultimate dualism between God and the world, which Torrance outright rejects. Colyer explains that for Torrance there is no inherent correspondence between the human mind and the mind of God due to our infinite qualitative difference and our sinful alienation from God.<sup>45</sup> Even the knowledge that humanity is sinful and has an alienated mind is only known through Christ;<sup>46</sup> we know neither God nor ourselves on *a priori* grounds.<sup>47</sup> “God is certainly greater than [*sic*] we can ever conceive, so that we cannot but reckon with an infinite discrepancy between our human forms of thought and speech and God himself in his transcendent and ineffable majesty.”<sup>48</sup> When Torrance speaks of the Word becoming flesh his emphasis is on flesh as the human forms of thought and speech in which God himself has entrusted himself to us in Jesus.

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<sup>43</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 146.

<sup>44</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 232.

<sup>45</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 103.

<sup>46</sup> See specifically the chapter “The Reconciliation of Mind” in Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–47.

<sup>47</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 103.

<sup>48</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 232.

Jesus simultaneously reveals and heals our fallen thought and speech. In his atoning incarnation he united himself, by the Spirit, to a fully human body and soul (as we affirmed with dithelitism) "in order to redeem it and effect reconciliation deep within the rational centre of human being."<sup>49</sup> Colyer elucidates the link between christology and soteriology by showing that by rejecting both Nestorianism and Apollinarianism (and monothelitism), Torrance can affirm that Jesus is himself both the God-ward and man-ward direction and thus reconciles our mind to God.<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, kataphatically:

The resurrection of the incarnate Son means that God has consummated in Christ such a union between our humanity and himself, and therefore between our human forms of thought and speech as they come to articulation in Christ and himself, that in and through Jesus Christ we may yet know God in his reality beyond ourselves.<sup>51</sup>

Torrance insists that God intentionally formed the thoughts and concepts of his people of Israel so that they could receive and understand who Jesus is and what he did for them.<sup>52</sup> This accords with Torrance's 'scientific method' in which an object is not only understood in and of itself but in light of its constituent relations. In this case, Jesus, while intrinsically in himself the Son of the Father, can only be understood within his context as Jesus of Nazareth who fulfils Israel's history. This methodology is also 'scientific' for it uses language and concepts appropriate to the object it is describing.

The resurrection being a real event in this space-time also upholds Jesus' human response to God in our place. He is the Word made flesh, and in the resurrection enfleshed truth is made to stand forever. "The whole epistemic function of the incarnation thus comes to its complete fruition in the resurrection of Christ in the fullness of humanity."<sup>53</sup> As has been shown, firstly the resurrection makes eternally valid what is already real in the life of Jesus. Secondly:

It is as incarnate Son risen that Jesus Christ remains truth, uncreated truth and created truth in one. He is not simply the eternal Logos of God,

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<sup>49</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 49; see also Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 104–5.

<sup>50</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 105.

<sup>51</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 232.

<sup>52</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 12–23.

<sup>53</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 232.

but that Logos become flesh, full of grace and truth, not simply Word of God addressed to man, but answering word of man addressed to God in the unity of his one person.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, in conclusion, Jesus is not only the Word of God to humanity, but also the response of humanity to God. In him God reconciles the world to himself.

## **ii) The Holy Spirit is God the Father's Self-Impartation**

Jesus continues to be the one mediator of revelation for in the ascension he returns to the Father not simply as the eternal Word but as the Word made flesh. He is "God's own Word translated into human form and reality and returning back to the Father as answering Word in perfect fulfilment of his Will."<sup>55</sup> Jesus' ascent does not reverse his descent but fulfils it.<sup>56</sup> He ascended on our behalf and in our place. As such he is forever the one place we hear God and the one place in which we answer.

This is central to Torrance's understanding of ministry.<sup>57</sup> We are not left to our own devices, in toil and anxiety, to work up a faithful response to God's revelation. Jesus is our response. His offering is in our place, includes us, and draws us into it. This is why Paul can say, "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>58</sup> We must abolish from our thinking a competitive relationship between our response and Christ's response in our place, and hold the former as participation in the latter rather than as an additional response. Jesus offers worship and prayer:

In such a vicarious way that while made in our stead and on our behalf they are made to issue out of our human nature to the Father as our own worship and prayer to God . . . through the Spirit Christ's prayers and intercessions are made to echo in our own, and there is no disentangling

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>55</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 119; see also Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 249.

<sup>56</sup> In the words of the prophet Isaiah, as water falls and enables fruit to be produced, "so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11.

<sup>57</sup> See also Graham E. Redding, "The Significance of the Priesthood of Christ for a Theology of Prayer in the Reformed Tradition, with Reference to T.F. and J.B. Torrance, and the Eucharistic Tradition of the Church of Scotland" (PhD, King's College, 1999).

<sup>58</sup> Gal 2:20.

of them from our weak and stammering and altogether unworthy acts of devotion.<sup>59</sup>

Jesus' response in our place does not mean that our lives remain as they are. Quite the opposite, by the indwelling Spirit of the Son we are transformed into people who love the Lord our God as he does: with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

Faith, then, is sharing Jesus' human response to the Father in the Spirit.<sup>60</sup> It is evidently not a blind faith, nor a faith with no empirical basis. Rather, it is a faith which is both historically grounded and grounded in the very being of God who has come amongst us in Jesus and come into our hearts by the Holy Spirit – who enables us to declare that Jesus Christ is Lord.<sup>61</sup> Interpreting something 'in faith' does not mean ignoring history. Rather, it respects the agent involved in history, namely the unique God-human Jesus Christ. As Molnar states concisely in reference to Jesus' incarnation and resurrection, "Torrance insists that these are miracles and that they can only be appreciated both historically *and* theologically."<sup>62</sup>

The apostles saw the resurrected Jesus. However, even then, by sight alone they could not discern who Jesus really was, but could only do so in faith by the Spirit.<sup>63</sup> Empirical observation and historical analysis do not suffice. Since the resurrection is a divine act within history, the structures of our thought and speech are judged and restored in Jesus. As such, knowledge of God cannot be deduced by these very structures that need shifting. Knowledge that rests upon a base that rejects the death and resurrection of Jesus shall pass away; knowledge that is built on a framework that has the resurrection as its centre shall remain. Faith is thus required: faith in the objective basis given in Jesus Christ as God's self-revelation, and faith in the resurrected Jesus who confronts us personally by his Holy Spirit and impresses upon us the truthfulness of the message as we hear it.

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<sup>59</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 275. See also Rom 8:26, "we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

<sup>60</sup> See also C Baxter Kruger, "Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God: The Nature and Means of Our Knowledge of God in the Theology of T.F. Torrance." (PhD, University of Aberdeen, 1989).

<sup>61</sup> 1 Cor 12:3.

<sup>62</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 243.

<sup>63</sup> Luke 24:13-35, the road to Emmaus. See also 1 Cor 12:3.

The Holy Spirit is the link between Christ's faith and our faith. "The reality of the incarnation or of resurrection is the kind of objectivity which makes itself accessible to our apprehension, creating the condition for its recognition and acceptance."<sup>64</sup> This undermines faith in Jesus as a capacity belonging inherently to human beings, either as divine consciousness or rationality. "The eternal Spirit of the living God has composed himself, as it were, to dwell with human nature, and human nature has been adapted and become accustomed to receive and bear the same Holy Spirit."<sup>65</sup> While God the Father communicates himself to us in the Son, he "imparts himself to us in his Spirit in such a way as to enable us to receive his revelation and participate in the mutual knowing and loving between the Father and the Son."<sup>66</sup> As Jesus is both the Word of God to humanity and the perfect human response, so the Spirit is both God opening himself up to us, and opening us up to know God.<sup>67</sup>

Chapter One mentioned the *apophatic* and *kataphatic* nature of theology. This in part derived from the distinctive quality of the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is self-effacing. Torrance can even describe the Spirit as "the invisible Light in whose shining we see the uncreated Light of God manifest in Jesus Christ. . . . but it is known in his own distinctive, transparent and translucent *hypostasis*."<sup>68</sup> Similar to the incarnation in which the Son of God becomes fully human while remaining who he always was, when the Spirit is sent he enables apprehension of God while himself remaining ineffable and as such reserves the hiddenness of the being of God. In the Spirit "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."<sup>69</sup> In Christ and the Spirit we really apprehend the very being of God, yet cannot fully comprehend

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<sup>64</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 19.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 246; cited in Elmer M. Colyer, "Thomas F. Torrance on the Holy Spirit," *Word & World* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 162; see also Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 222.

<sup>66</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 146.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 151; the concept of "uncreated Light" is prominent in Eastern Orthodoxy – especially the spiritual tradition found in the *Philokalia*, and in particular St Gregory of Palamas' defence of it – but largely foreign to the Reformed tradition. For more on this see Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*, 127–34.

<sup>69</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 151.

him.

Furthermore, to understand Jesus' resurrection, given what resurrection is, namely an event that continues to be present rather than fading with time, it is methodologically necessary to be attentive to the risen and active Jesus. Faith is thus needed if we are to think objectively about the resurrection. If the resurrection did indeed happen, then Jesus is indeed alive and must be allowed to act as his own interpreter or else we have *a priori* assumed that the resurrection did not happen. "It is through the Spirit that we may understand the resurrection in accordance with its own inner and free happening, as the sovereign act of its Subject."<sup>70</sup> Simply put, if the resurrection happened then when trying to understand it one cannot ignore the resurrected one who said, "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."<sup>71</sup> The Holy Spirit acted in the resurrection and enables us to understand it; the Spirit is both the ontological and epistemological key. Therefore, "an interpretation of the resurrection in faith respects the free action of the Holy Spirit as the one who enables understanding of this event for us."<sup>72</sup> The resurrection, ascension and Pentecost mean that the eternal Word of God is present by the Spirit to speak afresh and interpret the written word of God.<sup>73</sup>

Between the resurrection and ascension Jesus was apprehensible by faith and sight, and after the ascension – now – by faith alone.<sup>74</sup> This gives faith both a definiteness and yet an openness.<sup>75</sup> Jesus is known but not yet fully. It is the real Jesus we are apprehending, indeed the real God in his very own being, "but in order to apprehend him faith must reach out still to comprehend him ever more fully, and so faith exists in the tension of having and yet not having."<sup>76</sup> For now we see in part but then we shall see in full.<sup>77</sup> When Torrance says that "in faith

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<sup>70</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 95.

<sup>71</sup> John 16:13.

<sup>72</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 243.

<sup>73</sup> See "The Biblical Witness to Jesus Christ" in Torrance, *Atonement*, 315–40.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>75</sup> See "Faith and Godliness," in Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 13–46, in particular page 25.

<sup>76</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 300.

<sup>77</sup> 1 Cor 13:12.

we are a new creation,"<sup>78</sup> we must recall that faith has an objective ground in Torrance's thought. Faith is not taking hold of something that is not yet so, but rather a submitting of our mind to the reality of Christ and thus confessing that creation is already renewed in him. Faith thus reaches forward in expectation of sight. It invisibly discerns the kingdom of God here in the midst of the old creation and looks forward in expectation to the new creation visibly coming. The next chapter, *Eschatology*, will expound this relationship between reality and actuality.

This chapter has shown that Jesus, because of who he is in himself, determines a new relationship between God and the world. Since he is both fully God and fully human, united in one person, he is the one mediator between God and humanity. On one hand, God determines this new reality for us: the resurrection is the decisive act of God, raising Jesus from the dead, and us in him. On the other, he does this from within our humanity: Jesus' fully human life of active obedience means that humanity is no longer destined to come to nothing sin and death but is granted eternal life in Christ. Eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. We have this since Jesus is both the Word of God to humanity and the answer of humanity to God. Through participating in his life, by the Spirit, this new reality is made present to us here and now, even as we await its final unveiling.

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<sup>78</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 420.

## Chapter 5

### Eschatology

What will happen in the end? What is real? The Last One – Jesus Christ – determines the last things. This chapter is by no means an addendum to the previous four since eschatology was not that to Torrance. Rather,

the whole content of eschatology is thought through christologically in terms of the incarnation, the God-manhood of Christ, and the events of the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. In this way eschatology is nothing but a thorough going expression of the doctrine of grace as it concerns history, while the important word is not *eschaton* (the last event), but *Eschatos* (the last one).<sup>1</sup>

Torrance's eschatology can best be understood with reference to the hypostatic union. The work of Jesus happens *in* the person of Jesus. Therefore by looking at the hypostatic union of Jesus' humanity and divinity and his relation to creation in his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and future second advent we understand creation in relation to God at present and as it shall be.

The first section demonstrates that christology determines eschatology by unfolding the implications of Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. It does so with reference to Torrance's important distinction between reality and actuality. The second section, in turn, outlines the implications of this for the Church.

#### A) Christology and Eschatology: Reality and Actuality

This section examines the relationship between resurrection, ascension, reality and actuality. The resurrection determines what is *real*; the ascension both veils that *reality* and makes it *actual*. Two veils obscure this reality: the veil of sense and the veil of time. The veil of sense means the continued presence of non-reality in our ongoing history. This veil will persist until the veil of time is

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<sup>1</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 309.

removed with Jesus' second advent. We firstly examine Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in terms of reality and non-reality, and secondly his ascension both as the holding back of reality and as making it actual here and now. In Torrance's words, the new creation is both "present veiled reality and unveiled reality yet to come."<sup>2</sup>

### **i) Reality and Non-Reality**

The starting point for Torrance's eschatology is the fact that the new creation is already a reality in Jesus. As we have seen, Torrance insists that Jesus' work happens in him and not merely through him. Therefore because Jesus is already crucified and risen, so too, in *reality*, is all creation in him.

Reality means that which has being, that which does not fall away into nothingness. In this sense fallen creation is non-reality, it has been given its sentence in Jesus' crucifixion and will be revealed as such at Jesus' second advent. We thus say with Torrance that in *reality* it is already crucified and resurrected, and at the second advent it will be crucified and resurrected in *actuality*. The final outcome of history is already determined. The cross was itself the final judgment of the world.<sup>3</sup> The details are still to be worked out in history, but the end is determined.

The new creation is a present veiled reality. The crucifixion reveals the first way in which it is presently veiled: the veil of sense. Sin and evil makes this reality hidden. When the Word was made flesh the rulers could not perceive Truth, the incarnate Son, in their midst due to sin and evil, "for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."<sup>4</sup> Jesus' death and resurrection thus creates the primary eschatological tension: the tension between the old and the new.

As the King became incarnate in our fallen humanity – his divinity being hidden beneath the fallen human nature he assumed – so his kingdom is present but hidden within this fallen creation. Torrance's eschatology is utterly consistent with his christology. He uses the vocabulary 'the mystery of the kingdom' as he

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>3</sup> "Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out." John 12.31-32.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor 2:8.

does 'the mystery of Christ;' the former being consistent with the latter for it is in Jesus that it is found. Because the kingdom or reign of God is hidden so too is the new creation, for the new creation simply is the old creation but judged and restored to be under God's reign – including its transformation to incorruptibility as it shares in Jesus' resurrection.

As the previous chapter described, Jesus was sanctifying fallen human nature in himself progressively right up to the cross, living a holy life within it and wrenching it back to obedience to God. Yet at the point of utter obedience – death on a cross – he became sin for us once and for all. As such, creation living up to its reality in Christ, that is, in obedience to his reign, takes a hidden form in this yet to be physically resurrected world. The crucifixion means that like Jesus' divinity the kingdom takes a veiled form here and now.

Therefore, "the relation between the *today* and the *eschaton* is much more a tension between the hidden and the manifest, the veiled and the unveiled, than between dates in calendar time."<sup>5</sup> Fundamentally, we do not see reality because of the persistence of non-reality: the veil of sense. Of course this and the veil of time cannot be separated since at some future calendar date all that is hidden will become manifest, and the glory of the Lord will be fully unveiled forevermore.

## **ii) The Ascension, Pentecost, and the Second Advent**

### *The Ascension*

The ascension of Jesus means that the new creation is also hidden due to the veil of time. God decided to not make the new creation extensively present now but to withdraw the glorified Jesus from our sight. The resurrection means that the new creation is a *present* reality; the ascension that it is a present *veiled* reality. Since the ascension creates this *eschatological pause*, it also means the new creation is a *future unveiled* reality since we must await Jesus' future return in the manner he ascended.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 405.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 1:11.

In this final unveiling Jesus will still be both fully human and fully God. He ascended, then, not because there is a conflict between being humanly present and filling all things,<sup>7</sup> but rather because the judgment of the cross and restoration in the resurrection must be given room to become intensively present before they become extensively present. The reign of the ascended Lord is a *reality* extensively and universally, but its *actuality* is only intensive and particular. The latter is only true and meaningful because of the former; the former is only known and recognised because of the latter.

The previous chapter showed that Jesus has responded on our behalf, and later this chapter, in Section b), i) “Against Determinism and Arminianism,” we examine our participation in his response. Torrance comments, “that final judgment confronts people here and now, but its full action is delayed until the last day. Had the *eschaton* encountered men and women in its unveiled openness they would have been damned on the spot without room or freedom for the decision of faith.”<sup>8</sup>

The Father thus received Jesus to his right hand and veiled him and the new creation from our sight for mercy’s sake.<sup>9</sup> Torrance implies that if the kingdom, the reign of the king, was extensively present immediately then there would not be room for genuine choice and response.<sup>10</sup> Because he is only intensively present by his Spirit, discernment is needed and choice is possible. People’s reaction to him in his earthly life and today is the divine judgment upon them.<sup>11</sup> The response to the historical Jesus, present by his Spirit, is important, “I Judge you not, but the word that I have spoken to you, that shall judge you at the last day.”<sup>12</sup>

There is a very hopeful tone to Torrance’s perspective regarding world mission. This hope stems from the fact that the new creation is already real but simply veiled: “the world-mission of the Church is part of God’s grace, for it is God’s

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<sup>7</sup> In terms of this old framework it is impossible to articulate how this will be so, but see Torrance on the *extra Calvinisticum* in Chapter Three, “The Ascension and Reconciliation.”

<sup>8</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 322.

<sup>9</sup> See also 2 Peter 3:4-9.

<sup>10</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 322.

<sup>11</sup> Though even in this judgment there is redemption, for the rulers crucified the Lord of glory in ignorance, yet Jesus forgave them for they knew not what they did (1 Cor 2:8, Luke 23:34).

<sup>12</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 322. See John 12:44-50.

grace alone that keeps back the dissolution of this age.”<sup>13</sup> Once again, this shows the order of God’s action and our action: “all of grace means *all* of man.”<sup>14</sup> The syn-ergos, the working together of God and humanity, is not at all Pelagian; the new creation is not a mere possibility that we have to bring and make real. God works, and we share in his working. This is very different from a striving forward to make this world new. His grace must *hold it back* because it is already a reality. It is this reality that makes the kingdom imminent and gives the Church missional urgency. She really feels the new reality pressing in on her by the Spirit and must proclaim to all, ‘wake up and smell the coffee: the old has gone, the new has come!’

### *Pentecost*

Firstly we saw that the new creation is *reality*, then due to the veils of both sense and time that it is *veiled*, now we see that it is *present*. We have already discussed the sending of the Spirit in Chapter 3, Section b) “Our Communion with God,” and we now recapitulate this eschatologically. The new creation is a *present* veiled reality because Jesus is present by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, because Jesus ascended in the flesh and we await his return, the new creation is also *future unveiled reality*.

Jesus himself explicitly relates his ascension to Pentecost: “if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”<sup>15</sup> Torrance is insistent that while “Christ does not communicate himself to us here and now as he will at the second advent, nevertheless his presence is as fully real here and now as it will be then.”<sup>16</sup> The ascension means that Jesus is absent in body but really present in the Holy Spirit. “It is the pouring out of the Spirit that links the historical Jesus with the ascended Lord.”<sup>17</sup> Holmes points out that Torrance’s use of the present tense in relation to Christ:

Relativises Lessing’s so called ‘ugly ditch’ by pointing to Christ as One who continually comes in the power of the Spirit. How indeed can an unsubstitutable happening like the resurrection of Jesus be regarded as

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<sup>13</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 435.

<sup>14</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, xii.

<sup>15</sup> John 16:7.

<sup>16</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 423.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

constitutive of reality? The scandal of the Christian Gospel is that the empty tomb and resurrection appearances are concrete declarations which brings one into communion with the new reality.<sup>18</sup>

Torrance has not only a Chalcedonian eschatology but also a self-consciously Trinitarian one. The ascension and ensuing Pentecost, due to the *homoousial* relation of the Spirit to the Son and the Father, means we are not left as orphans but rather enables the personal presence of God himself. God's move toward us in Christ in the Spirit is an overflow of who he is in himself. God being with us in Christ and the Spirit is "a coming-and-a-presence in the most realistic sense."<sup>19</sup> Because who God is toward us in Christ and the Spirit he really is in himself, when we receive the Spirit we are sharing in the very life of the Triune God.

Therefore – and this is significant for Torrance – there are not two comings of God among us, but one in different modes. He does not equate 'parousia' with 'second coming,' for fundamentally there is only one coming. Instead he can say that baptism and the Eucharist together remind us of the "*parousia* as both a real presence here and now, and yet as an advent presence still to come."<sup>20</sup> Jesus has an 'abiding parousia' in the Spirit. There are two advents or comings (the incarnation and the second coming) with a different form of presence in between, though a real presence nonetheless.

The different modes of the one *parousia* reinforce each other. The coming-and-presence of Jesus in the flesh and in the Spirit leads to the hope of his second advent in his unveiled glory. "Hence due to its union with Christ through one baptism and one Spirit the Church cannot but look through its participation in the saving death of Christ to its participation in his resurrection from the dead, and thus look forward to the general resurrection."<sup>21</sup> We look forward to the day when we will share in the resurrection of Jesus, receiving a glorious incorruptible body, a new creation free from decay and perfect communion with

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<sup>18</sup> Christopher R. J. Holmes, *Ethics in the Presence of Christ* (London: T&T Clark, 2012); containing footnote, "That is: *accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.*" Lessing Gotthold, *Lessing's Theological Writings*, trans. Henry Chadwick (London: A&C Black, 1956), 53, original emphasis.

<sup>19</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 301.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

<sup>21</sup> Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 300, containing footnote: "Cf. Epiphanius, *Anc.*, 119."

one another in the life and love of the Holy Trinity.<sup>22</sup>

### *The Second Advent*

While the presence of Christ by the Spirit partially removes both the veil of sense and time, nonetheless because he ascended both partially remain until he returns. Just as Jesus' divinity was hidden beneath the veil of sinful flesh he assumed until the resurrection when it was revealed, so too the kingdom of God is hidden within this old creation until the apocalypse or second coming of Jesus. Just as the unity of Father and Son was revealed in the resurrection the "complete union which we possess in faith here and now will be unveiled in a new heaven and new earth."<sup>23</sup>

The new creation being partially manifest now is akin to the *enhypostatic* nature of Jesus; in the Spirit, we truly participate in the divine reign within the conditions of our ongoing fallen human existence. Jesus' final coming is linked with his mission on earth, for it is only his grace that is holding it back in patience for all peoples to hear and receive his Son. On the other hand, the primary biblical motif is that of the sudden and transcendent act of God; the final unveiling of the new creation is akin to Jesus' *anhypostatic* human nature.<sup>24</sup>

There is forever a distinction between our place and God's place, between the created order and God's reign, even though there will be no veil between them. As with Jesus' hypostatic union in which his fallen humanity became sanctified humanity but not itself divine, our humanity will be in perfect communion with the Triune God without becoming divine itself. The old creation is made new; it is not turned into the kingdom of God itself, which is the presence and reign of the King. Rather it is made utterly transparent and permeable to the king and his kingdom.

The transcendent Spirit of God has always been actively present in the world immanently sustaining its continuing relation to God the creator, but what happened at Pentecost manifest a change not only in the form of his activity but in the mode of his immanence which it is difficult for us to

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<sup>22</sup> Paul writes, "I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as those who have no *hope*. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus." 1 Thess 4:15.

<sup>23</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 422.

<sup>24</sup> For example Luke 17 and the warnings in Matthew 24-25 of being ready for the unknown hour.

conceive or express . . . but something incomprehensibly new in the life and activity of the eternal God and the mode of his presence to all flesh.<sup>25</sup>

As has been seen, there is not just a difference in degree but in kind of the Spirit's presence to us. God has always been transcendentally present to all things, but in the Spirit now he is personally and intensively present in the Church, and in the *eschaton* he will be extensively personally present, and thus all things will be made new as the entire creation will be new creation. Finally, on that glorious day, what is already real in Christ now will be made actual here.

While at present the new creation can be experienced intensively and particularly through God's abiding *parousia* in the Spirit, we still look forward to its extensive actuality at the final *parousia*. As seen, Christ's *parousia* means "the *real presence* of him 'who was, who is, and who is to come.'"<sup>26</sup> Now in the Spirit we experience him 'who is,' and we look forward to the final of these, him 'who is to come.' Against both realised eschatology and realised teleology<sup>27</sup> - which is discussed in the next section - the final apocalypse is a future calendar moment, a moment in time and a moment for God. Therefore, the ascension and Pentecost is not the end of the story. If it were we would be at a loss like the disciples staring up into the sky; our faith would even be pitiable.<sup>28</sup> But as the angel reassured them "this very same Jesus will return in the manner that he left."<sup>29</sup> We thus have a hope of a *future unveiled* new creation. The final hope is the renewal of all creation, Jesus' presence in the flesh and him filling all things. The King will be both extensive and universally present as well as intensively and personally present; the whole earth will be filled with his glory.

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<sup>25</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 238.

<sup>26</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 301, containing footnote: "See Rev 1.8; cf 1.17-18, 22.13."

<sup>27</sup> By 'realised teleology' Torrance means the view that the full purpose of God, i.e. the new creation, can be fully manifest here and now through the Church by the Spirit.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Cor 15. It is not that union with Christ in the Spirit is not abundant life, rather our faith would be incongruent and inconsistent since God's eternal pledge in his death and resurrection that he would love us and be with us forever would be unfulfilled. Instead, the Spirit with us now is a pledge guaranteeing what is to come (2 Cor 2) - pointing us to the hope of seeing the face and glory of the Father and Son and not entirely satisfying us here and now. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 155.

<sup>29</sup> Acts 1:11.

## B) The Church: Union with the Whole Christ

In the first section we looked at the eschatological implications of the fact that the incarnate Son of God was crucified, resurrected, ascended and will return. In light of that we now make some preliminary observations about the Church.<sup>30</sup>

### i) Against Determinism and Possibility

What Torrance means by the 'reality' of the new creation can be elucidated by contrasting it to the Arminian 'possibility,' and Federal Calvinist and Universalist determinism. Torrance has a consistent but easily misunderstood relationship between the so-called 'objective' and 'subjective' modes of resurrection. We must distinguish between 'reality' and 'actuality.' Colyer asserts, "Torrance maintains that by reference to this logic of grace we may give careful formulation to 'all the ways and works of God in his interaction with us in space and time.'" <sup>31</sup> I concur, and apply the relation between Jesus' humanity and divinity to this issue.

Redemption has two ranges: particular and universal, inner and outer, or Church and all humanity. The inner reaches toward the outer by the Spirit.

It is then this subjectification of the perfected reality of atonement which marks out the bounds of the Church, the body of Christ, the community of the redeemed in a narrower sense, of those who are sealed for the redemption of the body and the resurrection of the dead. It is this communion of the Spirit which marks out the inner range of redemption.<sup>32</sup>

This statement exemplifies the relationship between reality and actuality in Torrance's theology. The key is christology. Just as Jesus' divinity did not override his humanity but was given full *enhypostatic* existence, so too God's decision on our behalf in Christ does not abrogate but fully includes us. The

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<sup>30</sup> For Torrance's work on ecclesiology, see Torrance, *Atonement*, 341–400, "The One Church of God in Jesus Christ"; Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 252–301, "The One Church"; Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1 (London: Lutterworth, 1959); Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 2 (London: Lutterworth, 1960); Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*; and Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975).

<sup>31</sup> Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 119; including footnote, Thomas F. Torrance, "My Interaction with Karl Barth," in *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 55.

<sup>32</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 190.

question of what happens to those who either do not know their reality in Christ or who reject that reality, is an open question. Torrance makes suggestions, but never reduces the fact of Jesus' universal representation of all humanity in his incarnation and atonement.

This is what Federal Calvinism<sup>33</sup> does and it puts into serious question Jesus' consubstantiality with humanity and with God.<sup>34</sup> Since the range of Jesus' representation in the incarnation is the range of representation in the atonement, limited-atonement would mean Jesus was not really *homoousios* with us.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it means separating the action of Jesus from the being of God, for it claims that the Father loves all, but the Son did not die for all, thus denying Jesus being *homoousios* with the Father. As such "this divorce of the action of Christ from his love really means the dismemberment of Christ, separation of his person from his work – and that is to destroy the atonement as well as the incarnation."<sup>36</sup> Instead, "all men and women were represented by Christ in his life and death, in his advocacy and substitution in their place."<sup>37</sup>

Against Arminianism, Torrance clarifies that Jesus' representation and substitution, "is a finished work and not a mere possibility."<sup>38</sup> The issue at hand is not defining Arminianism. Nor is the issue the details of how, with respect to human agency, the new reality in Christ becomes actual here and now to an individual. The issue is universal atonement as a reality that has already taken place in Christ. There are of course subtle and nuanced versions of Arminianism that do not fit Pelagian caricatures. Many, for example, hold to libertarian free will, but in the theological context of the bondage of the will.<sup>39</sup> Torrance insists that rather than Jesus' atoning work being made real through our reception of it, "the believers find that they are already involved once for all in that resurrection,

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<sup>33</sup> Taken on this issue as synonymous with hyper-Calvinism and limited atonement.

<sup>34</sup> See Chiarot, "The Unassumed Is the Unhealed," 220–21, which holds that Torrance has somewhat misrepresented Westminster theology, and relates it here to Jesus' assumption of fallen humanity.

<sup>35</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 182.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>39</sup> Those sympathetic to Arminian concerns will find some useful essays from within a Torrancean framework in Myk Habets and Bobby Grow, eds., *Evangelical Calvinism: Essays Resourcing the Continuing Reformation of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012); see in particular Habets, "There Is No God behind the Back of Jesus Christ."

and already included in the objective reality of Jesus Christ risen from the dead."<sup>40</sup> It is not a consequence that follows from some sort of possibility arising from Jesus' resurrection, but is a participation in *that* resurrection itself. Our resurrection proceeds from Jesus, "*more by way of manifestation* of what has already taken place, *than as new effect* resulting from it."<sup>41</sup> We are all already included, but only believers realise this and thus *actualise*, by the Spirit, what is already *real* in Christ.

Against universalism Torrance continues once more, "the unbeliever is also affected, for they too will be judged precisely by this man whom God has raised from the dead and who confronts everyone as the decisive act of judgment or justification freely proclaimed to all."<sup>42</sup> The problem with universalism, and the above two approaches, is the deterministic logic they use rather than the logic of grace.<sup>43</sup> Holding central the mystery of Christ – that all of God does not mean no human response but total human response – enables us to maintain the eschatological mystery of individual participation in Jesus' resurrection at the general resurrection. Both universalism and limited atonement use deterministic reason to push "the death of Christ to its logical conclusion, and so the great mystery of atonement is subjected to the rationalism of human thought . . . in both cases they have not yet bowed their reason before the cross of Christ."<sup>44</sup>

The incarnation and atonement means all humanity is engrafted into Christ – thus refusal and damnation does not mean that some were not included in Christ, but rather that they have absurdly been broken off again. "We may think of human refusal of the atonement, a refusal met by God's opposition of love, as a breaking off of people, like a branch from the vine, and yet that must not be thought of as if it meant undoing the fact that Christ died for them."<sup>45</sup> Torrance suggests that refusal of God may mean eternal damnation, but not in such a way that avoids the fact of Christ's unconditional love and his death in their place and on their behalf. He points out that when evangelizing we must not throw people

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<sup>40</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 208.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 186–8.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 187–8; for more on Torrance's rejection of determinism, see *ibid.*, 426–7; and Chapter Nine, "The Unchangeableness of God," in Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*.

<sup>45</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 189.

back on themselves – on the very self that needs saving – but proclaim the objectivity of what Jesus has already done. We are to proclaim:

In Jesus Christ, God has actualised his unconditional love for you in your human nature in such a once for all way, that he cannot go back on it without undoing the Incarnation and Cross and thereby denying himself. . . . He has bound you to himself by his love in a way that he will never let you go, for even if you refuse him and damn yourself in hell his love will never cease. Therefore repent and believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and saviour.<sup>46</sup>

## **ii) The Church Participates in the Whole Life of Christ**

The Spirit unites us to Christ, actualising his reality in us. But what is our reality in him?

Jesus' ascended humanity determines the nature of the Christian life. The ascension of Jesus is to be understood in terms of the hypostatic union and his relations with the Father and the Holy Spirit. "The Lord Jesus Christ, in whom human nature and divine nature while not confused are indissolubly united in his one Person, is taken up in his ascension into the very heart of the Godhead . . . the crucified Jesus, risen, is now for ever lodged in the heart of the Triune Being of God."<sup>47</sup> Therefore the presence of his Spirit means union and communion with the whole Christ: "eschatology concerns the *parousia* of Jesus Christ the king of the kingdom. That *parousia* comprises his birth life, death, resurrection, ascension and second advent as one extended event, the great inclusive event of *Immanuel*, God with us."<sup>48</sup> He thus gives himself to us historically in the preaching of his earthly life, death and resurrection, and also through the Holy Spirit. These two modes do not mean he is absent, but personally present; the former is not a mere remembrance for he still is the historical Jesus, and the latter is not the Holy Spirit in his stead but the Spirit as his other self, so to speak.<sup>49</sup> Thus to relate to Christ we need both the material content and the actual encounter, both the "*mediate horizontal relation* through history to the historical Jesus Christ and *immediate vertical relation* through the

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<sup>46</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 94.

<sup>47</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 109–10.

<sup>48</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 429–30.

<sup>49</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 300.

Spirit to the risen and ascended Christ.”<sup>50</sup>

As the body of Christ, the Church participates in the whole life of Christ: incarnate, crucified and resurrected. We do not address the ascension directly since all that follows is a reflection on our relation to the ascended Christ.

*The Church shares in the incarnate Jesus*

Since the resurrection makes the hypostatic union eternally valid, Jesus’ ascension to the right hand of the Father affirms our fully human life here and now. As Torrance puts it, the ascension establishes humanity in humanity’s place in space and time. Jesus’ ascension was not eternity ceasing to be active in time, but God’s action in the world being made forever true. The distinction between eternity and time is brought together in Jesus, who is God in humanity’s place (incarnation) and humanity in God’s place (ascension).

With Barth, Torrance contends that ‘the reality of the Church is the earthly historical form of the existence of Jesus Christ, the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.’<sup>51</sup> Jesus’ ascension to the Father is the pledge that eternity will never be without time, and this affects ecclesiology and eschatology. History matters because Jesus was raised bodily and will return in the same manner that he left. Because biblical eschatology is concerned with real human history, God “creates a community of persons as the sphere of divine operation in the world.”<sup>52</sup> The Church must take physical form and not merely a spiritual one. Because Jesus is one with us and one with the Father, we cannot draw a distinction between the visible and invisible Church.<sup>53</sup> Jesus is fully human, so the Church must take up space. Torrance affirms the Barthian definition of the Church’s identity not only on the basis of the double *homoousion* but also due to the bodily resurrection. “For Nicene ecclesiology the focus of attention was on the incorporation of believers into the Body of Christ on the ground of the reconciliation with God

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<sup>50</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 305.

<sup>51</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 276; he is paraphrasing the introductory paragraph to chapter 62 of Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/1*; see also Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 252, which pointed me to this reference.

<sup>52</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 427.

<sup>53</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 275–6. See Origen, *In Canticum canticorum*, 2–3.

which he had accomplished in and through his bodily death and resurrection.”<sup>54</sup>

Being the body of Christ both affirms and relativises the life of the Church. She is united to Jesus whose human nature is both *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic*: his humanity has no independent existence but is fully alive in the Son. Therefore the Church’s identity transcends herself as she has no life outside of the life given to her in the Son, but she also has genuine historical life as the body of Christ.<sup>55</sup> She “reaches out beyond this present age into the age to come and derives its life from there, even though it still participates in the ongoing history of this present age.”<sup>56</sup>

We only have communion with God by sharing in Jesus’ atoning hypostatic union. Since the ascended Christ is the historical Christ, he continues to be the place here on earth where we meet with God. Torrance explains, “by withdrawing himself from our sight, Christ sends us back to the historical Jesus Christ as the *covenanted place* on earth and in time which God has appointed for meeting between man and himself.”<sup>57</sup> This is of course not to say that God does not relate to us immediately in the Spirit now, but that Jesus Christ is the one point in the history of the world where God was, and is, personally united to human nature. The ascension establishes the crucified Christ as the only way to the Father. Our access to God is mediated by the life, death and resurrection – the vicarious humanity – of Jesus. The ascension does not make the cross redundant now that the Spirit has been poured out on all flesh. Quite the opposite, we only enter God’s throne of grace with confidence because on the cross Jesus has gone into the inner sanctuary of God on our behalf. “Just because it is the historical and risen Jesus who is ascended . . . Jesus speaks as God and God speaks as Jesus. Therefore we are sent back to Jesus, for there and only there may we hear God speaking in person, and there and only there at the cross . . . may we meet with God face to face and live.”<sup>58</sup>

All of this gives the Church an inherently missional life. Torrance explains, “it

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<sup>54</sup> Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 276.

<sup>55</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 422.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* This makes the apostolic witness to Christ irreplaceable for we meet Christ not just in Spirit but also in word. See also Chapter Ten, “Biblical Witness to Christ,” in *ibid.*, 315–40.

remains the function of the Church in the world to carry the union already perfected in Christ into all the conditions of time."<sup>59</sup> The Church continues to exist in the conditions of this sinful world for the sake of the world. As Jesus prayed to the Father, "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one."<sup>60</sup> Christ himself calls us to suffer with him in this world to see this world renewed. The Church is already united with Christ but "because of its union with Christ the Church is sent by him to fulfil its mission within the time and history of this world and therefore within its temporal and *nomistic* structures."<sup>61</sup> Our union with Christ thus creates an existential tension between the desire to not be in this old creation and the call to be transformative within it. As Paul expresses, "if I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you."<sup>62</sup> The Church must get involved in the messy affairs of this world – whilst feeling the pressure of the new creation impinging on it. This will be expanded on in the next sub-section where we see that the Church must live a cruciform life in the power of the resurrection.

This dismisses a fully realised eschatology, the view that because the kingdom of heaven is fully real now in Christ its actuality in history is unnecessary since one simply needs to become aware of the spiritual kingdom already present. A realised eschatology does not make enough of history and thus neither of Jesus' bodily resurrection and his humanity. C.H. Dodd states explicitly, "the time-scale is irrelevant to the ultimate significance of history."<sup>63</sup> In this view the kingdom is fully present now. But clearly this world is not as it should be, and therefore it offers no hope for *this* world. It has no teleology, and like one that has only teleology there is no distinct event of Jesus coming again in the flesh to this earth to finally make all things new in actuality. This view shares similarities with the common modern view that the extent of our hope is 'going to heaven when you die.' Both of these views come under the scrutiny of 1 Corinthians 15, which Paul

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<sup>59</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 421.

<sup>60</sup> John 17:14-15.

<sup>61</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 257.

<sup>62</sup> Phil 1:22-24.

<sup>63</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 3rd ed. (London: Nisbet, 1936), 71; cited in Torrance, *Incarnation*, 320.

calls a futile pitiable faith. As Torrance points out, having *only* eschatology means no eschatology because there is no expectation left.<sup>64</sup>

This view becomes docetic for all intents and purposes: the only tension that remains is between this world and the supernatural world – and reality only refers to the latter. The two are distinguished, but they are also separated, and ultimately the latter subordinates the former. Whereas, in Jesus and his bodily resurrection, the two natures are forever united in hypostatic union, and thus will heaven and earth be united in him. Therefore a realised eschatology is not consistent with Chalcedonian christology. Torrance comments, “its great demerit is that it entails a divorce of redemption from creation, of eschatological end from teleological end.”<sup>65</sup> Ironically, a realised eschatology is not realised at all in real space-time history.<sup>66</sup>

How, then, does the Church witness to Christ in the world?

*The Church shares in the crucified and risen Jesus*

The Church is not only united to the incarnate Christ but the crucified and risen Christ. By raising him from the dead by the Spirit, the Father vindicated his life of absolute submission and obedience. Further, in his ascension, Jesus is forever the crucified, risen Lord. His wounded hands and pierced side have been forever taken up into the life and love of God.

Therefore the Church must live both a cruciform life and in the power of the resurrection. The Church living 'crucified with Christ' and 'in the power of the resurrection' are not contradictory, but mutually necessary. The Church only shares in Jesus' exaltation as it shares in his humiliation. The Church only lives up to the high name of 'the body of Christ' as it lives as he did in the body – that is utter obedience to the Father unto death, even death on a cross. Sharing in the new *aeon* in Christ, requires being crucified to the old *aeon* with Christ.

The Church exists in one time interval, the literal time lapse between Jesus' ascension and final *parousia*, but in two *aeons* or forms of time simultaneously present within it. The implication of the death and resurrection of Jesus for the

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<sup>64</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 320.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

life of the Church is that right now she lives in two times: the old age which, in reality, has already passed away, and the new age which, in reality, is already present. "The Church lives in two times, the time of this passing world and the time of the new creation."<sup>67</sup> Because we daily take up our cross, we must live under the judgment of God upon our sin. Yet because the same Spirit that raised Christ lives in us we, precisely by allowing our sin to be judged, must also live in freedom from it.<sup>68</sup> "The real life of the Church lies in its participation in the resurrection, in the new creation, and so in its detachment from the forms of this present evil age."<sup>69</sup> We live a cruciform life on the resurrection side of the cross.<sup>70</sup>

The Church, as still involved in this fallen world, takes the form of the suffering servant.<sup>71</sup> This, a sharing in the cross, is how the kingdom comes.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, "the Church can do that because she knows the Lord in the power of the resurrection."<sup>73</sup> Just as Jesus is fully God in his death even though flesh and blood observation cannot discern this (especially since it is the depth of God's hiddenness), so too the Church participates in the kingdom of God when she suffers – even though the world and often she herself cannot discern it. Further, just as the increasing demand of Jesus' obedience to the Father – his true humanity – led to the crucifixion and thus veiling of his divinity, so too the Church's obedience to the reign of God leads to her suffering and the hiding of her divine locus in Christ.

Despite the veiling of the new creation, as has been seen, the presence of the Spirit in the power of the resurrection does in fact partially remove the veil of

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<sup>67</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 256.

<sup>68</sup> Eph 4:22-24, "You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

<sup>69</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 435.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 429. See also 255-6.

<sup>71</sup> Jesus relates his suffering to his oneness with the Father and to our suffering, John 15:20-21 John 16:2-3. How one relates to Jesus and those sent in his name shows how one relates to the Father, for Jesus is *homoousios* with the Father. Stephen also preaches this to the people in Acts 7:52-3. In so doing he is made to suffer with and for Christ, and, full of the Holy Spirit, is made to share in Christ's prayer: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," Acts 7:60.

<sup>72</sup> By the Church getting involved in the world's troubles at cost to herself "the kingdom of God presses in and men of determined purpose lay impatient hands upon it." Matthew 11:12, in the translation of W. Manson, *Jesus the Messiah* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943), 65; cited in Torrance, *Atonement*, 421.

<sup>73</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 421.

both sense and time. The eschatological Spirit makes present now in the Church what is already true in Jesus. "The pouring out of the Spirit belongs to atonement. It is atonement actualising itself, really and subjectively within the personal lives of men and women, within their decisions and living actions, and upholding them creatively in their real relation with God."<sup>74</sup> The Spirit actualises eschatological reality. Thus the Church is "the body not only of the crucified but of the risen Christ, the body upon which he has poured out his Spirit as he ascended to 'fill all things.'"<sup>75</sup> There is validity in a partially realised eschatology, where the resurrection breaks into history giving an ontological and epistemological apocalypse, or revelation. That is, the new creation is real now and we must become increasingly aware of this fact. Even though the Church continues to exist in history which falls into the past "we nevertheless live in the power of the resurrection as those who are united to the risen Jesus Christ, and who must . . . be transformed through the renewal of our mind in Christ. We are called constantly to shed the image of the corruptible and put on the image of the new creation."<sup>76</sup>

*The problem with fully realised teleology*

To understand our union with the resurrected Jesus and what this means for the kingdom of God breaking in here and now – teleology – we must think strictly christologically. The hypostatic union between God and humanity in Jesus was only perfected through the cross, and the world still awaits the manifestation of its judgement in the cross and therefore its perfect union with the kingdom of God. There is "a union between the eternal kingdom of God and the new creation, indeed a union between the eternal and time made new in Christ, and of that as an abiding union even in the heart of the world's estrangement."<sup>77</sup>

The resurrection of the body does mean the Church has a divine mission to "confront all humanity with the crucial word of the gospel, and so to penetrate every aspect of human life with the power of the resurrection, intensively as well

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 256, containing reference to Ephesians 4:10.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 247. As St Paul prays, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead." Phil 3:10-11.

<sup>77</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 335.

as extensively.”<sup>78</sup> But a fully realised teleology – belief in the full manifestation of the new creation here and now – while it rightly holds together creation and redemption, “does not see the incarnation sufficiently in the light of the death of Christ, and therefore that the incarnation terminates the world as well as fulfils it.”<sup>79</sup>

There is a tension between the Spirit realizing the reality of the new creation here and now and it being held back until Christ’s return. Both must be affirmed. Torrance rightly argues, “the ascension means that Christ holds back the word of his power, the physical transformation of the creation, until the day when he will return to make all things new.”<sup>80</sup> This puts a limit on the nature of miraculous healing: we will die before being raised on the last day and until Jesus returns with the incorruptible new creation our bodies are subject to decay. This teleological end will not be progressively realised up to a point of utopia, but must await the eschatological end to come and meet it when Jesus returns and makes all things new.

Yet on the other hand, “this does not mean that it may not please God throughout history to answer the prayer of his people for direct miraculous healing.”<sup>81</sup>

Significantly, since for Torrance the apostles are the hinge of the Church – they embody the transition from Christ’s self-witness to the Church’s witness to him<sup>82</sup> – even post-ascension Jesus does miraculous healing through them. To Torrance, they do this as the self-witness *of* Christ and therefore these acts do not continue in the post-apostolic community, i.e. the Church today. For Torrance, the apostolic miracles of healing were *not* the physical actualization of the new creation but “unique revelatory signs associated with the incarnation.”<sup>83</sup>

This is not the place for a full investigation of Torrance’s theology of the apostolic community, but we may make two brief comments. Firstly, the Church as the body of Christ who has no ministry apart from him must always ask, ‘what is Jesus doing and how can I participate in that?’ and must answer that by looking

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 306–7.

<sup>81</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 306.

<sup>82</sup> See “Jesus Christ and his messianic community” in *ibid.*, 349–358.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 306.

to what Jesus did in the Scriptures. Thus discretion is required when creating a distinction between what the historical Jesus *did* and what the ascended Jesus is *doing*. Secondly, since the *ascended* Jesus worked miraculously through the apostles, if we think strictly from the relation between Jesus and the world that the ascension establishes then Jesus *can* continue to act miraculously while being physically absent.

Torrance has already rightly addressed the *manner* of the in-breaking and the necessary limits on a realised teleology that this imposes. The Church, in Jesus, is to be the suffering servant and is to be self-giving. To be sure, the Church is not to avoid its call to be the suffering servant by calling upon supernatural help. Rather, it is called to both suffer with and alleviate the suffering of others as Jesus did and does. As Torrance rightly points out, "Although he wrought miracles as signs of the kingdom, as part of his revelation in act and word, he did not call in supernature to help *himself*, but worked within the nature, weakness and limitations of the creature, to the very end."<sup>84</sup> While Torrance's point here is actually against physical transformation today, his reasoning shows that Jesus miraculously healing *others* does not contradict his union with full human nature. As such, the Church living in the power of the resurrection, for the sake of Christ and others, does not contradict God's calling for her to live within the conditions of this on-going world.

The in-breaking of the kingdom is bound up with the presence of the King, and since the King is still really present by the Spirit, we cannot *a priori* rule out the new creation bursting forth. Torrance himself asks, does not the bodily resurrection of Jesus in our space and time mean:

The reality of the new creation is temporal fact now though its reality is veiled since the ascended Lord is yet to be unveiled in the *parousia*? Must we not think of the kingdom of God and with it the new creation as interpenetrating our old world within the reign of Christ here and now, if only in some contrapuntal fashion?<sup>85</sup>

Therefore the Church must live with the tension of seeking to participate in Christ's transforming work here and now while realising that due to the

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>85</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 333–4.

crucifixion it will mean suffering for Christ, and that due to the ascension we must await his final judgement and restoration of creation.

In summary,

Christology teaches us that the entry at Bethlehem of an abiding union between God and man and its perfection in the cross and resurrection, because it is the first-fruits of the new creation, inevitably entails conflict in the conditions of time and history. That is why we must say that the kingdom of God has come already and come in power, we must also say that the conflict continues in time just because the new creation is here and now breaking up the old, until the hour when the veil of sense and time in the fallen world will be torn aside, and the kingdom of God will come at last with observation in the new heaven and the new earth.<sup>86</sup>

To uphold these difficult eschatological tensions we turn now to what Torrance describes as the primary and greater kind of miracle, “‘the miraculous signs’ of the Church’s forgiveness and healing, of its crucifixion and resurrection with Christ:”<sup>87</sup> the sacraments.

### **iii) The Sacraments Hold Together the Eschatological Tensions**

The sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist shine forth our participation in ‘the whole Christ’ in both senses discussed in the first chapter: his two natures and his entire life.<sup>88</sup> Firstly, their being *sacraments* is analogous to the hypostatic union in which divine and human are distinct but not separate. Secondly, they hold together the eschatological tensions present in our union and communion with the whole incarnate life of Jesus.

Firstly, both sacraments derive their nature from the person of Jesus as fully God and fully human. Just as there was an unseen reality within all his observable acts, so too the real inner meaning in the sacraments is hidden in the ascended Christ. Just as flesh and blood did not reveal Jesus’ divinity,<sup>89</sup> so too flesh and blood cannot by itself discern the supernatural act of baptism or the Eucharist. It is not that the bread and wine themselves become divine – that goes against the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 336–7.

<sup>87</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 307.

<sup>88</sup> For more on the sacraments and eschatology, which we can only touch on here, see Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 82–138; and Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, vol. 2 (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 93–202.

<sup>89</sup> Matt 16:17.

Chalcedonian distinction of the two natures – rather the space-time act is present to God for in the Spirit the ascended Jesus is really present here and now.<sup>90</sup> The ascension is Jesus taking his human nature, and ours in him, to the right hand of the Father; our “life is hidden with Christ in God.”<sup>91</sup> Because Jesus is ascended we need these physical sacraments, yet because he is ascended their reality lies in him and not in themselves.

Baptism powerfully declares reality. It points to Christ’s once for all union with us, and our participation in that. Let us consider the outward reality that happens in our place and the inward reality that happens in God’s place.<sup>92</sup> “To be baptised is much more than to be initiated into the sphere where forgiveness is proclaimed and dispensed in the Church. It is to be “delivered out of the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”<sup>93</sup> We are already united with Christ in his death and resurrection. To be sure, outwardly baptism is incorporation into the Church, but “the really significant event in baptism is a hidden event; it recedes from sight in the ascension of Christ and awaits to be revealed fully at the last day.”<sup>94</sup>

Secondly, reflecting on the Eucharist makes evident the Church’s communion with the whole life of Jesus. Fergusson comments, “in the Eucharist, Christ as our incarnate, crucified, risen, and ascended Lord becomes sacramentally visible and tangible.”<sup>95</sup> The double eschatological tension is upheld in the Eucharist with particular poignancy since it declares that “as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”<sup>96</sup> This powerfully enshrines both tensions: the old and new since it holds forth Jesus’ death, and the present and the future since it calls us to wait *until he comes*.<sup>97</sup> Yes, the Church proclaims the presence of the kingdom here and now. But, it does so primarily by proclaiming the Lord’s death in the Eucharist, for Jesus’ crucifixion precedes his

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<sup>90</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 414.

<sup>91</sup> Col 3:1-4.

<sup>92</sup> The two places are not spatially separated but rather are the human and divine dimensions of the one event.

<sup>93</sup> Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 297.

<sup>94</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 415.

<sup>95</sup> Fergusson, “The Ascension of Christ,” 98.

<sup>96</sup> 1 Cor 11:26.

<sup>97</sup> Torrance notes that “realised teleology refuses to hold this doubleness in eschatological tension, and so tends to slip in a third sacrament or other sacraments in which the two elements are fully integrated,” Torrance, *Incarnation*, 326.

resurrection and is the means to his and our victory over sin and death. By proclaiming Jesus' crucifixion it proclaims to the world that it is sinful and its forms are passing away – thus not allowing us a fully realised teleology. At the same time it points forward to a future time when Jesus will restore all things. It declares that judgment and restoration can be shared in now by the Spirit but will not be fully manifest till Jesus' second advent.

The fact that we do not have a fully realised teleology, somewhat counter-intuitively, is actually what gives hope. The absurd crucifixion of the Lord of glory means that evil is powerful in its absurdity. The new creation is already a reality, and the old creation with the presence of evil has been crucified with Christ, but until Jesus returns we still have a wicked opponent. If the present reality of evil meant that God's plans were being thwarted there would be no reason for hope. Instead,

it is precisely because the New Testament thinks of the kingdom as a present but as yet veiled reality, because it refuses to identify the kingdom with the Church or teach the unveiling and complete realization of the kingdom in the conditions of this present evil world, that it carries with it a doctrine of final justification and consummation that gives meaning and sacred purpose to all things as working together for good.<sup>98</sup>

The Eucharist maintains that despite the new creation already being a reality in Christ, the Church continues to live in this fallen world and must keep the death of Christ as central to her identity as sinful while yet justified.<sup>99</sup> "In Holy Communion we have to do with the continuance of the new creation and its breaking in as an enduring event in conditions of time, with the Church as the bodying forth in this fallen world of communion with Christ."<sup>100</sup> Therefore celebrating Eucharist means the Church receiving the judgment afresh on herself as one whose forms and structures are something passing away, because she has her true existence in the new age, which is present but is still to come.

Finally, then, in the Eucharist, Christ himself sustains and nourishes us as we learn to recognise and participate in the in-breaking kingdom now, and as we hope and wait with eager expectation of the manifestation of the new creation in

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<sup>98</sup> Torrance, *Incarnation*, 323.

<sup>99</sup> As per Luther's famous dictum: *simul justus et peccator*.

<sup>100</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 413.

Jesus' return. Torrance describes the Eucharist as the very real presence and working of Jesus: "as king and head of the Church, Christ has instituted the ministry of word and sacrament within history, whereby he continually nourishes, sustains, orders and governs his people on earth."<sup>101</sup> As such, Molnar encourages us to live "in prayer, thanksgiving and joy as we rely upon the risen and ascended Lord himself to enable every aspect of our lives from the simplest daily tasks to the worship of the communion. . . . Through the Spirit, it is Christ's own priestly ministry that is at work in and through the Church which is his body."<sup>102</sup> Thus the Church, sent into the world as the suffering servant in the power of the resurrection, lives in hope since her life is hidden in Christ, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God."<sup>103</sup>

This chapter centred on the eschatological tension set up by Jesus' ascension. Because Jesus is risen from the dead, the new creation is already reality, but because he has ascended, it is veiled from our sight and we must await its final unveiling in his second advent. There is thus a veil of time separating us from the new creation. However the ascension also meant the sending of the Holy Spirit. Here and now the Spirit makes present the ascended life of Jesus, making intensively actual what is extensively real. Its being making actual is also in tension with the veil of sense. We considered Jesus' resurrection in relation to his crucifixion, which reveals the absurdity of sin and evil. As such, the Church is called to be in the world, suffering with and for Christ in the power of the resurrection to see his kingdom come. She is to put off the old self and put on the new self, and as such, in every aspect of life, witness to the new reality in Christ.

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<sup>101</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 279.

<sup>102</sup> Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 246–9.

<sup>103</sup> Heb 12:2.

## Conclusion

This conclusion summarises the main contours of thought presented and touches on some topics for further study. Two related concepts run throughout this thesis and provide the basis for multiple directions of future research. The first is the hypostatic union of Jesus' human nature to his divine nature, and the second is the relationship between reality and actuality. Further, Torrance has a profound understanding of the Trinitarian relations, and when applied thoroughly to the details of daily life this elucidates the two concepts above. Specifically, thinking of the relation between Jesus and the Holy Spirit elucidates the relation between Jesus' divine and human natures, and between reality and actuality.

To see this, firstly we revisit our articulation of the hypostatic union. Suggestions are made as to further study that would unfold this and its implications. Next, the logic of grace holds together the interplay of God's action and our action. This, along with Torrance's modern scientific understanding of causality, sheds light on often-unfruitful debate on free will and determinism. Following this, Jesus' incarnation and ascension are to be understood christologically and soteriologically with reference to the *extra Calvinisticum*. Since Jesus is now forevermore fully human, the new reality in him means that every aspect of human and creaturely life is affirmed, judged and redeemed. Finally, the Church lives in the tension created by Jesus' resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit. United to the whole life of Christ by the Spirit, his reality is made partially actual here and now.

Firstly, then, the hypostatic union and the logic of grace is the framework within which we understand Jesus' resurrection and ascension, and our participation in him. In Torrance's thought there is a two-way relationship between the resurrection and the person of Jesus. We realise that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God because of his resurrection, and in turn his resurrection is understood to be the raising of the incarnate Son of God.

In the person of Jesus there is no competition between him being the divine Son

of God and him being incarnate as a fully human person. This is the mystery of Christ and the logic of grace; as repeated in almost every chapter, in Jesus, all of God includes all of what it means to be human. Therefore there is no competition between the divine and human realities of the resurrection, ascension, the Church or the sacraments. We affirm, with Chalcedon, that Jesus' two natures are united in the one person 'without confusion, without conversion, without division, without separation; the difference of natures not being removed by their union.' This was not simply stated, but soteriologically unfolded. Since his two natures remained distinct but not separate, Jesus reconciles us to God by the two-fold movement of God to us and us to God. He redeems creation because his natures retain their particularity while being united.

With respect to the actual christological and metaphysical formulation of the hypostatic union, we suggested applying Torrance's profound Trinitarian theology more thoroughly to the *evangelical level*, that is, to the details of Jesus' incarnate life. By defining divinity in terms of Trinitarian relations rather than as abstract attributes, Torrance convinces that in order to uphold Jesus' divinity we must reject kenoticism: Jesus did not empty any 'divinity' out of himself. However, more needs to be said to uphold his humanity. In particular, thinking of Jesus as living out his eternal relation with the Spirit from within his humanity makes more intelligible his fully human mind and will and his sinlessness. Moment by moment, by the Spirit, in accordance with his developing human functions, Jesus received the mind of the Father and submitted his will to him. Firstly this reveals, not empties, his divine personhood, which is constituted by his relations with the Father and Spirit. Secondly it brings to coherence Torrance's affirmation of dithelitism.

An avenue for further study is the complementarity of Logos and Spirit christology. Torrance's Trinitarian theology is an excellent framework for such an exploration. His rigorous Logos christology and onto-relational understand of the persons of the Trinity will uphold the Son's divinity as one articulates Jesus' full humanity by considering the work of the Spirit. This needs to be explored in terms of both the hypostatic union and of our participation in the life of Jesus. Orthodoxy could be a fruitful conversation partner in this regard. Its articulation

of the dual nature of Christ as well its emphasis on mystical participation in the divine life may help elucidate what needs to be said of Jesus' humanity and our own. St Maximus the Confessor, who suffered for his affirmation of dithelitism, is an obvious point of contact between Torrance and today's Orthodox Church:

According to Maximus our deification is worked out by the identification of our human will with the divine will. Here we have a striking instance of the application of Christological dogma to the inner life: our Saviour, within Himself, constantly brought his human will under the subjection of His divine will; we ought, *mutatis mutandis*, to do the same.<sup>1</sup>

This relation between God's action and human action is also evident in Torrance's rejection of determinism. The logic of grace cuts beneath Federal Calvinism and Arminianism in a way that affirms both the objective and subjective poles of atonement. In Christ, atonement is already a reality for all, yet only by the Spirit does it become manifest in actuality. Torrance's theology would certainly be of benefit to those sympathetic to Trinitarian Open Theism. Despite its name, Open Theism does not argue that the being of God can change – that is process theology.<sup>2</sup> Rather it seeks to be faithful to the contingent order that God has bestowed on his creation, and the genuine open relationship between God and the world. It holds to 'partial epistemic openness': God chose to be sovereign in such a way that the future is not fully determined and therefore he does not know every detail of it. Torrance insists that the distinction of both time and eternity must be upheld in their union. Further study could explore the implications of this for whether or not one can affirm God not having exhaustive foreknowledge. Would affirming it jeopardise the peculiarity of eternity? Would rejecting it jeopardise the peculiarity of time? As a basis for such exploration, Torrance understands God from his dynamic revelation in Jesus Christ not in static metaphysical categories of perfection:

The constancy of God does not limit his freedom, for it is the constancy of his freedom as the ever self-living and self-moving Being. In fact it is the constancy of God which provides the very ground for the infinite mobility,

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Lev Gillet, *Orthodox Spirituality: An Outline of the Orthodox Ascetical and Mystical Tradition*, 2nd Edition (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 10–11; some work in this regard has already been done, see Loudovikos, "Possession or Wholeness?"

<sup>2</sup> See Greg Boyd, *Trinity and Process: A Critical Evaluation and Reconstruction of Hartshorne's Di-Polar Theism Towards a Trinitarian Metaphysics*, American University Studies, VII, Theology and Religion (Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 1992) and other of Boyd's work for a Christian Trinitarian understanding of Open Theism.

newness and variability of his activity, and at the same time the very ground for him remaining always the same mighty living God in every change.<sup>3</sup>

What does this mean for God remaining who he always was as he created a world with contingent freedom? Torrance's christological and scientific opposition to determinism, together with the objectivity of Jesus' atoning work, provides a theological framework that may well express most of what Trinitarian Open Theists seek to affirm, but in a way that upholds the dynamic unchangeableness of God.

Again, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the key to holding together this difficult relation. Firstly, the predestination of Christ – and that creation is proleptically conditioned redemption – must be given central place in this consideration since christology is the basis of our understanding of human freedom and its relation to God's sovereignty.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, considering the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life sheds light on the general relation of God and the world. The work of the Spirit gives coherency to the logic of grace, that is, to both divine and human agency in Jesus' life and our own:

A stronger emphasis upon the concursive activity of the Spirit working through and upon human choices should enable us to counter the charge that the history of creation is no more than the temporal unfolding of a timeless plan, immutable in every detail, without requiring the abandonment of the notion of God's sovereignty.<sup>5</sup>

This could be said for Jesus' incarnate life as well as our human lives. The doctrines of the mystery of Christ and of the co-activity of the Holy Trinity are thus how we are to approach questions of sovereignty, freedom, and divine and

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<sup>3</sup> Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 239.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, "Predestination in Christ," *Evangelical Quarterly*, no. 13 no 2 (Ap 1941): 108 – 141; T. F. Torrance, "Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, no. 15 no 1 (Mr 1962): 108 – 110; Habets, "On Getting First Things First"; David A. S. Fergusson, "Predestination: A Scottish Perspective," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, no. 46 (1993): 457–78.

<sup>5</sup> Fergusson, "Predestination: A Scottish Perspective," 478. This is preceded by Fergusson saying, "rather than presiding over a plan immutable in every detail, providence might better be conceived of as the infinite resourcefulness of God in dealing with human creatures in a manner that is in accordance with the purposes disclosed and fulfilled in Christ. Moreover, divine foreknowledge may need to be abridged in the name of divine love and patience. . . . The danger in this approach is that it may lapse into a form of synergism which will lose sight of the preeminence of grace and the divine over-ruling of human affairs. One way of responding to this is to assert the trinitarian, and not merely the binitarian, dimension of election."

human agency.

The mutual relation of Jesus and the Spirit unfolds our communion with God. Jesus is the eternal Son of God who relates to the Father in the Spirit as a fully human person, thus both Logos and Spirit christology make sense of his incarnate life. We, in turn, receive the Holy Spirit into our humanity in and only in the Son, and are united to Christ in and only in the Spirit. Our human reception of the Spirit is only because Jesus – who has the Spirit by nature – received the Spirit into his humanity for our sake. Conversely, our human participation in Jesus is only because the Spirit *of the Son* dwells in us. By being united to Jesus' Spirit-empowered life we can indeed expect to participate in his suffering and power. Torrance's understanding of our communion with God or *theosis* is directly related to his christology and again has affinities with Orthodoxy. As Jesus' humanity is brought into hypostatic union with his divine life, so too do we really partake of the divine life in the *koinōnia* of the Spirit who unites us to him. Further, as Jesus remained fully human in his ascension, so too do we remain fully human in the life to come.

As Jesus remained fully divine in the incarnation so too he remained fully human in the ascension. We affirmed the so-called *extra Calvinisticum* as a way to hold together this difficult point. All of God includes all of what it means to be human, for in Jesus God has made 'room' for us in his life. The meaning of 'room' or 'place' is relative to the subject it refers to. As such, it is meaningless to speak of the Son as being spatially separated from the Father. Instead, the Son remained transcendentally present with the Father and Spirit as he walked the earth in his humanity. The seeming Nestorianism of this is mitigated not only by Torrance's understanding of 'space' but his christology and soteriology. The *communicatio operationum* means that the acts of each nature take place in the other nature for they are united in the one person; the God-ward and human-ward directions of atonement occur in the one person. The intent of those who reject the *extra Calvinisticum* is to affirm the totality of the incarnation, yet when it comes to the natures being united without their propriety being lost, the *extra Calvinisticum* does better at maintaining Jesus' full humanity in his ascension. Similar to what

Oberman has shown in Calvin,<sup>6</sup> further study could look at the 'extra' in Torrance's theology. It is not a mere side point but is essential to how he views the person of Jesus. As this thesis has already indicated, Torrance's nuanced Chalcedonian christology determines his understanding of soteriology, ecclesiology, the sacraments, and eschatology.

The full humanity of Jesus means that every aspect of creation can and will be brought under his Lordship. Union with Christ in the Spirit thus involves all aspects of life. The environmental, the political, the menial, are all subject to the Lordship of the risen and present Christ. The Church, united to the whole life of Christ, is sent into the world as the suffering servant in the power of the resurrection. The Church proclaims the reality of the resurrected Christ and the renewal of all creation in him. It seeks to participate in the present ministry of the ascended Jesus who by the Spirit is establishing his kingdom on earth here and now. As such, Christian ministry is not an anxious striving to make the life of Jesus real and relevant now. Rather, it is peaceful and faithful participation in the risen and active Jesus.

Jesus' ascension and sending of the Spirit creates a tension between reality and actuality. Creation is already redeemed in Christ but awaits its full actualization. The resurrection of the incarnate Son of God determines reality and the Spirit unites us to him here and now as we await his final unveiling and the new creation in him. This means there is right and proper eschatological reserve regarding the manifestation here and now of the new reality. Whilst we are to seek the welfare of the city and work for peace and justice in and between nations, due to Jesus' crucifixion we recognise the absurdity of evil and that until he returns sin will still have sway over humanity. Whilst we participate in the stewardship and loving dominion that Christ has over creation, we recognise that until he returns and unveils the new creation it will still be subject to decay and corruption.

Finally, since Jesus has risen from the dead and will return, the Church lives in a

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<sup>6</sup> "The *extra calvinisticum* is not an isolated phenomenon but rather, like the top of an iceberg, only the most controversial aspect of a whole 'extra' dimension in Calvin's theology: *extra ecclesiam, extra coenam, extra carnem, extra legem, extra praedicationem*." Oberman, "Extra Dimension in the Theology of Calvin," 62. Lat, *extra*, 'outside'; *ecclesia*, 'church'; *coena*, 'supper'; *caro*, 'flesh'; *lex*, 'law'; *praedicatio*, 'preaching'.

sure hope because the new creation is already a reality. His resurrection was the divine act of God and a fully human, space-time, event that redeemed fallen humanity from sin and death. As such, the resurrection of the incarnate Son of God determines reality.

In the words of T. F. Torrance,

*“O God, our Father, we thank you that you have not left this world to tumble down into dust, but in Jesus Christ your Son you have raised it up . . . taken our cause . . . through Jesus Christ’s birth, life, death, resurrection and endless life . . .”*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Torrance, *Atonement*, 451.

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